PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FOURTH SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

Coal Industry

1. **Mr. Rost** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to discuss with the chairman of British Coal the future structure of the industry.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Mr. Rost: When will British Coal management and miners be given the opportunity now being offered to British Gas employees to become shareholders in their own enterprise as a reward for the excellent progress that the industry has made in recent months and to provide further motivation for improved productivity and profitability in the industry? Will my right hon. Friend see whether he can find Sid's brother and tell him?

Mr. Walker: There are no present plans for privatisation, but I am pleased to say that under the bonus system operated by the NCB many miners have benefited from the massively improved productivity that has taken place.

Mr. Mason: Contrary to what the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) said, will the Secretary of State give an undertaking that none of the plans for the proposed structural changes to British Coal will enable it to be privatised?

Mr. Walker: No, Sir. I have always said from the Dispatch Box that I would not rule out the possibility of the privatisation of British Coal. That would be an absurd thing to do and I hope that, on reflection, the hon. Gentleman will not do so either.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does the Secretary of State support the increase in the private sector of the British coal industry?

Mr. Walker: The arrangements that have taken place on the licensing of deep mines and the work of the opencast mines have been perfectly sensible and practical, and, I hope, have been to the benefit of the coal industry. I do not think that there is any problem on that.

Mr. Orme: Was Sir Robert Haslam speaking on his own behalf or on behalf of the Government when he talked about privatisation and preparing the industry for privatisation?

Mr. Walker: If the right hon. Gentleman reads what Sir Robert Haslam said to the Select Committee and elsewhere, he will see that he simply expressed the view that if British Coal were to be privatised it had to be done as an entity. That is a perfectly reasonable view for the chairman of the Coal Board to express.

Electricity Meters (Remote Reading)

2. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what progress has been made in encouraging the use of remote meter reading technology for electricity users.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): There are promising developments in this field. The Electricity Council has recently received a report on the field trials of remote reading systems and as a result is now planning to proceed with the next stage of development, which is expected to lead to the installation of a large-scale pilot scheme.

Mr. Bowden: I am encouraged by my hon. Friend's reply. Does he recognise the benefit that a remote meter reading scheme might have in places such as London, where there is a high turnover of the area boards' customers and where people are often not in when the meter reader comes to check their meters?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is correct about the potential value of remote meter reading. He will be pleased to know that it is intended that the proposed large-scale pilot scheme, which will involve 200,000 homes, will be in London.

Nuclear Waste

3. **Mr. Coombs** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. to discuss management of nuclear waste reprocessing.

Mr. Peter Walker: I meet the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels from time to time to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Mr. Coombs: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the substantial progress that has been made by BNFL in reducing the levels of discharges of radioactive material into the Irish sea? Is he also aware that BNFL has made substantial progress in becoming one of the largest yen earners in Britain, and that, indeed, in a few years time it will be on a par with Unilever?

Mr. Walker: Yes, Sir. I am pleased to say that the discharge levels from Sellafield are down to one tenth of what they were in the year before we took office. I am also delighted to say that the potential export orders of BNFL are a considerable proportion and will greatly benefit Britain.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Secretary of State accept not only that discharge levels are down to one tenth of their previous levels, but that by 1991 discharges to the marine environment from Sellafield will be almost zero and will meet the objectives of every green organisation in the United Kingdom? Does he further accept that with the development of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant BNFL will have spent £1·5 billion by 1990 and will have created thousands of jobs in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)? Does he accept that that deserves congratulation?

Mr. Walker: Yes. That shows the difference between those on the Opposition Benches who know what is going on and those who do not. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pointing out that further major reductions will take effect by 1991. At present, THORP is providing 8,000 jobs directly in the United Kingdom, and BNFL estimates that it will save a further 10,000 jobs in supplier companies each year for the next five years.

Mr. Heffer: While my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) may know what is going on and others do not, the fact is that the people on Merseyside, in Ireland and in Northern Ireland are worried about what is happening in the Irish sea. Is it not clear that there must be something better than what is happening at present, because the Irish sea is becoming a nuclear waste pool? [HON. MEMBERS: "Nonsense."] It may be nonsense to Conservative Members, but they do not live in the area. Our people on Merseyside are so scared of what is happening nowadays that most of them refuse to go fishing in the area.

Mr. Walker: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman, because he was a Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry during the period when pollution of the Irish sea was 10 times what it is at present. I hope that he will reflect on the matter and congratulate the Government for so improving the position.

Mr. Heffer: I was not responsible for that.

Mr. Ron Brown: Is it not a fact that under the Labour Government discharges from Sellafield into the Irish sea were at a safe level and being steadily reduced and that if they are now only one tenth that level, they are extremely safe?

Mr. Walker: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the levels are extremely safe.

Electricity Supply (Connections)

4. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the provisions available for connecting homes without electricity to the public electricity supply.

Mr. Goodlad: Area electricity boards are required to make a supply available to premises situated within 50 yd of a distributing main. Beyond this distance, area boards can arrange connection for an appropriate payment. In some circumstances, it is possible to requisition a board to provide a distributing main to enable connection to be made.

Mr. Beith: Is it not a disgrace that in this day and age thousands of people are not on the public electricity supply and cannot be put on it unless they fork out thousands of pounds? My constituents are often quoted as much as £10,000. Will the Minister look at the system that operates in the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board area and the legislation which enables it to offer connection for much lower sums and see whether he can apply that in areas of England and the south of Scotland, where such facilities are not available?

Mr. Goodlad: Of the United Kingdom electricity boards, only the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board has a statutory provision to help with the economic development and social improvement of its district. Assistance with the costs of connection is given under that provision. I shall bear the hon. Gentleman's suggestion in mind, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans at present for such a measure. If the hon. Gentleman has any particular cases in mind, I hope that he will draw them to my attention.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: How many houses are still lit by gas mantles? Would it not be a good idea, before we consider privatising electricity supply, if we made arrangements to cover houses that do not have an electricity supply?

Mr. Goodlad: I have no figures for the number of gas mantles, but I shall try to find out and let my hon. Friend know.

Mr. Stern: Does my hon. Friend agree that the charges frequently quoted by electricity boards for reconnection, outside the small distance limit quoted by him, often smack of monopoly abuse? Will he consider ways in which competition may be introduced for the benefit of consumers?

Mr. Goodlad: I shall bear in mind my hon. Friend's suggestion. The level of charge is designed to recover cost.

Efficiency Schemes

5. **Mr. Maples** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the aggregate annual savings generated by energy efficiency schemes undertaken by Government Departments; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): It is estimated that Government schemes are currently leading to savings of more than £500 million a year in industry and commerce. Nearly 3 million homes have also been insulated or draught proofed, leading to significant savings and greater comfort. Following my right hon. Friend's initiative, all Government Departments have appointed energy managers, and I shall be meeting their energy managers group next month, when I shall be reviewing progress so far.

Mr. Maples: May I congratulate my hon. Friend on the result of the programme? Will he say what percentage of energy costs this represents and how the Government's performance compares with that of the private sector?

Mr. Hunt: We calculate that £2 billion could still be cut from the annual energy bill of British industry and commerce. I have not yet received a calculation from the energy managers of what Government Departments have saved and what will be saved in Energy Efficiency Year. I shall write in detail to my hon. Friend as soon as the energy managers' report has been received.

Mr. Bruce: The Minister has accepted that much more can still be achieved, even though progress has been made. Will he consider revising the capital allowance programmes of public departments and agencies with a view to exempting some energy-saving schemes from them which offer short-term paybacks? There is evidence that many public authorities which would like to introduce energy efficiency schemes are prevented from doing to because of budgeting methods.

Mr. Hunt: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is aware of the initiative that my right hon. Friend has taken on contract energy management, which is having a significant impact already, espcially on local authorities. As for hospitals and the Health Service, my Department is pursuing an effective joint initiative with the Department of Health and Social Security and nearly 20 per cent. of the extended energy survey scheme applications have been for hospital sites, There is movement, but there is still a long way to go.

Mr. Hannam: May I congratulate my hon. Friend on the establishment of the new telephone hotline, which has been established with neighbourhood energy action? It will help the disabled, the elderly and others on low incomes to receive assistance in keeping warm this winter. Will he ensure that all citizens advice bureaux are made aware of the hotline, they being in the front line in dealing with these problems?

Mr. Hunt: I, too, pay tribute to the citizens advice bureaux in this crucial area. It is a fact that the disabled on low incomes and the old are only a telephone call away from receiving help on how to keep warm this winter. I hope very much that the telephone hotline will be greatly used. By telephoning 0800-234-8000, callers will be put in touch with their nearest neighbourhood energy action project.

Mr. Rowlands: Does the Minister recognise that the greatest savings can be made in the health sector? I am encouraged by the figures that he has given, but is he aware that many health authorities are having to worry about their budgets, and that in many instances capital projects that could produce the results that he is talking about are being pushed aside by other areas of expenditure that inevitably are given priority?

Mr. Hunt: I am not aware of any examples of that sort, but if the hon. Gentleman has details, will he please give them to me? Only last Thursday I visited Withington hospital in the area of the South Manchester health authority. I was impressed with the authority's action plan, especially with the feeding through of savings, to the benefit of patients in local hospitals.

Mr. Rost: When will the Treasury relax its restrictions on third-party financing so that the private sector can invest in energy efficiency in the public sector on a shared benefit basis?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend will know the commitment that my right hon. Friend and I have to contract energy management. We are still in early days, but we are unaware of the serious restrictions which my hon. Friend mentions, although we are monitoring the position very carefully.

Coal Industry (Investment)

6. **Mr. Andy Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much investment there has been in the coal industry since 1979; and how this compares with the investment in the period 1974 to 1979?

Mr. David Hunt: Since 1979 more than £5 billion has been invested in the coal industry. In real terms, the rate of investment has been more than 35 per cent. per year higher than under the previous Labour Administration.

Mr. Stewart: I thank my hon. Friend for that excellent reply. Does it not show that record investment has made the coal industry competitive, and does it not refute the allegation that all that the Government have done is to close collieries? Was it not the previous Labour Government who starved the coal industry of its investment funds?

Mr. Hunt: Exactly. My hon. Friend is correct. If one excludes the year of the miners' strike, in which, thanks to that tragic and unnecessary dispute, nearly £500 million worth of potential investment was lost, investment under this Administration has been almost 50 per cent. higher per year in real terms than under Labour. We have seen, especially in my hon. Friend's constituency, a massive increase in productivity, which bodes very well for the future of the coal industry.

Mr. Ron Davies: Does the Minister acknowledge that if he wishes to make full use of the investment which has been put into the coal industry he must ensure that British miners have access to the best and most up-to-date mining equipment? If he accepts that, will he give an assurance that he will pay special attention to developments at the NCB subsiduary at Tredomen engineering works? Will he

give a further assurance that he will take all steps possible to ensure that any orders for mining equipment go to that subsidiary company?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman knows that decisions on investment at individual pits must be a matter for British Coal management. I assure him, as I think he suggested, that British technology, especially in deep-mining equipment, is the best in the world. In the mines that I have been privileged to visit during the past 18 months I have seen some of the finest equipment in the world and some of the finest miners in the world, which together have produced those tremendous results.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister accept that investment in the coal industry during the past decade stems from the "Plan for Coal" for which the Labour Government were responsible and which the present Administration have continued? If the logic of that plan is to be maintained, will the Minister ensure further effort to secure greater markets for British coal in Europe, to enable the home base for that superb technology to be maintained?

Will the Minister take steps to ensure that South African coal ceases to enter Britain as it does today?

Mr. Hunt: I had thought that the hon. Gentleman needed no lessons from me as to the real position in the coal industry today. I am surprised that he should mention the discredited "Plan for Coal". Under this Government, investment has been far higher in real terms than was ever envisaged under "Plan for Coal". That envisaged a 4 per cent. increase in productivity every year. Under the last Labour Administration productivity fell overall by 2 per cent. Under this Government it has increased by 30 per cent. The hon. Gentleman should get his facts right.

Mr. Eadie: Will the Minister confirm that the figures that he has just given took into consideration the two changes in accounting practice by the National Coal Board? I refer, first, to deferred interest counting as capital expenditure and, secondly, to lease assets being included for the first time in 1985-86.

Will the Minister confirm, especially for the edification of the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), who posed the question, that in 1979 total investment in north and south Nottinghamshire was £149 million? I discovered from figures obtained from the Library that, taking that at 1985-86 prices, the investment projected for those two areas totals £97 million.

Mr. Hunt: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has some crucial points wrong. He has failed to appreciate that the total investment under the Labour Administration was less than that envisaged in "Plan for Coal", and considerably less in real terms than that provided under this Administration. We have seen record investment, which the Government believe is fully justified, but which evidently the Labour Government did not.

Sizewell B (Report)

7. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to publish the Sizewell B inspector's report.

10. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he plans to publish the findings of the public inquiry into the proposed PWR nuclear reactor station at Sizewell B, in Suffolk.

Mr. Peter Walker: The inspector now intends to deliver his report to me at the end of this month or in early December. I shall decide on the publication date when I have seen and considered it.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I thank my right hon. Friend for that encouraging reply. Will he initiate an urgent debate on this subject in order to end the highly unsatisfactory situation whereby Britain's entire energy policy has been held up by a local planning inquiry for more than four years?

Mr. Walker: Yes. I think that the four-year delay in making any decisions has been a sad feature of holding such a full inquiry. We must carefully consider the results of that inquiry, but then, as my hon. Friend said, we must reach decisions as quickly as possible.

Mr. Simon Hughes: As the Government are so keen to privatise the energy supply industry, what does the right hon. Gentleman believe to be the view of the private sector and the City towards privatising the pressurised water reactor at Sizewell, or reactors anywhere else? Is not the reality that if the Government offered that PWR to the private sector without any public money there would be no economic case, and such privatisation would be seen to be a bad part of the Government's economic and energy strategy?

Mr. Walker: I had not considered offering a PWR to the City, but I shall carefully consider the hon. Gentleman's views and see whether that is a possibility.

Mr. Speller: May I thank my right hon. Friend for his answer? Does he agree that the British public are probably split about 50-50 on the desirability of continuing with the nuclear industry? Will he undertake to arrange for a debate to be held in the House before an answer is reached?

Mr. Walker: As I have said, I wish to consider the report before making up my mind on these matters.

Mr. Conlan: Does the Secretary of State realise that the long delay in publishing the report has created havoc in the industry? Is it not now imperative that he makes an early decision? Until that decision is made, the industry's major procurement decisions will be delayed. Many firms are finding it extremely difficult to cater for that.

Mr. Walker: I well recognise that several industries, particularly in the north of England, are concerned about the delays. However, it was right that the inspector should take such care to prepare the report, and there was obviously no way in which I could hasten it. All the services that he required were offered and provided. It has been a matter of regret to me that we have had to wait so long before making any decisions. I also agree that once the report is received decisions will have to be made quickly.

Mr. Beith: Does the Secretary of State intend to deprive residents of areas where other PWRs are planned, such as Druridge Bay, of their full rights of objection if the CEGB proceeds with other PWR proposals?

Mr. Walker: That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Chapman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those concerned about the safety of a nuclear reactor at Sizewell B should be more concerned about the safety

standards of the 140 foreign civil nuclear power reactors that are within 500 miles of Britain? If those reactors were up to the standards of the British civil nuclear power organisation the country might then be reassured, but that patently was not the case at Chernobyl.

Mr. Walker: The initiatives taken by Britain and western Europe in general to ensure that better safety standards prevail in eastern Europe are of considerable importance. In comparison with all the various forms of energy industry, none has had a better safety record in the European Community for the past 25 years than the nuclear power industry.

Mr. Orme: Will the Secretary of State explain more fully how he will deal with the report? Will he publish it as soon as he receives it, so that the House and the country can see it? As he knows, its publication has been delayed and delayed. He promised the report in September and now, in November, he is talking about December. The country urgently needs to see that report, and we should have a debate before the Government take any decision.

Mr. Walker: I wish to see the report before I decide on these matters.

Coal Industry (Output)

8. **Mr. Harvey** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current level of output in the mining industry; and what was the comparable figure in 1985.

Mr. David Hunt: Current output in the coal industry has been maintained at broadly the same level as in 1985, with output per man shift reaching a new record level of 3·55 tons in the week ending 1 November 1986, compared with 2·87 tons in the same week last year.

Mr. Harvey: Does my hon. Friend agree that those figures represent a staggering increase in productivity? Will he convey our congratulations to both management and work force? Do not those figures represent a ringing vindication of the rationalisation policy carried out in the teeth of a politically motivated strike?

Mr. Hunt: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. That encouraging and rapid growth in productivity since the end of that tragic and unnecessary strike demonstrates the determination of all concerned in the coal industry to succeed and to meet the competitive challenge in the energy markets. Since 1979 productivity has risen by more than 50 per cent., and productivity records have been broken in six out of the past seven weeks.

Mrs. Clwyd: Is the Minister aware that there have been four deaths in south Wales pits during this financial year? Is he also aware that there is an upward trend in reportable accidents? Does he think that increases in productivity are being achieved by pushing unacceptable levels of safety, to the danger of the men who work in the industry?

Mr. Hunt: I believe that to be one of the most disgraceful accusations that I have heard in the Chamber. That is an insult to all who work in the industry because, for them, safety is always paramount.

Power Station Construction

9. **Sir Trevor Skeet** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he proposes to authorise the construction of further power stations.

Mr. Goodlad: The only application to construct a power station currently before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy is for Sizewell B, and he intends to make a decision on that as soon as possible after he receives the inspector's report.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Is my hon. Friend aware that by the year 2000 AD there will be a shortage of generating capacity in the United Kingdom unless stations are authorised in the 1980s? Will he persuade my right hon. Friend to get ahead and order both nuclear power stations and several coal-fired power stations?

Mr. Goodlad: As my right hon. Friend has said, he intends to lose no time in reaching a decision on Sizewell. The Central Electricity Generating Board is considering the possibility of building new coal-fired stations. My right hon. Friend has received no applications to construct new power stations apart from Sizewell. The CEGB has identified a number of possible sites for future coal-fired stations but has made no firm decisions as to where they will be sited.

Mr. Lofthouse: Before the Secretary of State commissions any more nuclear power stations, will he first examine the cost of de-commissioning such power stations? Before there are any more commissions, will he ensure that the true cost of generating electricity by nuclear-powered stations includes their de-commissioning? When the true cost is revealed, we may find that using fossil fuel is the cheaper way of generating electricity.

Mr. Goodlad: The cost of de-commissioning power stations is provided for in the CEGB's accounts.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the usage of nuclear power in the European Community is 35 per cent. and rising, and that any decision to curtail this programme would lead to critical pressure on resources and serious implications for the Community?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct.

Mr. Orme: On the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Mr. Conlan), is the Minister aware that there is an urgent need for the immediate ordering of two coal-fired power stations? The demand is there, so why wait for Sizewell? Why not get ahead with two coal-fired stations now?

Mr. Goodlad: The Government fully appreciate the importance of maintaining the capability of the industry during a period of a lack of home orders, and they have provided considerable aid and support for the industry to win overseas contracts to help maintain its capability. However, ordering is essentially a matter for the CEGB.

Renewable Energy Resources

12. **Mr. Wood** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much his Department has spent on research, development and demonstration of renewable energy sources since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

21. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much his Department has spent on renewable energy sources since 1979; and what was the comparable figure in the period 1974 to 1979.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): Expenditure by my Department on research, development and demonstration into the renewable sources of energy in the financial year 1979-80 to 1985-86 amounted to £91·3 million. That compares with £7·6 million in the years 1975-76 to 1978-79.

Mr. Wood: I thank my right hon. Friend for that most helpful reply. Is the Department also looking into and monitoring the work carried out in Denmark and the Scandinavian countries into renewable resource activities, because it appears that good work is being carried out there as well as in this country?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Yes, we keep in touch with all the developments in Common Market countries. The question of useful alternatives and research is discussed from time to time in the Council of Energy Ministers. I note my hon. Friends remarks.

Mr. Watts: Has my right hon. Friend had time to read a recent report to his Department about the hot dry rock technology developed by KE International in my constituency, which is producing electricity at a lower cost than fossil fuel? In view of the export potential of this new British technology, will he favourably consider funding a demonstration plant in Cornwall to act as an export shop window and ensure that this British technology is exploited in Britain and does not need to go abroad?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My hon. Friend is right to emphasise the importance and economic relevance of this area of alternative energy. I hope that a decision will be taken on this matter next year. Of course, my hon. Friend is already aware that, so far, we have spent about £20 million on geothermal hot dry rocks. That demonstrates the importance that we attach to it.

Mr. Bruce: Does the Minister not think it unfortunate that some hon. Members have been invited to Norway in the next couple of weeks to see the installation of its prototype wave power generators, when British wave power research has been cancelled? Does he not acknowledge that, although we successfully pioneered wind power generation in Scotland, Denmark and the United States are way ahead of us in its application? Can we not take action to speed up the application of technology rather than just deal with research and development?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The hon. Gentleman ought to examine the facts before he makes statements like that. So far, we have spent about £17 million on wave power. It has been studied very carefully. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should study what happens in this country before he tries to sing the praises of other countries.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the way in which he has encouraged the development of renewable energy resources from day one. After all, it is something for nothing. Does he agree that more emphasis given to combined heat and power will reduce the cost of energy throughout the country and will ensure that all commercial undertakings and, indeed, private individuals, will benefit from a resource that has so far been untapped and unexpended?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am very much aware — of course, I am sure that I am not as aware as is my hon. Friend — of the good work being done in Leicester. I hope that he will convey to his friends in Leicester the fact that we await the report with considerable interest and expectation. I have no doubt that as this involves Leicester my hon. Friend will give it his wholehearted support.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has the Minister examined the work done by the Severn barrage consortium on its Severn estuary project? Does he accept the figures that the consortium produced on the cost per unit of producing electricity?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: As the hon. Gentleman knows, further work is going on. The Government are helping in the funding of that work. One of the purposes is to try to clarify precisely the issue that he mentioned.

British Coal Enterprise Ltd.

17. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has about the aggregate investment generated so far by British Coal Enterprise Ltd.

Mr. Peter Walker: British Coal Enterprise Ltd. has itself committed £18·8 million in support of some 800 individual projects. Over £100 million has been generated for these projects from other sources, such as banks, local authorities, Government grants and other enterprise agencies.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's answer. I welcome the high percentage of other resources to add to those of British Coal Enterprise Ltd. I ask my right hon. Friend to consider another aspect. During that terrible strike, and since, the miners in the so-called good areas of long life were accused of an "I'm all right, Jack" attitude. Therefore, will he assure the House that British Coal Enterprise Ltd. will always have sufficient funds so that that charge is never allowed to stick?

Mr. Walker: I mentioned that £18·8 million has already been provided. I have already allocated up to £40 million to the enterprise company. I have made it clear that, in my judgment, it is not a financial limitation but a matter of finding job opportunities. I am delighted to say that so far nearly 12,000 new job opportunities have been created in coalmining communities. Therefore, if one examines the amount of money expended so far, one will see that it is likely that around 25,000 new jobs will be provided under the new programme. The mining community will consider that programme an exciting one.

Mr. Rowlands: Is the Minister aware that British Coal Enterprise is refusing to give any information or detail about where these jobs are, what types of jobs they are and what companies are being supported? Therefore, it has been impossible to evaluate what the impact in our communities of British Coal Enterprise will be. Many of us still do not see much evidence of its working.

Mr. Walker: I am saddened at the constant way in which the Labour party has bickered about British Coal Enterprise. In view of the tens of thousands of mining jobs lost during the Labour Government, it is a pity that there was not an enterprise company then.

Coal Conversion Schemes

18. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what progress is being made with coal conversion schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Department of Energy has offered grant-aid under the coal firing scheme of £48 million towards the cost of 420 projects with annual coal burn of 2·7 million tonnes. The scheme will close to new applications made after 30 June 1987.

Mr. Carlisle: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Will he extend the scheme in view of the fact that the price of oil is always likely to fluctuate and that we do not have control over it, yet have adequate coal supplies? If we encourage people to use that coal, there will not only be a market for our coal but a very good market for the manufacturing products of engineering enterprises that go in for the coal conversion schemes.

Mr. Hunt: The scheme has achieved the objectives for which it was set up—to help the coal industry become competitive, to reduce industrial energy costs and to reduce our long-term dependence on oil and gas. I recognise that it is a significant scheme. I am happy to announce that there is still a useful and substantial amount of money available for coal conversions and a useful amount of time left in which to make those applications.

THE ARTS

Public Libraries and Museums Act

57. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Minister for the Arts what action he proposes to take in exercise of his powers under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 in the light of the High Court judgment on the matter of the banning of News International publications in some public libraries.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): Following its successful High Court action against three London boroughs, News International has indicated that it may institute proceedings against the other English and Welsh authorities operating similar bans if these are not lifted quickly. I am watching the situation closely. Meanwhile, I note the news that 14 authorities have lifted the ban as a result of the High Court judgment.

I have written to the chairman of the Audit Commission drawing attention to the fact that the councillors of Camden, Ealing and Hammersmith and Fulham maintained their ban in defiance of what Lord Justice Watkins described as "impeccably sound advice" that they were acting unlawfully.

Mr. Cartwright: Does not the High Court judgment make it absolutely clear that all the authorities that have banned News International publications have acted illegally? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that he has the statutory powers to uphold the law in these matters? Why has he not followed the advice of the Library Association, given as long ago as March this year, and used his powers to require those authorities to drop the ban forthwith?

Mr. Luce: The position is absolutely clear, and as I have described it. News International took legal action. It is interesting to note that Lord Justice Watkins, in referring to the Act under which I am empowered to institute proceedings, said:

> "The statutory remedy involves a cumbersome procedure which is wholly unsuited to meet the requirements of a necessarily swift resolution of the issue arising out of the ban."

I started to institute proceedings under the Act and wrote to all authorities concerned, but in July News International decided to institute court proceedings. We now know the outcome.

Mr. Greenway: Would it not be outrageous and unacceptable if the ratepayers of Ealing and of the other councils involved in instituting the illegal ban on *The Times* and other News International newspapers in libraries were required to pay the heavy legal costs of the Labour councillors who involved the councils in that action? Should not those expenses be met by those councillors from party funds or in some other way, not by the ratepayers and taxpayers?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend has been right to take a close interest in this problem. For the reasons I have just mentioned, I have now written to the chairman of the Audit Commission about these matters. It is open to any elector in a borough which is maintaining or has maintained such a ban to make a formal objection to the district auditor about the conduct of the councillors involved.

Mr. Heffer: Whether it is legal or illegal, is it not clear that many councillors feel very upset at the fact that Murdoch could sack 6,000 workers without giving a damn about what happened to them? Is it not also clear that Conservative Members are actually hiding behind the law in order to carry out policies contrary to the interests of working people?

Mr. Luce: The important thing that the hon. Gentleman seems to ignore is that those authorities have been found to have contravened the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and to have withdrawn newspapers in order to make a political or industrial point. That contravenes the Act, and if the hon. Gentleman believes in following the law he should support the decision that has been taken.

Sir Anthony Grant: As the Act seems to be a somewhat cumbersome way of dealing with this censorship problem, would not a simpler solution be for the Leader of the Opposition, in view of his desire to improve the image of his party, to write to those loony councils and tell them to behave themselves?

Mr. Luce: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. It is very noticeable that we have not yet had an Opposition Member who has welcomed the decision of the judge.

Mr. Buchan: In his new-found zest for a lack of censorship, may I ask the Minister to tell us how frequently he has intervened over some of the Tory councils, especially county councils, which have refused to carry out their full statutory duties in the way of provision of books in libraries? Could he also tell us how many libraries in the home counties which stock *The Sun* also stock, for example, *Tribune* or *Labour Weekly*, and if they do not, has he tried to ensure that they do that? Just out of interest, would he tell us, as the Minister responsible for the arts and culture in this country, what *The Sun* has contributed to human civilisation?

Mr. Luce: I find it astonishing that the hon. Gentleman should indulge in such a long intervention and not once say that the action by those authorities was unacceptable. Not once has he condemned the court action. That is what the House and the country will note.

Arts Council Funding (Eastern Area)

58. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received concerning Arts Council funding in the eastern area.

Mr. Luce: Several organisations and individuals have written to me.

Mr. Thompson: I welcome the 19·5 per cent. funding this year. Can my right hon. Friend tell me what the increase has been in real terms between the current year and 1978-79? Is he aware of growing concern about the diversion of funds from traditional areas such as orchestras, theatres and touring companies, for example, the Theatre Royal in Norwich, towards community arts? Does he share my concern at that diversion of funds?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I know of his interest in and support for the arts in the eastern area. Financial support for the arts in the eastern area has gone up in real terms by 132 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1986-87. The cash sums for the next year are not as yet allocated. I think my hon. Friend will agree that those figures are a real indication of the support that the Arts Council is giving through the regional arts association to the arts in his area. I am sure that my hon. Friend will ensure that is own views are known to the regional arts association. In the meantime, I am taking a close interest in the area and will make another visit there next week.

Arts (East Midlands)

59. **Mr. Ottaway** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on Government support for the arts in the east midlands.

Mr. Luce: It is for the Arts Council to determine its allocation of funds to regional arts associations. So far this year East Midlands Arts has received £1·793 million. An announcement of 1987-88 funds will be made by the council in due course.

Mr. Ottaway: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware of the growing cash crisis in East Midlands Arts, which is a development agency having difficulty sustaining its present level of support for the arts in Nottingham? Is he aware of the closure of the midlands group arts centre, which is funded by that agency? Can he offer any hope for agencies such as that in Nottingham?

Mr. Luce: I was glad to be able to visit Nottingham not too long ago. I am much impressed by the range of arts and museum facilities there. Since 1979-80 and until this financial year the amount of resources allocated to East Midlands Arts has gone up by 150 per cent. in real terms. That is a substantial increase and devolution of powers from the Arts Council. On the matter of the midlands group arts centre, I understand that the various recommendations of the working party are being examined and it should take about nine months for the centre to implement those recommendations. That seems to be the current position.

Mr. Yeo: I welcome the increases in funding both for the east midlands and for East Anglia. Does my hon. Friend agree that the use of public funds to support arts projects in the regions is preferable to supporting high prestige projects in central London, to which only a very small proportion of the total population have access?

Mr. Luce: The figures that I have given are a clear indication that, broadly speaking, the Arts Council is pursuing a policy of allocating more funds to support the arts in all parts of the country.

CIVIL SERVICE

Rayner Scrutinies

68. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on the latest progress of the Rayner scrutinies.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): Savings already made as a result of efficiency scrutinies are now running at £300 million per year and further annual savings of £100 million are expected to be made. The scrutinies have also led directly to improvements in service to the public.

The scrutiny process, begun by Lord Rayner and continued under the supervision of Sir Robin Ibbs, continues to prove its worth. Details of the 1986-87 scrutiny programme will be announced shortly.

Mr. Bowden: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Could the Rayner scrutiny process be extended to other aspects of the public service?

Mr. Luce: The task of efficiency scrutinies does not suddenly stop now. There will continue to be a relentless drive to ensure that the taxpayer and the public receive the best value for money and that our Civil Service is as professional as possible. The number of scrutinies will continue to be roughly 30 per annum.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Rayner scrutiny process extend to considering whether sending the head of the Civil Service to take part in court proceedings in Australia represents value for money?

Mr. Luce: I do not think that there is anything useful that I can add.

Mr. Key: Will my hon. Friend consider carefully a no doubt unintentional side effect of the Rayner scrutinies? A number of organisations in my constituency are aware of the shortage of apprenticeships, especially engineering apprenticeships, and of training capacity. Is my hon. Friend aware that the scrutiny arrangements sometimes mean that directors have to choose between a PhD and an apprentice because of the manpower targets? Does he agree that that cannot be sensible?

Mr. Luce: That question goes a little wider than policy on scrutinies. As my hon. Friend knows, important training schemes are run both by central Government and by individual Departments to cope with the problems to which he has drawn attention.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Will the scrutinies extend to consideration of service to the public? Will my right hon. Friend examine waiting times at DHSS offices, for instance, which sometimes seem unreasonable, especially for those who have lost their jobs or face financial hardship?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend raises an important point. The purpose of the scrutinies is not just to obtain better value for money, but also to ensure a better service to the public, and some services have been improved as a result of the scrutinies. For instance, recommendations to reduce the time taken to settle planning appeals from 21 to 11 weeks are being implemented as a result of the scrutiny carried out in that area.

Dr. McDonald: The Opposition agree with the Rayner objectives of efficiency and wellbeing for the Civil Service, but is the Minister aware that those objectives cannot be achieved if the Government misuse a senior civil servant such as Sir Robert Armstrong by placing him in an invidious position in the Australian courts and requiring him to be economical with the truth when such matters are the responsibility of Ministers? As Minister responsible for the Civil Service, what is the hon. Gentleman's opinion of that?

Mr. Luce: I welcome very much the support that the hon. Lady gives on behalf of Her Majesty's Opposition to the policy on scrutinies. With regard to our civil servants, I reiterate what I said to the House at the end of July this year—that in Sir Robert Armstrong, as both Secretary of the Cabinet and head of the Home Civil Service, we have one of the most outstanding post-war civil servants.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Does my right hon. Friend accept that many people feel that there are now too many civil servants in situ? Does he agree that what we need is a loyal and obedient Civil Service, not some of the Militant Tendency civil servants, who are deliberately undermining the powers and wishes of the Government and the local departments? Can we encourage civil servants to be loyal to the Crown again?

Mr. Luce: I must say to my hon. Friend that the size of the Civil Service has reduced by no less than 20 per cent. in the past seven years, so it is at the lowest level that it has ever been since the second world war. To suggest that the service is full of people who are disloyal is a wrong impression to give. We have a service that is impartial, dedicated and professional. The country should note that and admire it.

THE ARTS

Arts Council Grants

60. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Minister for the Arts what is the current annual total contribution of grants by the Arts Council; and what is his estimate of this as a proportion of total expenditure on the arts.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): The Arts Council's grant for 1986-87 is £135·6 million, of which £6 million is attributable to operating costs, and £129½ million to grants. Those grants amount to some 40 per cent. of central Government expenditure on the arts.

Mr. Chapman: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that that means that under this Government there has been a significant increase in real terms in Arts Council funding, but that, as always, that is only a minority of the total funding for the arts in the country? Does he agree that it is the responsibility of the Government to set a tax regime and economic climate that are conducive to encouraging maximum funding from local authorities, businesses and individuals?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. On his latter point, I confirm that our broad strategy is to do everything possible to encourage a successful partnership between the public sector and the private sector. That is one of the reasons why, in the Budget, two tax changes were introduced giving tax relief both for corporations and, from April next year, for individuals, to encourage them to give to charitable bodies, including the arts world. We have seen a real increase in resources for the Arts Council, in the past seven years, of no less than 8 per cent. and, if one includes abolition money, of no less than 30 per cent. That is a sign of our confidence in the Arts Council.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Is the Minister aware that in his answer to his hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) on Friday, he said that expenditure on the arts from 1979-80 to 1987-88 had gone up by 13 per cent., while the autumn statement shows that Government expenditure generally has gone up by 14½ per cent.? What is happening is that less money is being spent in real terms on the arts than on other areas of public expenditure. What does the Minister say about that?

Mr. Luce: The picture is absolutely plain. There is a real increase in support for the arts—and there has been over the past seven years—amounting to 13 per cent. I am leaving out abolition money. If I include abolition money, which I should, support has gone up in real terms by 28 per cent. If that is not support for the arts, I must ask what is.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend agree that he gets exceptional value for money in the expenditure that he properly makes, which we welcome? Does he further agree that it generates more money from tourism than the budgets of many of his colleagues? Does he agree that a little bit goes a long way in that area, and will he bear in mind that there could be a need for a little more soon?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The evidence all round the country—I travel round various parts every week—is that the arts are expanding in almost every area. That is thanks to the partnership among the Government, the local authorities, which are doing more and more, and the private sector, to which we look to help to fuel the expansion still further.

Mr. Beith: Is the Minister aware of the dismay in the arts world that the small 5·5 per cent. increase that he announced is more than half taken up by the British Library building programme? Does he believe that projects such as regional theatres will be able to get adequate support from the Arts Council under such conditions?

Mr. Luce: As the hon. Gentleman has said, the arts budget on this for next year will go up by 5½ per cent. That is broadly in line with the increase in overall public expenditure next year on the arts. The hon. Gentleman is right when he says that a considerable proportion of that increase will be taken up by the new library at St. Pancras. That is an important national facility which will serve the nation well to the turn of the century and beyond.

Mr. Lord: Can my right hon. Friend reassure my central Suffolk constituents who live in the more remote areas of East Anglia, and a long way from places such as Ipswich and Norwich, that he is aware of their problems about access to the arts, and that he will do all he can to see that they get a fair deal?

Mr. Luce: I will indeed, and I look forward to the chance of coming to my hon. Friend's constituency next week, when I shall be able to say that again.

Mr. Buchan: Is it not the case that almost every independent analysis disproves the Minister's figures about the increase since 1979? For example, the National Campaign for the Arts says that there has been a collapse of between 3 and 4 per cent. The Minister has forgotten every single historical incident since 1979, including the shift forward because of the computer strike in that year. Secondly, does he agree that the increase to the arts is below the rate of inflation because the figure that he is talking about of 5·5 per cent. includes two major items, the increase for the British Library and the abolition of the GLC and the mets, which put another £24 million into the kitty. Arts expenditure is increasing by about 2·5 per cent. and that is a dramatic fall from the amount required to keep up with inflation.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman can try as hard as he likes, but I notice that on 14 November last year he said:

"Many companies will die as a result of the amount announced today."—[*Official Report*, 14 November 1985; Vol. 86, c.700.]

That was a year ago, but not a single company has died. Indeed, we have seen the arts go from strength to strength, and I do not see why I should pay much attention to what the hon. Gentleman says. The Arts Council will get an increase of 3·5 per cent. in its basic provision. That is broadly in line with inflation, and on top of that I have helped with the abolition problem by allocating a further £3 million. That should be a help and the hon. Gentleman ought to go round the country encouraging local authorities to play their part.

Quotations (Question Time)

3.32 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday when putting a question to the Prime Minister, for greater accuracy I quoted from the evidence given by Sir Robert Armstrong in the course of the current court case in Australia. I subsequently realised, of course, that quotations by hon. Members are not in order at Question Time, and I express my regret for what occurred.

Mr. Speaker: I am obliged to the right hon. Gentleman. *[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Gentleman's quotations were short, which is doubtless why I did not recognise them as quotations, but he has stated the rule correctly and the House has been usefully reminded of its terms.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think anything further can arise on that.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): May I seek your clarification on one point, Mr. Speaker? You said in answer to the Leader of the Opposition that quotations at Question Time were not in order. Will you confirm that that ruling applies only to those who ask questions and does not apply to those who reply to questions?

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether I have got the hon. Gentleman's drift. If he is saying that Ministers may quote, that is correct. It has always been the case that Ministers may quote in the interests of greater accuracy.

Ministerial Statements

3.33 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will remember that last Monday the Secretary of State for Education and Science made only the shortest of statements to the House on teachers' pay on the ground that the agreement between the employers and teachers was not complete. On Friday, despite attempts by the Secretary of State to undermine the deal, the employers and four out of six unions formally signed the agreement. Why does the Secretary of State still remain silent? Will you convey to the Leader of the House or to the Secretary of State for Education and Science——

Hon. Members: Abuse.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Points of order must be addressed to me. I have had no request for a statement about this. The hon. Gentleman has made his point.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that it helps.

Mr. Greenway: I was here last Monday as well and the Secretary of State made it clear——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know. I was here too.

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to seek your advice. Last week, a ship called the Kowloon Bridge, which was loaded with iron ore from Canada, put into Bantry bay in Ireland. It is the sister ship of the merchant vessel Derbyshire, which went down in the South China sea in 1980, and all 44 people on board lost their lives. As the Department of Transport sent out a senior surveyor to Ireland last week when it became aware that the ship had incurred serious structural damage, could I, through you, Mr. Speaker, ask the Leader of the House whether he will persuade the Secretary of State for Transport to make a statement?

Mr. Speaker: Order, I have said that I have no responsibility for ships that are registered in Hong Kong. I call the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) to make his application under Standing Order No. 20.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have no responsibility at all in this.

Mr. Heffer: I know, but constituents of mine died in the Derbyshire and it seems to me that the Secretary of State has a responsibility. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) that the Secretary of State should be asked to make a statement to the House on this very important——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There are other ways in which to do that—and not through the Chair.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take the hon. Member's point of order, but I cannot see that I have any responsibility in this.

Sir David Price: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Like the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) I had a constituent who died on the Derbyshire. I have already tabled a question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport which is to be answered on Monday. That seems to me to be the proper way in which to proceed.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) was seeking your advice about how to pursue the matter, bearing in mind the fact that the parent legislation allows the Secretary of State to hold a public inquiry into any sinking of any vessel which involves any British seaman in any part of the world. That is why my hon. Friend was asking how he might pursue the matter further.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that it is not the role of the Chair to offer advice on parliamentary tactics.

Standing Order No. 20

3.36 pm

Mr. Speaker: I wish to make a short statement about applications under Standing Order No. 20.

On 27 February last, the Standing Order was amended to provide that a Member should make his submission to me

"In an application lasting not more than three minutes".

Many Members, I am glad to say, complete their applications in less than this time. In fairness to all, I intend to enforce the limit strictly in future, now that the House has had time to become accustomed to it. Members will be required to resume their seat, even if their application is not complete. The full three minutes available to Members will be recorded on the clock at the Table, but Members will be able to gain a good idea of how much time they have left by keeping an eye on the digital clocks on either side of the Chamber.

Civil Servant (Briefing)

3.37 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 to discuss a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the Government's decision to require a named civil servant to make statements on behalf of the Government, to issue attacks on Members of the House of Commons in the knowledge that the civil servant was to be named in *The Independent* newspaper and referred to in *The Guardian*, while refusing to make similar statements in answer to written questions tabled by me."

The matter is urgent because the Government have now deployed a procedural device to gag Members of Parliament. The whole world's press is perplexed, aghast and at a loss to understand why the British Parliament cannot debate these matters.

The British Government are making an ass of themselves in the Australian court and using civil servants to make statements to which the Prime Minister says it would be inappropriate to make in reply to Members. It is being said that whereas, in medieval times, kings debased the coinage, the Government are today undermining the flag.

The British people object. We have no opportunity for oral parliamentary questions, no Adjournment debates are available and private notice questions are at your discretion, Mr. Speaker. You must inevitably find yourself in difficulty with private notice question applications, and meanwhile Whitehall leaks.

The matter is important because the Government have put up a Downing street junior, a civil servant, to make political attacks on individual Members of Parliament. The Government are abusing the Civil Service, and Mr. Jim Coe and Mr. Bernard Ingham would do well to consider their position. To say that this is being done to influence opinion without the Government accepting responsibility is not good enough and is a fraud. A naked civil servant is being used not only to attack hon. Members but to scatter the seeds of division between the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General.

In a shabby betrayal of a Cabinet colleague, the Prime Minister is inducing civil servants to attack the Attorney-General. The House must recognise that the Attorney-General took his instructions from, and was guided by, the British Prime Minister in all his actions. She is at the head of Britain's security services. These decisions were her decisions and she cannot deny her responsibility. The trade of a Prime Minister who lacks the courage to admit failure and who then uses the scalpel remorselessly to incise the reputation of a parliamentary friend and colleague of 25 years, is one of treachery. We need a courageous decision from you, Mr. Speaker, to exert the authority of Parliament and to give us time for a debate.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the Government's decision to permit a named civil servant to make statements on behalf of the Government."

As the hon. Gentleman knows, my sole decision in these matters is whether the matter should take precedence over the orders set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I do not consider that the matter that has been raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This concerns the use of a room within this building. I have been making some inquiries and I find that there is a room in the Turret which does not exist, in which are held meetings that do not take place. Speaking about the activities that go on in that room, Sir Robert Armstrong said in the Australian court today:

"The people who are there seek to influence opinion without accepting responsibility and seek to place in the public domain ideas which Government wish not to be seen to be putting there."

My point of order is this. Bearing in mind that the Prime Minister said, on Thursday that it would be inappropriate to discuss certain matters here, but then instructed a civil servant to discuss those matters in the room upstairs, at the meeting that did not take place, is it not time that you, Mr. Speaker, ruled the lobby out of order?

Mr. Speaker: It is a long-established practice, as I understand it.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If Mr. Jim Coe has been attacking an hon. Member, could you guide me and tell me who is the Minister to whom we should direct inquiries? Is it the Prime Minister, as head of the Civil Service?

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for Mr. Coe.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the two motions on Statutory Instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Recreation and Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Enterprise Ulster (Continuation of Functions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Orders of the Day

Petroleum Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.43 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second Time.

We debate this Bill against a background of low oil prices and at a time when the industry is going through one of its most difficult periods since we were first fortunate enough to discover oil and gas off our coast. To that extent, many of us in the House — particularly those who, like myself, represent constitituencies in the areas where the activities are based—are very sensitive about the particular problems that the industry faces.

We have particular sympathy and understanding for those individuals who face difficulties, many of whom, because of the downturn in the price of oil, have lost their jobs. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, it is important that we should not become too obsessed with the immediate problems, important though they are, but that we should look ahead to the future of this industry and to the other challenges and problems that it will have to face in the years ahead.

Despite the immediate difficulties that are faced by the industry, it is still very much in business. Production continues and there have been new developments, especially those relating to gas. I have considerable confidence in the continuing activity of this industry for many years to come.

Against that background, it is important to plan at this stage not only for the continuing development activities of the industry but also for the other challenges that the industry will have to face. When no more oil or gas is economically recoverable from a field and the life of that field comes to an end, one of the challenges will be that the structure and other installations that have been used to recover the oil and gas will still be in situ. Therefore, we have to provide for what happens to those structures and installations when the life of a field comes to an end. That is the main matter that the Bill tackles. As I said earlier, it is a challenge for the future; it is not of immediate importance to the industry. None the less, I am glad that the Bill is being introduced at this stage, because it will provide us with a better opportunity to plan and to prepare for this challenge.

The Government have taken the opportunity to deal with a number of other important issues in the Bill. They are less striking than the abandonment of installations and structures, but they will also have to be dealt with.

The abandonment of structures and installations is not, as I have already emphasised, an immediate problem for the industry. The first fields are not expected to come to the end of their lives before the early 1990s, when steps will have to be taken to remove the installations and structures associated with them. There are now 150 oil and gas installations on the United Kingdom continental shelf. As the industry will continue to develop for many decades to come, the number of installations is expected to increase in the coming years, which will pose a substantial challenge.

Furthermore, the wide variety of gas and oil fields and the different types of structures and methods used to extract the oil and gas means that their abandonment will pose a variety of problems. There are a number of fairly small, lighweight installations in a number of fields. There are also a number of giant installations. I am thinking in particular of the huge concrete and steel jackets that are placed in water depths of up to 185 m. These very heavy structures are found mainly in the northern part of the North sea. By contrast, in the southern basin there are smaller structures that weigh as little as 300 tonnes. In the deeper waters the steel structures can weigh up to 58,000 tonnes each, creating a considerable physical problem, and concrete structures, of which we have about ten in the North sea, can weigh up to 650,000 tonnes. This illustrates the scale of the problem and the challenge which the industry and the Government have to face, and which the Bill seeks to address.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Has any research been conducted into the possible utilisation of the lighter structures, based as some of them are in shallow water, for artificial reefs?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Yes, some research is under way on such structures and attention has been given to artificial reefs in the press and on radio and television. I believe that some oil companies may be inviting the fishing industry to consider the matter, but perhaps we may deal with that point later.

To remove structures of the size and scale that I have described would involve huge sums of money. With the co-operation of the oil industry in 1984, it was estimated that, at 1984 prices, to require the complete removal of the structures in place at the moment — not future developments — could cost about £6 billion. That is a very large sum of money indeed.

I emphasise that that figure is surrounded by considerable uncertainties. For example, as the hon. Gentleman has just said, there are many different structures in different areas — small structures in the southern basin and larger structures elsewhere. However, the real challenge lies in the deep waters which, although they contain only about one third of the total number of structures, might, it is estimated, involve more than three quarters of the total cost. It is that kind of uncertainty, given the scale of the problem, that makes it difficult to be specific about costs.

Existing legislation requires the removal of such structures, but in general terms to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State. Under present legislation, we lack any detailed framework to deal with the abandonment of platforms and other installations. We do not have the provisions to set the kind of standards that might be required to do that or deal with the submission and approval of removal plans and with important matters such as preventing default from any removal obligations. The Bill seeks to enable action in all those general areas.

A large number of interests are involved. On the one hand, there are the interests of the oil companies which installed the structures and platforms and other installations and which are now operating them and will be doing so for the rest of their productive life. On the other hand, in contrast, there are the interests of the taxpayer. At the end of the day, in the same way as development costs were allowable against tax, it has

always been understood that abandonment costs would equally be allowable against tax. Therefore, another major interest in any legislation must be that of the taxpayer and the country generally.

There are other interests which use the sea — for example, the shipping industry, navigators and, most important, fishermen who have traditionally used the sea and the waters around our coasts for longer than the oil industry. Because of that, for longer than a year, consultations have been undertaken, some of which I have conducted. We have consulted the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations from south of the border, a number of organisations representing the Scottish fishing industry, and the Sea Fish Industry Authority. On the industry side, we have consulted the Oil Industry International Exploration and Production Forum, the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association and Brindex, the organisation that represents the small British independent exploration companies.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): I do not wish to delay my right hon. Friend and I am aware of the consultations that he is having with the various fishing organisations, but can he assure me that, before or during Committee stage, he will have further negotiations with the fishing industry, especially the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, which has expressed serious reservations about clause 2(11)?

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): May I follow the intervention of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) and ask, while I have no objection to consultations with fishermen — they seem to be a good idea — whether the Minister recognises that, in a letter from the United Kingdom Offshore Operators' Association, we are told that it is disturbed by some proposals in the Bill and is at present discussing those concerns with the Department of Energy in the hope that they can be resolved by appropriate amendments to the Bill? Would it not have been better to have delayed the Bill a little longer so that consultations could have been carried out? Can we take it that the Minister will have consultations, even at the cost of delaying the Committee stage by a day or two?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I had hoped to get on with some of the detailed provisions, but I am happy to deal with these points, as they are about consultations. Consultations have been taking place now for nearly a year and in some cases for more than a year. All parties to the consultations have been aware of the problems under discussion. We have made clear what we believe needs to be done and the issues that need to be covered. If some matters are not dealt with to the satisfaction of those concerned, we shall consider them during the later stages of the Bill. Some consultations will certainly continue.

I do not agree with the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) about delaying the Bill. What he says would be a great reason for delaying all legislation. We have laid down provisions for some important issues. There may be better ways, but I shall approach the Committee stage in my usual constructive manner; I am sure that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), with whom I have worked in Committee, will do the same. If there are further representations and suggestions, I shall be happy to consider them during the later stages of the Bill. I am sure that we shall have a great deal of opportunity for debate during those stages.

Following those consultations, we have sought in the Bill properly to strike a balance between the different interests. There is a conflict of interest, as there is in any legislation. That is why the Government must reach a decision and make their proposals. We have sought, for example, both to ensure that we minimise the costs of abandonment which ultimately fall on taxpayers, thereby ensuring their interests, and at the same time to balance the interests of those who use and who will be using the sea in different ways for many generations to come. There is another important balance to strike, for we must ensure that the provisions that we introduce are consistent with our obligations under international law. That must have a bearing on what is ultimately decided.

That is the background to what we are seeking to do by means of the Bill.

Mr. Edward Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Am I to understand that that is all that the Minister intends to say about international obligations?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I should be happy to say a great deal more on that score, but, if I do so, I shall not be able to make progress with my speech, in what is a relatively short debate. I have been interrupted constantly so far.

I have mentioned in passing our international obligations; as the hon. Gentleman is aware, there are certain obligations under the Geneva convention of 1958, which were laid down at a time when the North sea had not been developed in the way that it is now and when international law was directed to smaller and lighter structures. The very large structures which now exist were not anticipated then.

As the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney knows, with his experience of dealing with international matters, international law evolves constantly, and the Geneva convention has been very much overtaken by the law of the sea conference of 1982. The hon. Gentleman may know that, following that conference, the International Maritime Organisation, which is one of the arms of the international organisation that deals with this matter, will be convening meetings that will start early next year to deal with these precise issues. International law will evolve as the Bill is considered, and will evolve even further after it is enacted. We have chosen a relatively flexible framework for the Bill, as that will enable us to respond to whatever may be decided internationally. In introducing the Bill and in planning for the 1990s, we are way ahead of any other country that faces these challenges. In introducing the Bill now, I hope that we are focussing the debate on the United Kingdom and more widely.

Mr. Rowlands: I am grateful for that elaboration. These are important matters and they will be of importance in the Committee. May I take it that the Government intend to submit proposals to the IMO at its meeting in January in giving a lead of the sort that the Minister has suggested?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Discussions are taking place on the precise form of the IMO meetings and they are still at an early stage. No decision has been taken on the exact case that we shall present. We want to know slightly more about the agenda that is to be discussed. The international debate through the international organisations will be a

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

reflection of what we are discussing domestically. I wish to emphasise that domestically we are ahead of what is taking place internationally.

The provisions of the Bill are addressed to providing a framework that will control the safe and orderly abandonment of installations. The Bill will not set standards in the abandonment provisions. It will enable the Secretary of State to set standards covering such important matters as safety of operation and the other important matters to which my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) referred, such as the extent of removal. My hon. Friend is probably aware that fishermen believe that international law requires complete removal, but that is not the Government's view. We believe that partial removal is possible under international law. We understand, however, the fisherman's reservations. I had discussions with fishermen's organisations as recently as the middle of last week, and we shall continue to discuss with them what we are doing.

Dr. Godman: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I think that I have given way enough already. I shall be replying on behalf of the Government and I shall answer all detailed questions at that stage. I am aware that many other right hon. and hon. Members want to contribute to the debate.

I was saying that the Bill does not set standards or norms for abandonment. These will follow in the regulations that the Bill, when enacted, will enable the Government to put before the House. The die is not being cast irrevocably or rigidly. We do not believe that that would be sensible. By asking the House to allow this proposed legislation to take its place on the statute book, we are enabling the oil companies especially to make sensible financial provision and clarifying what is likely to be expected of them.

By introducing regulations at a later stage rather than setting them out in primary legislation, we are making it much easier to vary what may be required in the light of experience and in response to changes in international law. That is the reason for our approach. The Bill makes it clear that ultimately responsibility will rest with the owners of installations for their final removal. Responsibility will rest with them whether removal is partial or complete.

The early clauses deal wholly with abandonment. Under clause 1, the Secretary of State will be able to require those responsible to draw up programmes for the removal of installations and to set out details of their programme. The Secretary of State is given power to draw up his own programme where the owner is unable or unwilling to frame his own, and will be able to recover the costs that he may incur in so doing. I hope that we shall not be required to use that power, but it is important that we have it in the event of default. The power is set out in clause 5.

Under clause 8, strict responsibilities and duties are laid on those responsible for submitting a programme. They will have a duty to ensure that the programme is carried out properly. In the last resort, the Secretary of State will be able to arrange for the abandonment and to recover the cost of so doing. Again, that is something that I hope will not arise in practice. Clause 12 makes it a criminal offence to fail to comply with any of the requirements set out in this part of the Bill.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Am I right in my understanding that the Bill widens considerably the numbers and types of people who can be served with a notice by the Secretary of State, taking them well beyond those that come within the normal limited liability regulations? Is there anything in the record of the companies which have operating in the North sea which would justify such a widening?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My hon. Friend anticipates precisely that to which I was about to turn. The House will realise from what I have said already that the financial costs of abandonment are extremely high. The commitments of the oil companies will vary greatly given the partnership arrangements, for example. Under clause 2 —this is probably causing my hon. Friend concern—the Secretary of State may require companies to satisfy him that they can fulfil their obligations. That is why the liability under the clause has been spread widely. If a company failed to fulfil its obligations, the cost of so doing, which could be very large, would fall on the taxpayer. Therefore, the Secretary of State and the Government have an important responsibility to ensure that the interests of the taxpayer and the country are protected.

Under legislation in other areas, provisions have been made for spreading the liability widely. I would be happy to return to those provisions later and I am sure that they will be returned to later during discussion on the Bill. I am aware, as interventions from other hon. Members have shown, that some oil companies consider that their liabilities under the clause are too severe. Given the risks that exist—I mentioned that the Secretary of State may be required to carry out certain things in the event of a company not fulfilling its obligations — there is a responsibility to ensure that companies live up to their obligations and can fulfil them. We are not asking for anything unreasonable and we would be failing in our duties if we did not make that provision. Equally, if the oil companies believe that there are better ways of achieving the same objective of protecting the taxpayer and the public interest, we would consider them.

During consultations over the past year, several suggestions have been made to the oil companies which they have not taken up or proceeded with. In the absence of any other counter-proposal from the oil companies and their organisations that can meet practically and sensibly the fair obligation which the Government believe should be imposed upon them, we have drafted the Bill as it stands. I assure the House that we shall closely consider fishing interests when deciding on the degree to which abandonment shall take place. We shall also consult the oil companies on whether there is a better way to achieve that objective. I emphasise to the House that the objective is fair. The Government are committed to it and, in principle, I do not believe that the oil companies regard it as unreasonable. However, if there is a better way to achieve the objective, I would be happy to consider it.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Is not the Minister faced with the problem that the initial stage, when the revenue is tumbling in, is not the time for decommissioning? At the end of the fields' useful lives, when the revenue is falling off, companies may not be in a state to give an assurance that they will make provision

for their liabilities out of future earnings which do not yet exist? Should not the Minister require the establishment of a fund?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: That idea has been put around and discussed from time to time. There may be a solution down that road, but it is one to which the oil companies would have to make a major contribution and in which they would have to play a major part. We have been discussing this matter for a year and no specific proposals have been made. Therefore, the Government have rightly made their proposals. If suggestions are made for another route, I would consider them.

As the House will realise from my remarks, we have endeavoured in the Bill to adopt a flexible approach which seeks to balance different interests, including costs, and which uses regulations, to establish standards of what may be expected in the case of abandonment. An advantage of that approach is that the huge variety of different structures and installations can be approached case by case. That is the only sensible way to achieve some of the objectives.

I hope that the Bill makes clear the Government's determination to ensure that the industry discharges its obligations. It also meets the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), that now is the time to plan, rather than leaving it until the last minute when companies may not be clear about their obligations and may therefore be less able to provide for them. The fact that the Bill is being introduced now rather than leaving it too late in the day will ensure that proper provision is made to cover extreme eventualities.

The abandonment provisions of the Bill have another advantage. By endeavouring to widen the debate and set out the framework under which abandonment will be approached, an opportunity will also be provided for what I would loosely and inaccurately describe as the supply industry offshore. The term "supply industry" is used for those industries that work in support of the oil industry in supplying all the goods and services. Abandonment will also require a supply industry and the development of new technology. Research is already taking place.

This weekend an article in a Sunday paper mentioned a company in Aberdeen which was already actively pursuing and trying to evaluate the opportunities for getting involved in that area. At present, the industry is rightly concerned with development rather than abandonment. None the less, given that the United Kingdom is in the lead in terms of legislation on this matter, British industry has the scope in terms of technology and of capacity to move ahead of industries in other parts of the world by getting involved in activity, first, on our continental shelf and, I hope, on the continental shelves of other countries as opportunities occur.

Finally, I shall mention briefly the later parts of the Bill. Part II, which deals with royalties, updates the royalty regime by rationalising procedures for royalty accounting and for arbitration. It also provides the enabling power, related to part I of the Bill, to allow the repayment of royalty to make allowance for abandonment costs. I apologise to the House unreservedly for the complicated nature of the schedules which refer to the clauses relating to royalties. I tried to do that more simply, but we are dealing with amendments to seven different sets of model clauses. The approach that we adopted in the drafting of the Bill was the same as in previous Bills where amendments had to be made.

I promise the House that, in Committee, I will provide full explanatory notes on that part of the Bill. Hon. Members may be even more confused when they see the length and complication of the notes, but I shall endeavour to provide them. I shall also endeavour in Committee to rewrite the schedules, although not in the sense of rewriting them as part of the Bill. I shall try to submit to the Committee draft model clauses which incorporate the amendments in the schedules. Precisely how those schedules are applied will perhaps be made clearer. I hope that that will be helpful to the Committee, as the procedure appears to be enormously complicated for what, in other respects, are not enormously dramatic changes and tidying-up measures.

On part III, I wish to pick out two important items. Around rigs, platforms and other installations there will be automatic rig safety zones of 500 m. At present, each safety zone must be submitted in an order to the House by statutory instrument. Where a safety zone is revoked, an order must again be submitted to the House. The provisions on safety zones represent a direct response to representations from the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, which asked that the Government should consider this approach. I am happy that we have been able to respond. It will certainly save me placing a lot of orders before the House.

It is worth reflecting that only about 30 orders in 1981 involved establishing or revoking safety zones, whereas up until the end of October this year about 159 orders have had to be submitted to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. The provisions represent a sensible tidying up. The Committee has been very patient, as it has been pressing us for some time. This is our first legislative opportunity to oblige, and I am happy to do so.

In recent years, those involved in the industry have expressed worries about pipelines. This Bill represents our first legislative opportunity for action. It enables the Secretary of State to prohibit the use or testing of any pipelines until specified steps have been taken by their owners to ensure that funds are available to discharge any liability for loss or damage, and so on. One or two recent public inquiries on pipelines have raised this question. It has been examined carefully and fully, and I am happy that we can now respond to those who have raised the issue. They had a legitimate point, and subject to the agreement of the House, it will be incorporated in the Bill.

The Bill is important. I make no apology for having dwelt at length on abandonment. I hope that I have anticipated some detailed questions and answered some of the interventions made. The issue is complicated, and is surrounded by many doubts and uncertainties as to the best way to proceed. As yet, for example, we do not have the technical knowledge as to how best to deal with some of the structures. I ask the House to put this legislation on the statute book, because I believe that it will give us the necessary legislative framework, and will help to concentrate the minds of those in charge of oil companies and supply industries, as well at the minds of those in other international forums on the problems. A flexible approach means that we should be able to react to changes in policies and decisions, particularly at an international level, as the moment of first abandonment comes closer.

I commend the Bill to the House.

4.22 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I shall follow the Minister in one respect, in that I shall devote my remarks almost entirely to part I of the Bill. The Bill primarily creates the legislative framework with which to deal with the abandonment issues and the decommissioning of oil platforms in our waters. The Bill's other clauses involve miscellaneous questions that still, however, deserve scrutiny. I think, particularly, of those provisions relating to the royalty repayments that are involved in the whole question of covering the costs of abandonment.

Like the Minister, I shall concentrate on the major issues contained in part I of the Bill, which deals with the abandonment of oil and gas platforms on our continental shelf. We also realise the enormous, awesome implications of abandonment. It presents us with great technical challenges. I think, too, of the fiscal implications of abandonment and of the profound concern felt by many of those involved in fishing and marine affairs, who make their livings from the North sea.

Those issues, and the awesome challenges presented by the prospect of having to abandon such huge structures, raise major concerns. They, in turn, must be seen against the background of major international obligations and of the search for international standards. That was the reason for my intervention. I am still rather surprised that the Minister did not elaborate as much as I want to do on the international context in which the legislation is being debated. The problems involved in abandoning oil and gas platforms are to the oil and gas industries what decommissioning is to the nuclear power industry, although without such emotive connotations.

Abandonment presents those industries with an awesome technical and financial challenge, and with major concerns with respect to fishing and the marine environment. Those issues and concerns must be set against the search for a new set of internationally agreed standards and criteria. I think not only of how those standards will affect the North sea but of the major decisions made at the law of the sea conferences in 1982. We must judge the timing and character of the legislative proposals against such major domestic and international issues.

In some respects, I find the legislation odd, to say the least. I shall go on to explain why but first, I should underline what the Minister said about the consequences of those challenges. As he said, we are talking about nearly 150 installations. Although they are an intrinsic part of the Bill, he did not mention that for every installation there are about 2,800 miles of pipeline. It is not only the last part of the Bill that deals with pipelines, but the whole of part I. That part of the Bill deals not only with abandoning the installations but with abandoning large tracts of pipeline on the sea bed. In a way, they present just as difficult a problem.

As the Minister said, many of the installations are very large, and form part of the approximately 6,000 installations that are scattered all over the world. But the major difference between our installations and the others is that almost 90 per cent. of the other installations stand in relatively shallow waters that are no more than 40 m deep. Only 360 of the 6,000 installations stand in waters that are deeper than 75 m. As the Minister said, we have a share of them, so it is only right and responsible of us to address ourselves to the argument as early as possible.

I hope that the House will agree that we should not try to diminish the size of the problem. For example, I have heard it said that, compared with the sums earned from the North sea by the oil industry, Scottish trawler and fishing interests involve only small incomes. But the House should not consider the matter in those terms. I have also read articles saying that there are 20,000 shipwrecks recorded in United Kingdom waters, thus trying to minimise the potential problem of abandoning our oil installations.

Dr. Godman: May I point out to my hon. Friend that a modern stern trawler can fish in depths of up to 500 fathoms? Even a smaller, side trawler can fish in depths of 300 fathoms if it has the right equipment.

Mr. Rowlands: I hope that my hon. Friend will join us on the Committee, as his knowledge and expertise will be required in the sort of Committee that we hope to have.

We should not minimise abandonment, despite what is said in some contexts about the amount of debris that already exists on the sea bed. As the Minister said, 18 of the installations stand in the central North sea. Fourteen are major installations, of which eight, nine or even 10 are major concrete structures. Those present technical and financial challenges, and that is what has prompted the Government to introduce the Bill.

As the Minister admits, abandonment is an intrinsic part of the Bill. The question is whether we allow partial removal, toppling or alternative uses for the platforms. Under the 1958 convention, complete removal has been the historical position. The Bill would allow the oil industry to bring forward proposals for a combination of possible solutions to the problems involving partial removal, toppling, the possible towing to and sinking in other parts of the North sea or other uses for the platforms.

We recognise that there are enormous technical problems in trying to remove a concrete platform. The literature contains a romantic description of the champagne cork effect—if we try to pull out or remove the enormous concrete structures that are deeply embedded in the sea bed, there will be a terrible and awesome effect on the whole structure. The rapid lifting and rising will present an enormous danger to life.

We in no way underestimate the nature and character of the problems associated with abandonment. Hon. Members will have researched the issue and will know that some fascinating work has been done by the Heriot-Watt university into possible alternative uses. One suggestion is that one or two of these installations could be turned into casinos. It might be a bit of a gamble to have a night out on the Thistle, and I would not fancy it.

However, there are some interesting suggestions for alternative uses for the platforms. For example, one or two might be used for marine search or for communications and navigation assistance. However, in the majority of cases, the issue is one of either partial clearance, toppling or complete removal.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): The hon. Gentleman said that many hon. Members have researched the problems of abandonment. During his research, did he find any evidence of research at the time when the rigs were originally designed that would assist the abandonment programme? I have found no such evidence and it would be interesting to know whether he has found any.

Mr. Rowlands: The hon. Gentleman has made a most interesting point. A major retrospective criticism of the development of these rigs is that some aspects of design could have been done in such a way as to facilitate the handling of the problems that we are now facing. However, in view of the enormous technological breakthroughs that have enabled us to achieve so much during the past 20 years or so, we should not be too censorious.

The hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) is on to a good point. We are now beginning to realise fully the character and nature of the problem. Some interesting studies show how designs might evolve to tackle the problems, and there might be some interesting design techniques for demolition. Although that appears to be a contradiction in terms, designing for demolition will create many challenges in engineering and physical terms. I have read only a little about that aspect of the problem, but no doubt we shall have time to discuss it in Committee.

When considering partial abandonment, toppling and case-by-case programming, we must ensure that those who are listening understand what we are saying. There is a suggestion for international criteria for the standard that should be established for partial removal in the deepest waters. It requires that no more than 40 m of clearance from the sea should be the base for partial clearance. In other words, some of the platforms will have to be reduced to 40 m below sea level. We might be asked to approve enormous standing structures on the sea bed. Put in terms that we can understand and appreciate, that is what partial toppling involves. We are discussing structures in 500 or 600 ft of water. By seeking partial toppling of a mere 40 m we are talking about an underwater level for pylons of 300 or 400 ft.

We shall have to devise a set of arrangements to justify that proposal. However, at least we would know what we mean by such terms as partial abandonment and partial toppling. The lack of clarity is the reason for the real concern of the fishing industry about these arguments—especially in the trawling industry and those who might ship in the area.

We must recognise the shared concern of the United States and others about the defence aspects of leaving considerable structures or debris on the seabed after abandonment. With a Bill that contains such sweeping powers and the need for case by case solutions, we desperately need sensible and clear guidelines from the Government. Although the codes and criteria are very important to abandonment programmes, we must question whether powers in the form described in the Bill should be granted to the Government. That is one of our criticisms of the Government's approach. It is not emotive to draw clear and specific attention to the consequences of leaving such huge structures in the North sea as anticipated in the Bill.

I will not deal now with the specific worries of the fishing industry, as they will be dealt with later by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). The Opposition recognise the Minister's interest and concern for the profound anxieties of the fishing and trawling interests about the consequences of policies that might be adopted under the Bill. It is important that we establish that those interests have rights.

One of our major criticisms of the Bill is that third parties are given no right to a hearing or consultation during programme making. The Minister might verbally promise the Scottish Fishermen's Federation that there will be consultation on the regulations, and so on. I should like him to tell me under which clause a third party's statutory rights and interests are fully to be taken into account.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Before the hon. Gentleman goes too far, he should read the clauses in relation to the drawing-up of the regulations. They make it clear that there has to be consultation. There is a legal obligation of consultation when those regulations are drawn up.

Mr. Rowlands: After the years we have sparred in Committee and across the Dispatch Box, the Minister should realise that I do read Bills. The point I made was not the one he rose to speak about. I said that, in this Bill, there are no third party rights—I was going to complete my remarks but he did not give me a chance—regarding the approval of programmes and input into their preparation. It will be of considerable concern to trawlermen and other interests that the Minister should proceed on a case-by-case basis. The cases, as well as any general criteria or general regulations, will matter. There will be general consultation on the regulations. Decisions will be made when the Minister gives approval to amend or reject individual programmes.

If one examines the clauses dealing with those provisions, one will notice that a third party has no right to be heard or to be consulted. That is one proposal that we might consider—I hope in no partisan spirit—in Committee. I hope the Minister will have an open mind about the way in which we can build upon this procedure. If he is to approach the issue on a case-by-case basis, he must allow those who could be most affected by it to have genuine statutory rights to be consulted and involved in the process.

Because of the way in which the Minister and the Government have brought forward these matters, we have minimum information about the Government's thinking on the criteria and guidelines that will constitute the regulations. The Minister did not give us much of an insight into the nature of his consultations. They are funny consultations in at least one basic sense. From my experience and observation of Government consultation, there is usually a document available, especially if the matter has been going on for 12 months and many bodies are effectively involved. The Minister made the big claim at the Dispatch Box that he had conducted these consultations, but there is not one single document on which this process has been based. I asked his Department the form in which these consultations had taken place. The Minister quite properly referred to the speech of an official, Mr. Butler. It was a useful, helpful speech that some of us were directed to read. Apart from that speech and another piece of paper—there is nothing in the Library and nothing in writing—no other document has been properly used in consultation.

If consultation of the kind that the Minister described has occurred, it has obviously been oral consultation. I understand from my inquiries and my informal contacts that the Minister has put forward some ideas. I challenge him to tell us where the ideas are presented. Are they available to hon. Members as we embark upon this major debate? I thought that he would elaborate on them this afternoon, but he has not done so.

Dr. Michael Clark: My right hon. Friend the Minister can speak for himself. He made it clear that he had various consultations with oil companies, asking whether they could suggest ways in which this could be done. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that this is a consultation Bill? There is much scope in the Bill for consultation in Committee, when we shall thrash out so many of the matters about which he wishes to talk.

Mr. Rowlands: I am delighted to accept the hon. Gentleman's invitation. I rather like his description. My quarrel is that, if we bring forward a Bill with such sweeping powers — if nothing else, we all agree that clause 2 and others, upon which I shall touch, are wide, enabling provisions — it should be accompanied by a much clearer idea of how the Government will implement and exercise it. A Bill of this kind giving Ministers such awesome, huge powers to do all sorts of things to all sorts of people should be accompanied at this stage by much clearer thinking and a statement of the character and nature of the Government's policies.

I understand that the Minister has been discussing—I do not know whether orally or not; I cannot find any document—zoning the North sea. There are three zones. There is the southern basin, the central North sea and the deep North sea. Different criteria and standards relating to partial toppling, partial clearing and so on will be laid down. It is an interesting and reasonable proposition. We are debating the Second Reading of a Bill to include all those powers without having any real insight into the Government's thinking. That insight should have come as a consultative process alongside this Bill. We should not, as we shall have to, in a sense, winkle it out in Committee. The hon. Member for Rochford rightly said that the Committee stage of a Bill such as this can be a consultative process. We shall have to utilise it.

We have been discussing how we can improve the legislative process. This would have been a good opportunity—the parties are not necessarily divided—to use the pre-legislative process. A Select Committee or a genuine pre-legislative Committee could have taken evidence on the issues and the legislative structure in a genuine, non-partisan spirit. That would have been a most useful way in which to proceed. This procedure will cause many problems and make it harder for us to grapple with the issues. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall make every effort to do so.

I do not support the manner in which these issues have been brought to the House. It has led to the nature of this legislation. This point is given greater force in view of the financial and fiscal consequences of the various policies and programmes. I am grateful to the Minister for bringing to our attention the fact that core estimates of abandonment vary from £6 billion for total clearance to £2·7 billion, in 1984 terms, for partial removal. The lower figure—he did not mention this—was based on a policy of a 40 m clearance depth.

If the Minister is considering a variable system of clearance depths of the kind that we understood he has orally been discussing with the industry, there will be different clearance levels of 55 m or 75 m, depending on the depth of the North sea and the installation itself. We will need to know the cost implications of those arguments. We could take them on a core basis.

Every taxpayer and hon. Member should be concerned about who will pay and how. In July 1985, in the lecture which we were advised to read, Mr. Butler, the Department of Energy official, estimated that 60 to 70 per cent. of abandonment costs would fall on the Exchequer in royalties or tax relief. He added:

> "The way in which the rules would operate in individual cases will require a good deal more study."

That was July 1985; it is now November 1986. We shall be interested to learn in Committee how much more study of the costs to fall on the Exchequer has been done since July 1985.

On 9 September 1986, Max Wilkinson in a perceptive article in the *Financial Times* drew specific attention to the capricious nature of taxation in relation to abandonment and certain companies and a certain size of field. These important matters will require much greater scrutiny in Committee.

Confronted with a large series of major problems, unresolved policy decisions and an uncertain financial and fiscal structure, what have the Government done? They have brought forward the Petroleum Bill and provisions such as clauses 2, 4, 5 and 10. They are catch-all clauses. Because the Government are not certain what to do, they will sweep up everyone, serving notices on everyone in sight who has the slightest possible interest in an abandonment programme. Clause 2 is a catch-all provision of enormous potential.

I understand the Minister's concern. We do not want the taxpayers to be rooked in any shape or form. He will have much support in ensuring that that does not happen. But is it the answer to bring in a provision such as clause 2? It smacks less of the Department of Energy than of the Inland Revenue. When in doubt, the Inland Revenue decides to serve notices in respect of taxation or costs on anyone who has anything to do with the issue. The House will have considerable qualms about clause 2. I shall be interested in Committee to hear the Minister reveal the precedents that it raises in respect of corporate liability, and so on.

I was glad to note the Minister's willingness to take part in consultation in Committee to thrash out variations on the way to handle the provisions of clause 2. Clause 2(5) seems to redefine the nature of control of a company. In my ignorance, I assumed that one controlled a company with 51 per cent., not 50 per cent., of the share capital. Under clause 2(5) "one half or more" is defined as giving control of a company. Major issues arise, and we have a right to register our objection to the nature of the legislation when we do not have a clear idea of the policy.

The international dimension — that we should relate our standards and policies to those being thrashed out in the key international forums, especially the law of the sea conferences and the International Maritime Organisation — is another important consideration. Although the Minister contested this, we are in an uncomfortable position. The only convention to which we are a party, to which we are a signatory and which is in force is the 1958 Geneva convention, but it contains the rather uncomfortable statement that there must be complete removal of installations. Rightly, we have moved on since then. In 1985, the Government sought to move away from the 1958 convention by introducing a revised article, article 60, and I compliment them on that. The agreement of 60 states was needed to make the measure enforceable. We were just over halfway there, with the support of 31 states, when the conference concluded. I suspect that we shall achieve the

agreement of 60 states only if we thrash out the definition of the article and devise genuine international guidelines which we, as much as any other country, will accept.

On 12 January there will be the first of a series of significant meetings of the IMO to start the work of turning article 60 into a meaningful set of practical criteria and guidelines. The last time I checked, as of last weekend only two papers had been submitted for discussion at the 12 January meeting. I understand that, according to the rules, submissions must be made by 15 September. The Minister complimented himself and the Government on coming forward with this legislation to give the lead and to shape up the debate nationally and internationally, but I am surprised that we are not taking the lead in shaping the arguments which will be made at the IMO meeting in January. I understand that, unless the Minister has submitted proposals in the last few days, the Government have not submitted any ideas to the IMO. The submissions made so far show the type of problems we could come up against. One major proposal could cause considerable difficulties in implementing the Bill in this form. We are justified in bringing these important international dimensions and issues to the attention of the House.

We understand the challenges that face everyone dealing with the issue of abandonment. We understand also the opportunities, on which the Minister touched, to develop new engineering techniques, in designing demolition techniques and in the physical opportunities of removal. We must ensure that British companies meet that challenge, take up the opportunities as outlined in the National Economic Development Council report, "Growing Markets for Demolition and Dismantling", which brought forward an interesting, important and almost contradictory concept which was nevertheless fascinating.

I cannot conceal our view that the Government have not approached the issues in the way we should have liked. It would have been useful to have a pre-legislative process of the kind I have suggested. I hope that there will be consultation in Committee. We shall not oppose the Bill tonight. We believe that there is constructive work to be done, not on a partisan or party basis but by searching for answers to meet this severe challenge. I think that it is no exaggeration to say that the problems of abandonment present, in their way, just as much of a technological and fiscal challenge as development in the North sea has done so far.

4.58 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) dealt with a number of interesting international points, but my right hon. Friend the Minister is well protected. We passed legislation on deep sea mining well before the international agreement was negotiated, although we have not ratified it. That was done in enabling legislation which anticipated events, exactly as the Petroleum Bill does.

This is a necessary Bill. It is purely an enabling measure. There are difficulties in clause 11 which prescribes standards and safety requirements, although at this stage we do not know precisely what they are. I hope that the Minister will give the Committee a draft of some of the regulations in order to establish one or two of the criteria which could be rather useful. That would not negate the value of the legislation.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney spoke about the vast expenditure involved. That troubled me. We must keep it in proportion. He mentioned a figure of £6 billion. That would be equivalent to £2 billion above what we are spending on research and development in the United Kingdom. That is enormous expenditure. It could be expressed in terms of the number of hospitals which could be built in the United Kingdom. Do we have to spend that vast sum on getting rid of some of the structures in the North sea? Perhaps we can say that it could be done a little less expensively by considering other matters.

Dr. Michael Clark: I recognise that if we do have to get rid of the structures in the North sea it will involve great expenditure. I wonder whether my hon. Friend could say how the taxpayer, the nation and the state could extract that money from the oil companies in order to build hospitals and do the technical research that is required in this country?

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am not in the oil industry but the oil companies have been paying petroleum revenue tax and taxation for many years. About 85 per cent. to 90 per cent. of the take from the receipts of the North sea is held by the Government. Therefore, when one considers the liability for decommissioning the structures, one has to take into account who has the profits. It has been the state. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] They have been carefully invested overseas to the benefit of the United Kingdom. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) may laugh, but the invisible account is of no mean significance to the United Kingdom. It buys a vast quantity of manufactures and food essential to this country.

There is one point which I consider to be of great significance. There is ample precedent. Legislation has been passed for the extraction industries. There is the Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Act 1981 in which aftercare provision was made; that is, that land had to be restored to the condition which was laid down by the Act.

We then moved into the nuclear area. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney mentioned the companies trying to get togeher with British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. and the Atomic Energy Authority, working with the international agencies to try to devise ways to decommission nuclear power stations. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the North sea, even though it is no man's territory and free territory in which things can be left—although it is preferred that they are not—some sort of arrangement should be made now. It is important that we should consider that point. Navigation has to be considered, as does deep trawling and the movement of craft on the surface of the sea and submarines.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney mentioned that the number of platforms—144 of them—in shallow water is about 70 per cent. of the total. Those in deep water form about 30 per cent. I agree, as would many other hon. Members, that those in shallow water will have to be removed entirely. Those in deep water can be truncated or cut off. When I was at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology recently I saw some novel methods of cutting the steel under water. When that has been perfected, it may reduce the costs substantially. We may look to the future when we avoid the use of those very expensive platforms and use floating production systems which are now coming into vogue.

[Sir Trevor Skeet]

When the Minister considers the liability of oil companies, will he be concerned with unlimited liability for those corporations — that is, after receiving certain grants or tax advantages from the state? After all, there is a principle in law that, when one brings something on to one's land and it escapes and damages a third party, one is liable for the damages, provided they are not too remote.

I understand the point referred to, which came under clause 2, that if a company becomes defunct at the end of its life and ceases to be a paying proposition because the revenues have disappeared and it is coming to the time when liabilities are beginning to mount, what does one do? Do the Government have to take in all the bills? The little device that the Minister has resorted to has been clear. One looks to the parent company for the default of the subsidiaries. One can travel right up the tree and fault anybody in the line. I mentioned in an intervention that the right course would probably be to establish a fund in the early stages, such as the ironstone fund which was utilised in Northampton, to which all companies had to subscribe in order to deal with the final reinstatement of the land at a later date. It was discussed at one of the inquiries prior to the Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Act 1981, when it was thought that it might be a useful idea to have a fund established for that purpose. I wonder whether companies would consider that.

Another important point is that obviously the Government want the maximum extraction from the North sea and the price of oil is one of the determining factors. That could lead to pemature closures which could lead to the loss of a lot of potential and available oil. I wonder how far the Government have got with their negotiations for a tax regime. According to the Bill, there is the possibility of the repayment of royalties, which will be appreciated. They may well be offset against corporation tax and PRT. It might be a sensible idea to do what somebody else has recommended, which is that one takes the last seven years of PRT which have been paid by the companies and offsets that in its entirety. There has been talk that we should adopt a grant system, which the Norwegians have resorted to, based on the average of tax to revenue over the complete life of the field.

Perhaps I can make one suggestion to the Government. The idea is to maximise extraction, and a formula for diminishing tax with the age of the field could be resorted to. That would encourage the use of enhanced recovery methods. It would counter the low price of oil and take into account the fact that liabilities are likely to rise at the time of the declining revenues.

Enhanced recovery is important. The public will recognise that about 42 per cent. of the oil is extracted and the rest is left in place. It may be extracted at some future date but, if the platforms are removed, some other method will have to be found for bringing it up. Of course, technology has not advanced to the point where it can be extracted. Therefore, it will remain in situ for the time being.

I want to ask the Minister about licensing. Under clause 19, in part II of the Bill, licensing can be extended to the territorial waters of Northern Ireland. I wonder whether the Minister will give me some indication as to the position of the Isle of Man, which is off the west coast of the United Kingdom. Does it have its own territorial waters? Does it have the right to raise royalties and grant licences? Does it have the right to negotiate directly with the oil companies or does it fall under his own Ministry?

I want to be brief in order to enable my colleagues to contribute. My approach is that this is a useful Bill and must go on to the statute book. The approach must be constructive. We have to measure the opportunities which are likely to arise. The oilfields have a long time to run. The first to close will probably be the Auk field operated by Shell. That may be closed in the 1990s. Many of the other fields will be running for 20 or 30 years. Over the course of time, the regulations can be carefully devised and the Government can decide what should be done in the public interest.

Consultations with the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association should continue and negotiations and discussions with international bodies, especially the International Maritime Organisation, should be extended. I believe that that will be of great value in achieving our aims — to maximise the advantage of North sea oil extraction and to safeguard the public purse without being unduly punitive to the companies involved.

5.10 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The Minister and others have acknowledged that there is much still to be done in this area, but I welcome the Minister's opening statement because in the current downturn in North sea activities it is important to state clearly that North sea extraction is still in its adolescence rather than fully mature and that the development of new fields and platforms will continue for a long time to come. It is important that people outside the House do not get the impression that the Bill has been introduced because the North sea industry is somehow past its peak, when in fact it still has a long way to go.

In the context of the Bill, there are a number of creative tensions between the various parties directly affected. Those who have to meet the cost of removal of offshore installations—the oil companies and the taxpayers—are naturally concerned about how the costs can be contained and how they will affect the investment already made. Those who use the sea for other purposes, however, are anxious to ensure that removal is not carried out in such a way as to prejudice their free movement. As the Minister knows, the fishing industry is especially concerned, because this enabling measure does not clearly and specifically defend the interests of that industry.

At the outset of North sea oil development, it was acknowledged that the platforms would ultimately have to be removed and I understood at that time that complete removal was envisaged. Concern has naturally arisen because measures short of complete removal are now being discussed. I appreciate the reasons for that, but we must acknowledge the definite anxieties that arise as a result.

If partial toppling of a major platform in middle or deep water were allowed, there would have to be a full inspection immediately after the completion of the work to ensure that it met the requirements of the various Departments involved. A more difficult question is how the condition of the installation will be monitored in succeeding years. Storms and corrosion may lead to pieces breaking off and migrating, possibly creating problems in areas in which there were previously no recorded installations.

The need to monitor installations will continue for decades after they are abandoned. Even if they are taken down to a level which would not interfere with surface navigation, there might still be problems for submarines, despite advances in modern technology, particularly if pieces break off and migrate so that some areas of the North sea become more littered than they were previously. A Russian submarine sank in very deep water this summer. Although this is an outside possibility it must be taken into account, because we would not wish to risk accidents of that kind.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Maps of all the installations will be published. They will be pinpointed on the charts, so submarine commanders will be able to avoid them.

Mr. Bruce: I appreciate the availability of charts and the ability of modern technology to identify obstacles, but unless there is consistent monitoring, pieces could break off and migrate to areas in which no hazard was previously recorded. We are entitled to seek an assurance that that possibility will be taken into account.

The anxieties of the fishing industry are more immediate. I understand that the Minister met representatives of the industry last week. In informal conversation with a senior representative of the industry yesterday it was made clear to me that the industry wants total removal of offshore installations because it does not believe that partial removal can be carried out without causing potential problems for trawlers and the risk of damage and loss of equipment. We appreciate why the original plans for total removal are being reconsidered. It is a matter of cost, both for the taxpayer and for the oil industry, and no one wishes to demand expenditure if it is not necessary. But if there were any suggestion that the taxpayer and the oil companies were being protected at the expense of the fishing industry, a real conflict would arise. At present, the fishing industry is extremely unhappy about the proposals and already fears that its interests are being sacrificed.

For those reasons, I believe that fishing and certain other interests should be specifically mentioned in the Bill and specific rights set out in the legislation. No doubt we shall return to this in Committee, but at present the Bill provides no specific protection. Clause 11(5) merely states:

"Before making regulations under this section the Secretary of State shall consult organisations in the United Kingdom appearing to him to be representative of those persons who will be affected by the regulations."

The fishing industry does not regard that as satisfactory and wishes to have more specific protection of its interests written into the Bill. At present, the industry is not even convinced that the Government are operating within the terms of international law. That difference of opinion can be resolved, but we shall need to consult our immediate neighbours in the North sea and many of the points that I have made will doubtless be raised by the Norwegians, the Dutch, the Danes and others using the North sea, who will want satisfactory assurances that their interests are taken into account.

The removal of offshore installations has been compared with the decommissioning of nuclear power stations. I do not wish to trespass beyond the confines of the debate, but I believe that that comparison has some validity in that it would be wrong to establish legislation setting out different obligations from those that would apply, say, in the decommissioning of a nuclear power station. At this stage, however, I merely put down a marker to the effect that we should not create circumstances which might be cited as a precedent in the future either by overloading the cost or by underloading the obligations in decommissioning such an installation.

The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) mentioned the concerns of the oil industry and generously suggested on behalf of the taxpayer that petroleum revenue tax might be repaid to cover the cost of removing installations. I am not sure that that would be acceptable, because when the companies took out licences to explore and develop the fields, they knew that those obligations existed. Indeed, I understand that Shell has made substantial provision for the ultimate removal of offshore installations. If other companies have not done so, they should have done so.

Two points arise, one of which bears further consideration. That is the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North that a fund should be established. Some of the large companies are concerned that the Bill implies that they would be liable for defaulting partners.

I should be grateful if the Minister would clarify the last paragraph of clause 2(5), which refers to a company that "has the power, directly or indirectly, to secure that the affairs of the company are conducted in accordance with its wishes." If I am wrong, I shall be happy to be put right. Does that imply that the operating partner is a consortium could be made liable for all the members of the consortium if any of them were, for financial or other reasons, unwilling or unable to contribute to the cost of decommissioning? If that is so, the suggestion of a fund is to be commended, as it would ensure some fairness to all the operating companies.

On the positive side, as several hon. Members have commented, the removal of offshore installations will be an industry in itself. It is a classic proof of the proverb, "It's an ill wind that blows no one any good". Whatever the figures—£4 billion to £6 billion have been quoted—somebody will be able to pick up the benefit of that.

It is important that we have the best technology and the best means at our disposal. I ask the Minister to consider some sort of contribution, over and above what is already going on, to step up the research, perhaps through universities or other academic institutions, if suitable groups are available to be funded. Given the amount of taxpayers' money involved, and given the potential to encourage forward decision making in companies that are taking risks for further development, it would be to our domestic advantage to stimulate ways of developing new technologies that are cheap and effective, for the removal of offshore installations. That might provide the technology to meet the fishermen's concerns and would give us export opportunities.

In that context I welcome the Bill, although it has been rather broadly drawn and leaves many questions that will need answering in Committee. I hope that the Minister will approach the Committee constructively and that he will not regard the Bill as any sign——

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am always constructive.

Mr. Bruce: I did not mean to imply anything negative by my comment. However, I hope that the Minister will not regard significant changes to the Bill as a test of his virility. Any changes would be a true and proper recognition of how Bills should go through the House, but regrettably seldom do.

5.22 pm

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): There has been a consensus of approval, in principle, of the Bill in the speeches made so far. However, they have suggested the need for more detailed examination in Committee. I concur with that view. The Bill is not contentious legislation but is important not only for the oil industry, but for the Government and the taxpayer, as well as for the fishing industry.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) underlined the size of the problem. My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) asked whether the problem of abandonment had been taken into account in the design of the rigs when they were built, at the beginning of the development of the North sea. Presumably it was, but at the time it was a new industry and many innovations have been introduced since then. I remember visiting the Conoco tension leg rig on the Hutton field. If the technology there had been adopted throughout the North sea, the problem we now face of removing some of those structures would have been made much easier. Of course, that technology was only being developed then.

The Bill could, of course, have been subjected to the special procedure in Standing Committee. I served on the Committee that considered what is now the Education Act 1981 and we adopted the procedure of taking evidence in several sittings before going into full Committee. It was a useful procedure, which might have worked on this occasion. This is the sort of Bill where we could have gained by having representations from those affected by the legislation.

That is not being done. The Bill has been introduced fairly quickly and therefore there has not been a great deal of time to study all the implications. However, my right hon. Friend the Minister is right to tackle the immense problem of dismantling our North sea oil platforms now. Given the usual good co-operation between his Department and the oil industry, I am sure that the technical problems that arise, and those that are certain to arise as we go along, can be sorted out in Committee.

Everybody has known for a long time that decisions would have to be made and that financial provision for removing offshore installations would have to be allowed for. We are committed by the 1958 Geneva convention on the law of the sea to remove every trace of our offshore oil operations and every oil company has been making provision for that in its accounts over some years. The trouble is that nobody has known what the costs would be, and how much dismantling would be required, and so nobody has known the extent to which the oil platforms would have to be removed and provision made for that.

Originally, the oil rigs were much smaller than the present-day deep water platforms, some of which are larger than the Empire state building in New York. The complete removal of one of those larger platforms is estimated to cost about £150 million.

As part of their licence agreements, oil companies have agreed to carry out that work at the appropriate time and, as I have said, they have made provision in their accounts. However, they have not created specific funds of cash in their reserves, so any future dismantling costs will have to be met from future cash surpluses. The total cost of dismantling all the 140 to 150 platforms is estimated to be about £6 billion over a period of years. Therefore, the Government are right to agree that the abandonment costs can be set against corporation tax, royalties and petroleum revenue tax on a retrospective basis.

The problem that seems to have arisen is the risk that an owner of a platform, say an overseas company, could pull out of the North sea subsidiary, declare it bankrupt and leave the Government or the taxpayer to clear the oil platform. The Government would not be left holding the baby because none of the oil rigs can be termed a baby —they are much more like grown adults in their size. In other words, the taxpayer would have lost the tax revenue that was given in relief to the company, but would still have to pay for the eventual dismantling.

The Bill proposes—I do not agree that it is right—that the normal corporate limited liability responsibilities should be put aside and a direct charge laid on all, some, or even one of the participants in the field. No provision is made for the company or companies made responsible for the abandonment to have recourse against the other partners to ensure an even and equitable distribution of the heavy costs involved. That could discourage the major oil companies from entering into partnership with small companies in future exploration rounds. As we are still not half way in the development of the North sea, that is an important factor. Although I understand the need to prevent a parent company from offloading its financial responsibilities—that would happen once or twice, if at all—I wonder whether there is a better solution.

In other commercial activities—my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North mentioned motor insurance—special funds have been set up to deal with such emergencies. That would be a better approach to the problem. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will confirm that, if the oil industry comes up with a special sinking fund solution, he will be prepared to consider it, rather than pursuing the present sledgehammer approach inherent in clause 2.

The Government are quite entitled to take steps to remove the possibility of being landed with the costs of dismantling through the default of the licenses. However, I hope that by the time we get through Committee, a better solution might have been agreed with the industry. I accept that my right hon. Friend has in effect thrown the ball at the industry and said, "Come up with a possible solution and we shall consider it favourably."

It is important that we do all we can to encourage the extension of the economic lives of our producing oilfields. The longer they run, the greater the chances of the oil companies making proper provision for the enormous abandonment costs, and of course, the greater the income to the country.

With the new powers given to the Secretary of State in the Bill, allowing him to approve, reject, amend or even impose a different programme for abandonment, it is important that proper criteria are laid down and that a system of appeal or arbitration is established. I hope that due consideration will be given to the latter point in Committee, possibly on the lines of the appeal and arbitration system established in the Petroleum and Submarine Pipe-lines Act 1975.

I refer finally to the methods to be used in the removal of installations. All sorts of weird and wonderful ideas are floating around, including offshore casinos, duty-free shopping centres, fishing centres and so on. I have no idea what the final solution will be for some of the platforms. The Government are right to deal with each installation

on a case-by-case basis. What cannot be denied is our responsibility to ensure safety for our sea traffic and protection for our fishing industry.

One idea that I saw in *The Scotsman*, which was referred to earlier, is for research into the use of rigs for offshore reefs around which huge new fishing grounds can be developed. Apparently countries such as Japan and the United States have been building artificial reefs for many years, and in Japan some $326 million has been spent on the construction of 2,300 artificial reefs. From them the Japanese are taking annual catches of nearly 5 million tonnes of fish and shellfish, compared with Britain's total annual catch of approximately 750,000 tonnes.

The suggestion is that some of our rigs be towed to within three miles of the shore, adapted for reef construction and sunk there. That could create jobs and help the fishing industry, as well as save costs. I have no idea whether that suggestion is workable, but as the European Community has allocated some £18 million for research into reef development, it might be worth while using some of that money to investigate the possibility of using some of our oil rigs for that purpose. That is the only suggestion that I should like to make.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the steps that he is taking to prepare us, with the framework in the Bill, for the time when the massive steel and concrete North sea oil structures have to be dismantled. I am sure that we can achieve a good workable piece of legislation in Committee, and I support the Second Reading of the Bill.

5.32 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I support the suggestion of the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) that we emulate the Japanese in the use of the offshore structures for fish production. The idea is attractive. Perhaps it is already being pursued on a small scale. The only difference is that I trust that when we catch the fish, we shall cook it, as I do not believe that we should follow the Japanese that far.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the Conoco tension leg platform in the Hutton field, which he visited some time ago. I am not sure of his assessment that it would be easier to deal with a tension leg platform. The technicians can pursue that matter. The fact remains that that fascinating development is illustrative of the technological capacity of the industry, which may not be properly recognised by the Minister in the Bill. It might be easier to deal with such a rig; it certainly would be queasier. I visited that rig while it was more prone to movement than I think is normal. It was only a fortnight ago, and on the following morning I was relieved that the sea was calm. It was like glass, and there was not a cloud in the sky. One then began to perceive the scale of the problem. I could see 30 structures from the top of the Hutton platform, some a long way away. Many were of enormous size.

Even that size should not daunt the Minister. He should not underestimate the capacity of the industry to make the technological advances that it has made while facing the challenges that have been presented since offshore development began. For that reason, I was delighted that the hon. Member for Exeter referred to the complexities that will face us in Committee. I hope that the Minister will recognise that, although it is right that the Bill should get its Second Reading without dissent, the fact remains that there are many weaknesses in it. I should have thought that he would seize the opportunity to recognise that such a Bill should be bipartisan. It should be accepted by the House as a whole. The conditions that the Bill presents should be the unanimous view of the House of Commons. However, unfortunately, there are grounds for serious concern and deep anxiety about the approach that the Government have adopted. I shall say just a word about that because I do not want to make a long speech; I may make longer speeches in Committee.

Our criticism must be that the Government have acted with enormous speed. It is outrageous that the Minister has produced the Bill today when proper consultations with the industry have not been carried out. As my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) said, I hope that evidence of adequate consultations on the proposals will be forthcoming in Committee.

I also hope that the Minister will take note of the fact that some misgivings have been voiced on the Conservative Back Benches about the speed of the Bill. I know that Ministers in the present Administration are not accustomed to hearing dissenting or anxious voices on the Benches behind them. It is significant that such feelings have been expressed today. I suggest that the Minister delays the Committee stage a little so that he can show the Committee that consultations have been adequate, so that the anxieties of his hon. Friends can be justly and honourably relieved and so that we have a reasonable amount of time to read the complex notes on clauses that the right hon. Gentleman promised us. That suggestion is not unreasonable, given the complexity of the Bill.

The Minister is capable of dealing with complexities. He has been dealing with complex oil legislation quite effectively from his party's point of view, and he must recognise that other Members of his own Benches, as well as those on Opposition Benches, have other things to do, and perhaps not quite the same familiarity with complex legislation as he has. Therefore, a slight breathing space for preparation would not be an unreasonable thing to ask.

We could have seen a less draconian approach. One would not think that we had seen the technological achievements offshore that we have seen in the past decade. One imagines that the Government are running scared of the substantial task that faces the industry. They seem to be casting doubt on the industry's business and industrial capacity to meet that challenge. Perhaps the Minister perceived the low price of oil continuing and therefore earlier abandonment of the offshore structures than is now likely.

A question to which I received an answer today might give cause for anxiety. It states:

> "In the week ending 27 October 1986, 27 mobile drilling rigs were active within the United Kingdom continental shelf. In the last week of October 1984, 49 rigs were active." —[*Official Report*, 24 November 1986.]

That reduction in activity is relevant to the debate because it means that unless there is further investment, the abandonment of structures and the sterilisation of resources could accelerate. Because of that acceleration, the lower price, lack of investment, loss of confidence and developing anxieties, we are entitled to suggest to the Minister that it would be foolish for him now to appear to be seeking to rush in emergency arrangements, because it suggests to the industry that the Government take a particularly pessimistic view.

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

There is another anxiety, about schedule 1. I must confess that I am not a lawyer, and I have not had a great deal of time to examine schedule 1. It seems that it presents a particular risk. I hope that the Minister will examine it straight away because it is a serious matter. The Secretary of State was forced by the Treasury to refuse to proceed along the Sleipner gas route and he assured the House that there was an enormous additional amount of gas available. We have debated that on many occasions. That is probably the case and further gas discoveries have been made since the Sleipner decision. The Secretary of State and, I think, the Minister of State will certainly recognise that much of the additional gas which will make up for the loss of Sleipner supplies will have to be obtained from satellite platforms. Much of the gas is in small reserves and satellite platforms will have to be used.

As I see it, schedule 1 provides a requirement for additional metering and therefore additional separation even on the unmanned satellite platforms which are developing and which will have to be used much more extensively. If the Minister insists upon separation and additional metering of satellite platforms, the prospect of achieving those platforms and of landing the gas upon which the Government's decisions rely are dramatically reduced. This is a serious point.

We already see satellite platforms in the Viking field in the southern basin of our continental shelf operation. The Government appear to be saying in schedule 1 that there will have to be additional separation of oil, water and gas on the additional platforms which must be developed. If that is what schedule 1 means, it will inhibit development and I imagine that the Government do not want to do that, because even this Government wish to land gas so that the privatised British Gas will not find itself in difficulty within a fairly short time. In order to make their privatisation scheme work, the Government will have to ensure supplies of gas for Britain.

The Government must ensure that the people responsible for offshore operations can operate in a sane and proper manner, but the Government's attitude gives cause for enormous anxiety. The Minister recognises the financial position, and next week we shall see the repayment of the advance petroleum revenue tax. That is not what the industry needs, and if it had more faith in the economic common sense of the Government it would not have reduced so dramatically its drilling activity. The anxieties in the industry are now considerable and they are not relieved by this sort of draconian Bill nor by a failure to introduce the concessions that were half promised in the last Budget and upon which further development of the North sea can be encouraged and the premature abandonment of our offshore structures delayed.

The Minister should understand that there is an obligation to consult the industry, which has served Britain well. It has produced not merely £113 billion in total economic yield but £56 billion for the Government to use, and they have not always used the money as wisely as they might. It has produced at least 100,000 jobs and I know that the Minister has played some part in trying to ensure that we get jobs in the British Isles from offshore development. The industry has made a substantial contribution to our economy and it is regrettable that that contribution has been abused by the Government.

The Minister could at least offer some understanding that the industry has served Britain quite well and that the people in it have made a tremendous technological contribution which, sadly, has been ignored by large sections of the British media. He should demonstrate that the Government do not wish to act in a draconian manner, and he could show some appreciation of the service the industry has given and perhaps be a little more helpful by engaging in meaningful co-operation before the Bill proceeds further.

5.43 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Bill. The problem of abandonment of oil platforms or of any other piece of equipment with which we have finished is important in this mechanical and technological age, which is also a throw-away age. If motor cars or plant and equipment are abandoned on land we can afford to dispose of them properly because of their scrap value. The scrap value of the platforms in the North sea, even if the platforms were recovered, would be far less than the cost of recovering it. For that reason, there is a temptation to leave the scrap where it is and to abandon it in the sea, but certainly not to recover it and bring it back to dry land.

The hon. Members for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) and for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) drew analogies with nuclear power stations. Those were valid analogies, but perhaps the most important and valid comparison between the abandonment of oil rigs and the decommissioning of nuclear power stations is that in both cases such things have not been done before. We are looking at new technology, which will be very expensive, and we need to make sure that power stations are decommissioned and oil rigs are abandoned in the interests of safety and for the sake of our environment. That environment is becoming smaller as our population increases and as people are able to travel and build much more than they did in previous centuries.

I am in favour of a proper policy for abandoning the rigs and should like to look into the possibilities in the Bill. There is no doubt that the oil industry recognises its obligations in a proper abandonment programme. It has no reason not to do that, because the oil industry is one of the main users of the oceans as a means of transportation. It is as interested in making sure that the seas are free for the movement of ships as anyone else.

It is possible that in the not-too-distant future oil companies will have large submarine tankers delivering oil all over the world. Such tankers will probably be more efficient because they will use less fuel and be more cost-effective. For those reasons, we do not want too many platforms or too many platform legs sticking out of the ocean in an indiscriminate manner, even if they are marked on the charts. I agree with the hon. Member for Gordon that, even though they are marked on the charts, to have them there at all is a hazard because mistakes happen and however careful people are, tragedies occur from time to time.

The oil companies have a good record on the environment. They are conscious of the need to ensure that as far as possible the environment is returned to the way it was when they started work, whether on land or at sea. Above all, the oil companies are conscious of and obey national and international law and the 1958 Geneva

convention on the law of the sea and the requirement of article 5.5 to remove all traces of installations that have been placed in the sea.

Who is liable for these platforms? When installations and pipelines are first put into the North sea they are owned by the companies that put them in and perhaps such companies have two or three partners in a consortium. When the licence expires, those installations and pipelines revert to the Government. But the Bill says that the oil companies will remain liable in perpetuity for the cost of maintaining these installations and pipelines. Clearly, the oil companies will not like that requirement, because having an indeterminate amount of money on a company's books for an indefinite time creates difficulties.

Will my right hon. Friend consider whether oil companies might be permitted in some way to buy out their obligations, so that by paying an amount to the Government to cover the cost of looking after the installations in future years they could get the amount off their books and would know where they stand in a proper trading way?

As many hon. Members have said, it is well known that the oil companies are not happy with the provision that allows the Secretary of State to name one person or one company as the party responsible for the costs and organisation of abandonment. They think that there should be another clause which enables the nominated person to ensure that his partners are legally responsible, and that responsibility is divided according to the equity, interest or perhaps profit that each partner has had from the enterprise. We must consider that in Committee.

We must consider alternatives to legislation such as this. An oil company could be required to purchase a bond, which is held by the Government, as a builder of a housing estate buys a bond held by the local authority to ensure that the roads are finished. Alternatively there could be an industry liability fund, similar to the funds of building societies, banks and insurance companies to ensure that, if one member defaults, the whole industry does not get a bad name and that the taxpayer does not have to pick up the tab.

On the other hand, we could require oil companies to pay a substantial deposit when taking up licences to ensure that abandonment costs are covered. That might be closing the stable door when the horse is truly down the track and all three suggestions are probably more expensive than what is proposed in the Bill. Oil companies might like to consider the options, compare them with what the Bill proposes, and see what they prefer.

Some oil companies might say that we should trust them and that they will ensure that the abandonment procedure is followed. We could say that, rather than trust the oil companies, they should trust the Secretary of State not to abuse this enabling legislation. It is easier to trust people when an industry is booming and profits are high than when profits decline and business is running low, as is happening now in the North sea. I believe that there must be legislation.

It might have been better if we had had the Bill earlier. We have had 18 years of gas production and 10 years of oil production from the North sea, and nearly 40 per cent. of its reserves have been extracted. We have about 140 installations. There will be more, but not many. We must get legislation such as this into place soon or it will be retrospective, and retrospective legislation is unpopular and, some say, unfair. We have no time to waste.

Although many platforms might have another 30 years' life, some will reach the end of their lives in the early 1990s and, with present low prices, some will be vulnerable earlier than we had anticipated. It is important to make the right provision bearing that in mind.

In view of the Bill, some companies may decide to extinguish impending liability by abandoning platforms early, rather than postpone abandonment indefinitely, not knowing what the future costs of abandonment will be. Would my right hon. Friend like to consider what will happen if a platform is abandoned before the Bill is in place? Would oil companies be under the proposed obligation? Would there have to be retrospective legislation or would they get away with it and be able to leave installations in the North sea at no cost?

The Bill could result in some oil companies continuing to pump oil until production costs equal or exceed revenue from sales. Platforms would therefore be in position longer than anticipated and remain a blot on the environment and a hazard. The Bill might arrest progressive abandonment.

The size of the problem has already been described. I have written in my notes that we have 139 platforms, but others have said that we have 144. It seems that five have toppled since the debate started. The abandonment programme will create about 100,000 jobs. They will be useful and welcome, especially in the north and Scotland. An analogy has been drawn with the nuclear power industry. Those jobs should be compared with the 140,000 jobs which are already to be found in the nuclear industry.

Opposition Members who want to abandon our nuclear industry should consider the fact that, welcome and important as they are, the 100,000 jobs in the abandonment programme are essentially negative jobs in that they are destroying something whereas the 140,000 jobs in the nuclear industry are positive and creating something.

Dr. Godman: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that many of the demolition jobs will require highly developed skills and, in some cases, training so that the task is performed competently and safely?

Dr. Clark: The job will indeed require a good deal of skill. We do not yet know how much because the project has not been properly researched. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that many people with minimal skills have been trained to work in the North sea and that they have enjoyed substantial career development. I hope that, with the demolition programme, people in less skilled work will be trained so that they attain high levels of skill and earnings. They will deserve every penny that they earn as the job will be risky and highly skilled.

As the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) said, the major concrete platforms will probably stay in place. We might find alternative uses for them. It would be nice to think that they could be the bases for wave power machines feeding in current for transmission back to the mainland, or as bases for wind power generators. They might be used as defence installations or even have a compassionate use as rescue stations for lifeboats or helicopters. It would be sad if we brought down some of these concrete installations only to erect something similar a few years later to help sailors at sea.

I do not like the idea of toppling rigs and leaving them on the seabed. That would be environmental vandalism.

[Dr. Clark]

The idea of leaving only 40 m of clear water, as the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney suggested, does not appeal to me. I prefer either to leave the platforms where they are or to remove them completely. I know that the latter is an expensive operation, except in the southern and shallower area of the North sea, where the figures supplied to us by UKOOA show that the cost of complete removal is no more than partial removal or toppling over. One should be able to clear the shallow waters of the southern basin.

The cost of the project will be about £5,000 million, which is a large sum of money, although not a lot compared with the revenue coming out of the North sea to the Government, the nation and the oil companies. The extractive industries have a tradition of returning sites to the condition that they were in before they were first worked. That tradition shou'd be continued, although the site is maritime and we are talking about platforms in the North sea. Under the laws of the land, the Government allow the restoration costs to be offset against tax and thus it is in the interest of both the Government and oil industry to keep the costs of abandonment low.

I understand the reasons for the Bill. I support the need for it. I recognise the concern of the oil industry, and there will be an interesting Committee stage, during which all parties will be lobbying, presenting and debating the issues that the Bill brings forth. The Bill should be given a Second Reading so that the Committee can fill the many gaps in the detail of the Bill. However, I do not wish to see the oil industry and the Government fighting each other over the legislation on abandonment. Instead, I should like co-operation, so that together we can complete the task of providing legislation for a sensible policy for the abandonment that all of us consider necessary.

6.2 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): In principle, I welcome the Bill. I would give it more enthusiastic support if I thought that Ministers would be willing to listen with care to fair-minded and constructive criticisms and suggestions from Labour Members.

I declare a personal interest, of which I think the Minister is aware. At the moment, under the Industry and Parliamentary Trust, I am seconded to BP. However, what I have to say is not influenced by the management of the company and in no way do I receive financial inducement by way of that secondment.

People living and employed in maritime communities will take a close interest in the Bill. I argued in a debate this summer, in a meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee, that all these installations should be removed once their working lives had come to an end. I remember arguing that, if it is in the national interest to exclude fishermen from some areas to allow for exploration, development and production of offshore oil and gas fields, it is also in the national interest, when production comes to an end, to have some structures removed. I readily recognise that there are formidable problems, but nevertheless the fishing grounds of the North sea should be swept clean of such hardware.

I should like the Minister to comment on the American experience, if he has time. Historically, the mineral management service of the United States Department of the Interior has stipulated that disused platforms and wells will be cut off about 5 m below the mud line or sea floor. It also requires that the sea bed shall be restored to its original condition, and that has been my argument for a long time. This American requirement replaced the former regulations, that simply called for the marking and abandonment of derelict structures. I appreciate that there are as many differences between the American offshore experience and that of our country as there are similarities and parallels, but we should follow the American lead.

A great deal of research is being conducted into the feasibility of turning defunct structures into artificial reefs; a journal said about this research:

"Extensive environmental analysis has demonstrated the value of converting offshore oil and gas structures and other appropriate materials into artificial reefs for everyone's benefit. Current removal and destruction requirements are wasting a national resource of tremendous public and private value."

That should not be the main objective of abandonment, but it could be worthy of analysis in shallow water areas.

In two or three years, the first of the North sea platforms will have come to the end of their operational lives. They should be removed. The National Economic Development Council has stated that demolition will become a multi-million pound industry, as the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) said. He talked about the 100,000 new jobs. The NEDC urges companies to plan ahead so that they can compete with this work. Again, this is likely to be dangerous work and will require careful management and a highly skilled work force, especially in the use of explosives, because not all the rigs can be burned. Controlled explosions will have to be used.

Despite what the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) said, we have experience of the dismantling of rigs to draw on. The work will require careful regulation, especially when safety matters are involved. Safety matters should be the kernel of these regulations. I support the need for safety zones, which feature in part III. Is the Minister of the opinion that a safety zone of 500 m is extensive enough?

The Minister spoke of the partial abandonment of installations, and that causes me a great deal of concern. As I said earlier, the modern stern trawler can fish in depths of up to 500 fathoms. Even the smaller, side trawler, if it has enough warps on board, can fish in up to 300 fathoms. These are important considerations. We have heard that there are 139 rigs, or 144. They are scattered across the continental shelf, sometimes in shallow water and in other cases in deep water. The Leman bank gas rigs east of Lowestoft are in shallow water, but it should be possible if, I regret to say, costly, to take such rigs down below the sea bed, following the American example. We should follow that experience and ensure that these rigs are cut off below the sea floor. In America they refer to 5 m. I am not sure that this would be adequate in some parts of the North sea, where there is sea bed erosion. That is of considerable significance in the North sea close to the Dutch coast but it is also of some significance close to the English coast.

Mr. Peter Gilson, a diver of many years' experience at the bottom of the North sea, has brought my attention to the following:

"Underwater structures resting on or tied into the seabed and under 'current' influence can be subject to stress, which may lead to serious damage as a consequence of seabed 'Scour' or 'Erosion'. For example, in the case of a pipeline not resting on the seabed and fully exposed with a gap or daylight beneath it, the 'bridging and/or spanning' can put an

unacceptable stress load on the pipe and lead to serious damage. Further mechanical damage may occur to exposed pipes underwater as a result of contact with anchors and fishing equipment."

If that is true of exposed pipelines, it also emphasises the dangers to fishing gear from the remnants of oil and gas rigs.

The Minister referred to pipelines in his speech. Is he satisfied with the present protection arrangements for pipelines which are marked on navigational charts? Trawlers must not tow across or along pipelines. Most trawler skippers obey the rules, but I know one skipper who by means of his echo-sounding equipment locates pipelines so that he can tow his gear up or down them. That is a very dangerous practice—indeed, extremely dangerous when, because of sea bed erosion, the pipe becomes exposed.

Sea bed scour or erosion emphasises the damage that can occur when trawl doors or steel bobbins come into contact with exposed pipelines and structure foundations. A beam trawler, of which we have many in the United Kingdom, could suffer severe damage if its gear were to snap on an exposed pipeline or on the remnants of a structure.

I have several questions to put to the Minister. First, by "sea level" does he mean low water springs? In the North sea that is very important to fishermen. It is also very important to the so-called partial abandonment policy. Secondly, when a licence application is made, is the applicant required to submit an environmental statement concerning the likely environmental impact of the new development? That should be a statutory requirement. Thirdly, what protection is to be given to pipelines vis-a-vis the problems of sea bed erosion? Fourthly, is the Minister satisfied with a safety zone of 500 m?

I hope that Ministers will pay close regard to fair-minded and constructive criticisms and suggestions concerning the Bill. To the many people who are employed in our maritime communities this is an important Bill. Many of the problems that it exposes will need to be analysed in a fair-minded and constructive way in Committee. I hope that those hon. Members who serve on the Committee will engage in a democratic analysis of the Bill and its implications. However, given this Government's record, democratic analysis is somewhat unlikely.

6.14 pm

Mr. K. Harvey Proctor (Billericay): My right hon. Friend the Minister of State is fair-minded and constructive, so I am sure that in Committee he will respond in the way that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) suggested.

I have a constituency interest in the oil industry, albeit that it is a downstream oil industry. I have not one but two oil refineries in my constituency. I share with my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) the Mobil oil refinery and terminal at Coryton, which employs about 900 people. There is a throughput of about 180,000 barrels a day, or about 25,000 tonnes of oil a day, or about 9 million tonnes a year. The Shell oil refinery at Shellhaven employs about 625 people and 200 contract staff. Current production is about 4·2 million tonnes of oil a year. That is not an insubstantial tonnage in terms of the United Kingdom's oil refinery capacity.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend upon the Government's foresight in introducing the Bill, in particular the powers relating to the decommissioning or abandonment of offshore installations. This is the time to plan for the future. As we have heard from a number of hon. Members, the issues are complex and have very important technical, legal and financial implications. My right hon. Friend estimates that the cost of clearing the platforms—either 139 or 144—will be about £6 billion.

My right hon. Friend admitted that there is a conflict of interest between the oil companies and taxpayers and the shipping and fishing interests and he said that the Government have attempted to establish a balance. He also said that if there are better ways of tackling these issues he will be very happy to consider them. I hope that the Government will approach the Committee in that spirit.

I hope my right hon. Friend will consider whether this would be a suitable Bill for the special Committee procedure. My hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) referred to the fact that he had served on such a Standing Committee. I served on a Special Standing Committee that led to very important changes to the mental health legislation. It would be appropriate for this Bill to be subject to that special kind of treatment. The first three sessions could be devoted to taking evidence from witnesses before commencement of the full Committee stage. I hope that that procedure is still available. I think that it is.

As for the abandonment of offshore installations, I wish to refer briefly to my concern regarding the powers and liabilities that are provided for in the Bill.

I recognise that the Bill, by the nature of the subject with which it deals, can provide little more than a framework within which the Secretary of State can regulate the requirements for abandoning fields, but in three important respects the Bill goes much further than it needs to or should do in terms of providing the Secretary of State with regulatory powers.

First, there are no restrictions on the way in which the Secretary of State can exercise the powers given to him in the Bill—in particular, the power of the Secretary of State under clause 4 to approve, modify or reject abandonment programmes submitted under clause 1. Secondly, the Secretary of State is under no obligation to give reasons why he has exercised the powers that he has under the Bill. Thirdly, clause 14 expressly limits the rights of those affected by decisions made by the Secretary of State under the Bill to appeal against them, and, in so doing, it can be argued that it restricts the usually accepted obligation of the Secretary of State to act reasonably.

The Bill could be construed as setting a bad precedent in giving a Minister powers which he may exercise as he chooses and without supervision. I hope that in Committee the Government will amend the Bill to provide some criteria which the Secretary of State must apply in exercising his powers under the Bill; to require the Secretary of State to give reasons why he has exercised his powers; and, at least, to provide the usual rights of appeal in relation to the exercise by a Minister of a regulatory power.

I understand and approve the desire of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State to ensure, through the Bill, that there is no chance of the Government or the taxpayer being required to meet that part of the cost of abandoning installations which should be paid by the oil companies. However, allowing the Government to pick on any

[Mr. K. Harvey Proctor]

member of a consortium or its bankers and make it liable for all the obligations of the consortium, as clause 2 would do, could have a number of unsatisfactory side effects.

The larger oil companies, faced with the risk of having to bail out the smaller oil companies, will be reluctant to invite them to join consortia and thus stunt the development of the smaller British oil companies which the Government have so carefully nurtured over the past seven years. In addition, I fear that the banks will be reluctant to finance development if they face the possibility of being liable for abandonment.

The Government may want to keep the powers in clause 2 as a fallback position, but what is primarily needed is for the Government to take steps to ensure that the oil industry disciplines itself by establishing guarantees so that, come the day, everyone, including the Government, can be sure that each member of a consortium will be able to contribute its proper share of the cost of abandoning fields. That could be done without undue difficulty by the Government.

The House should give the Bill a Second Reading and then critically examine its contents in Committee.

6.23 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I am grateful to have an opportunity to speak on the Bill, even in what are, for Back-Bench contributions, the dying seconds. I do not regret that enforced brevity because most of the salient features of a Second Reading debate have been well rehearsed and there is little need for further repetition.

My overwhelming sentiment was expressed by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydifil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) when he said that he could detect no significant or fundamental matter of principle or dogma in the Bill and so we can approach the debate and subsequent deliberations on the Bill with an open mind and in a constructive way.

For my part, I am aware not so much of the immediate positive suggestions that I have to make, but of anxiety about two broad general areas. One, which has been mentioned a number of times, concerns the practice and principle of liability as expounded in the Bill. The second is my concern about the extent and arbitrary nature of some of the considerable powers bestowed on the Secretary of State.

With regard to the Bill's handling of the principle and practice of liability, I welcome my right hon. Friend the Minister's opening comments and the tone and terms that he used. He acknowledges that this must be the subject of further debate, and that is indeed the case. I support the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) when he turned his attention to that.

Some of the reasons for my concern about liability are to be found in clause 1. We there learn that even if a company were to abide by all the recommendations in an abandonment programme laid down by the Secretary of State—this is the great point—the company could, in perpetuity in some circumstances, be held liable. We have given some thought to the principle at stake and we have acknowledged that that could be of severe potential damage to companies. However, I am struck by the inconsistency between the principle expounded here and that which the House accepted only last June when we turned our attention to the Latent Damage Act and discussed unlimited liability and propounded and accepted the principle of limited liability. Greater cause for concern about liability is to be found in clause 2. I need convincing that it is necessary to abandon corporate limited liability. I certainly need to be convinced of the need to extend liability in the way that the Bill proposes, especially as that applies to banks and finance houses. We are in danger of deterring investment and of moving into uncharted waters because, as I understand it, that is without parallel in other areas of corporate liability.

The second area for concern is the extensive powers given to the Secretary of State. I am surprised that Opposition Members did not give more attention to that theme. My hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) referred to clauses 4, 5 and 6 and how the Secretary of State does not need to publish the criteria for his decision on whether to approve, reject, amend or even impose an abandonment programme. That is in contrast with existing law. Nor do we find in the Bill, as I understand it, provision for an arbitration procedure of the kind in existing licences.

Clause 14 compounds the matter further. The explanatory and financial memorandum says that clause 14

"enables any person aggrieved by certain specified acts of the Secretary of State to make application to the courts"—

and so on. My understanding of that clause is that it limits the opportunities for remedy through public law rather than creates further opportunities. The arbitary powers proposed in the Bill perhaps reach something of a climax in clause 14, as they do also in clause 10 with the extensive reserve powers given to the Secretary of State. Hon. Members know how the offshore oil industry is expressing increasing concern about clause 10 and, indeed, about such powers altogether.

I welcome the Bill. There is no doubt about that. Some further work needs to be done on it and we must look to the Government for appreciably more explanation in Committee.

6.28 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The last occasion I remember the House debating the scrap metal trade was in relation to a whaling station in south Georgia. The transaction was not altogether happy for those concerned. Indeed, as far as I know, the scrap is still there and the unfortunate Mr. Davidoff has not even got his money back. Perhaps that is a cautionary tale about the importance of not neglecting the residue of industries which have died or are dying.

I rise to conclude the debate on behalf of the Opposition in my capacity as spokesman for rural affairs in Scotland. I do so because of the serious implications of the Bill for the fishing industry in Scotland. I intend to be brief because many important points have been raised and I want the Minister to have ample opportunity to respond to them in detail.

For all those concerned with the sea this is a disturbing measure. It could enable the Government to sanction irresponsible conduct by oil companies which may want to abandon unwanted equipment on the seabed. The Minister has a good reputation as a basically decent man. I hope that he does not mind me saying that. Indeed, he earned genuine credit in Scotland when in the 1970s he defied the present Prime Minister to support legislation to establish a Scottish Assembly and achieve better

accountability for Government in that part of the country. To many of us it seems that the Minister is selling himself short on this measure.

The measure is the legislative equivalent to a blank cheque — something like a blank Bill — and many gaps must be filled in Committee. It was interesting that so many hon. Members on both sides of the House emphasised the need for more information about the way in which the enabling powers would be operated and that my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) found an unlikely ally in the hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) in suggesting a special Standing Committee to obtain more information about the way in which the Bill would operate when enacted.

The Minister referred to his consultations with the Scottish Fishermen's Federation last week. He knows that it is far from satisfied with those consultations. Indeed, it is genuinely worried about many possibilities raised by the Bill. The Bill foreshadows the beginning of the end of Scotland's oil era. Despite all the hopes raised by the discovery of North sea oil, so far the Government have managed to spend all the oil revenues on the additional cost of unemployment.

In Scottish terms, we now have a premature slump in the oil economy because of the Government's failure to run a sensible depletion policy. To add insult to injury, the Scottish fishing industry, which has been severely disrupted by the oil industry in the North sea, will be left with a vast obstacle course of sawn-off oil rigs and disintegrating pipelines strewn over the fishing grounds. All that is despite the assurances given by the Government and the oil industry at the beginning of oil developments in the North sea.

Fishermen have co-operated to the full with the Government and the industry throughout and now it appears that the Government and the industry may leave them with less than they were entitled to expect at the outset. It has been acknowledged by hon. Members on both sides of the House that fairly substantial profits have been made in the North sea by the industry and the Government. I acknowledge that the cost of clearing up the mess will be substantial. The Minister suggested that it could be as high as £6 billion. However, it should not be too much to ask the oil industry to take account of its responsibility to clear up the mess that it made after it has finished the operation. Indeed, that was acknowledged by the hon. Members for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) and for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet).

We understand that the Government intend to cut the cost of that operation, perhaps by £2 billion, by allowing the oil companies to leave much of their scrap where it is, some with only 40 m of clear water above it. The hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) described that as environmental vandalism and he is right. We have severe doubts about those proposals and should like to consider them in proper detail in Committee.

Certainly, to saw off oil rigs in that way would present serious hazards for any semi-submerged cargoes that ply those seas in future. It will certainly create a fine old obstacle course for submarines, as the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) suggested. Above all, it will leave a dangerous and costly minefield for fishermen in valuable fishing grounds. I should not need to tell the Minister about that, or about the importance of the fishing industry to the economy of many communities on the east coast of Scotland — indeed around the coasts of Scotland and England — because he represents the constituency of Kincardine and Deeside where there are many fishermen.

Our fishermen have been able to work their way around the oil and gas installations. We do not know whether there are 139 or 144. That is one of the important questions raised by the debate. When they are above the water they may be seen, and while the pipes are still in good order, the fishing industry has been able to live with the obstructions. But if the rigs are sawn off or toppled over, they will become invisible and as the years go by the rigs and pipelines will disintegrate and sections will shift around the sea bed because of the currents in the North sea, so the fishing industry, in particular, is entitled to ask for certain assurances and information from the Government.

The first question is whether those sub-sea obstructions will be marked and properly charted; and, if so, who will be responsible for doing that and ensuring that fishermen and mariners are aware of their presence underwater. The second question is what compensation fishermen will have for the loss of their fishing grounds, if significant areas must be put out of bounds because of the risks to fishermen and their gear. More important, what provision will be made for compensation for the loss of gear when it is fouled in those obstructions? Most important, what about the risk to human life and limb?

I am not being alarmist. There was an incident two years ago when the fishing vessel, Mhari L, from Kirkcudbright, fishing in the Irish sea, went down and lost all its crew because the gear was caught on an undersea telephone cable. If that can happen as a result of gear being caught in an undersea telephone cable, imagine how much more danger there must be from massive unmarked structures, such as oil rigs and pipelines on the sea bed. We must accept that that could happen as a result of abandoning oil and gas equipment.

The Minister knows and we know that the SFF wants all the scrap to be moved from the sea bed. I do not necessarily suggest that that is reasonable or practical, but I share the federation's serious misgivings about the lack of genuine consultation. That is one job that the Committee can do, particularly if it constitutes itself as a Special Standing Committee. It can undertake proper consultations with all the interests concerned.

I tend to take the view, which has been expressed by many hon. Members, that the decommissioning of plant should be covered by the conditions of the licences to develop the oil reserves and should be included in the budgets of the oil companies involved in those operations.

I am deliberately being brief because it is important that the Minister has a proper opportunity to reply. The Bill seems to be a shameless enabling Bill. It provides far too much leeway for Ministers, the Government and, possibly, the oil industry. It undermines some useful principles which are at present enshrined in the 1958 Geneva convention. It appears to us that the Government are selling short important Scottish interests.

That reinforces our determination that the Labour party will establish a Scottish Assembly to protect Scottish interests better in future. It is a pity that the Minister no longer supports that principle. However, I hope that he will take this opportunity now, and future opportunities in Committee, to provide much more information about the Government's intentions in respect of the fishing industry and other maritime interests in the North sea. I

[Mr. John Home Robertson]

hope that he can allay some fears which have been expressed by his hon. Friends and Labour Members when he replies to the debate.

6.40 pm

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: With the exception of the speech of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), there has been a constructive approach to the Bill. When the hon. Gentleman has to resort to saying that the Bill is selling Scotland short and other such phrases, he does not reflect the earlier part of the debate to which hon. Members on both sides of the House contributed. If the hon. Gentleman had carried out a proper study of what the Bill involves and had consulted the various interests, he would recognise that his speech did not reflect fairly the issues with which we are concerned.

I accept what the hon. Member for East Lothian has said about the importance of fishing interests. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will listen to me instead of talking to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Torney), bearing in mind that he asked me to reply fully to the debate. There is probably no Member of this place who has been more involved in fishing issues over a longer period than I have. I do not think that I require any lessons from anyone on the importance of the fishing industry to Scotland and the whole of the United Kingdom. I am concerned that in a Bill such as the one before us we ensure that fishermen's interests are taken into account. That is why on two occasions I have met representatives of the fishing organisations to discuss our policy towards abandonment and work preparatory to the Bill.

I recognise entirely the interests of fishermen and shipping generally as well as the navigational interests that have been expressed. I hope that the hon. Member for East Lothian will acknowledge the interests that Scotland has in the oil industry. It is clearly a major Scottish interest. We must bear in mind those who operate in Scottish waters, those who are employed on platform rigs and other installations and those who are employed on shore. The hon. Gentleman has acknowledged that there is a balance of interests, although at one stage it seemed that he was speaking at one level of interest and one only. We are seeking to balance the different interests which he and others have described.

It has been acknowledged throughout the House that where we are dealing with an operation that will be so expensive it is important that we do not interfere with other legitimate interests in the sea. Against that background, however, it is only sensible to explore ways in which the cost of the operation can be diminished without putting at risk other serious long-term interests. I would have been a little happier with the hon. Gentleman's remarks if he had acknowledged that.

A large range of issues has been covered in the debate and I shall endeavour in the time that is left to me to deal with some that come within it. The issues are varied and numerous and some of them will be more appropriately taken up in Committee, and I hope that we shall have the opportunity to do so. I assure the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) that I approach our consideration of the Bill in Committee, as I have for other measures, in a constructive way. I hope only that the hon. Gentleman is more successful, when we deal with this Bill, than on previous occasions in tabling amendments that are constructive, and persuading me of the way in which improvements could be made.

I endorse what was said by a number of hon. Members, including my hon. Friends the Members for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) and for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) and the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), in underlining what I said initially about abandonment and our approach to it. I reject what the hon. Member for East Lothian said about the industry's future. I do not regard abandonment as the beginning of the end in any sense. The industry has a long future in the exploitation of our own resources. It has an even longer future if we are successful in continuing the investment that we are now making in building up a supply industry that can aspire to be competitive worldwide, especially as a leader of new technology. Far from being the beginning of the end, we are preparing for a new phase. That is all that we are doing.

As I said at the beginning of the debate, and as others on both sides have reiterated, we have the opportunity to build up new technology and a new industrial capability that will provide jobs and business for Britain for many years to come and in many different parts of the world, and not merely in our own territorial waters.

I shall address myself to some of the central issues of the debate, some of which were referred to by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, but before doing so I shall take up a number of the detailed issues. My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North spoke of the clause relating to Northern Ireland and asked whether the Isle of Man would fall into that category. Licensing the Isle of Man's territorial waters falls to the Government of the Isle of Man and not to my Department. As far as I am aware, no licences have yet been issued in that area of sea.

My hon. Friend made some extremely interesting and constructive comments about tax revenues and tax treatment on abandonment. I think that he was rather ambitious in what he said about the Government's tax take overall. It is much lower than 85 to 90 per cent. The most profitable fields pay a marginal rate of about 86 per cent. and some of the new and smaller oilfields will be paying as low a rate as that of corporation tax, which is 35 per cent. I hope that the discussions that the oil industry will be having with the Treasury and the Inland Revenue on possible tax treatment will prove useful. The principle is accepted that the costs of abandonment are properly to be set against tax in the same way as the costs of development.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North explained that there are other approaches, and one has been mentioned by the oil companies as an alternative. The companies have drawn attention to the grant system, a system that has been considered in Norway. I accept that that approach can be considered here. I feel, however, that allowance against tax is probably the more appropriate approach given our background, but there will be discussions on tax matters. I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not deal in detail with the comments that he has made on taxation, which involve matters more appropriate for consideration by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I shall ensure, however, that the Treasury is aware of the point that he has raised.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) spoke of the practical consideration of metering and asked for clarification. The Bill's provisions apply to existing fields

and existing licences as well as new ones. These provisions w pply to the new fields within the licences and there is no intention of requiring a licensee to alter the method of measurement that is agreed for an existing field, except where he proposes to make use of the measurement facilities for existing fields in measuring petroleum that is won and saved from another field. I do not think that our proposals will give rise to a large amount of unnecessary expense.

Mr. Hardy: The Minister will accept that, as schedule 1 stands, implications exist for the development of satellite platforms, which he knows will play an important part in the recovery of small reserves of gas. I hope that he will consider the matter to ensure that that development is not inhibited by this structure.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Of course I will consider that point. I was trying to say that schedule 1 will not inhibit that. If it did, I would be worried, as we are not seeking to inhibit any activity but rather to encourage it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) asked me a specific question regarding what would happen if, between today and the passage of the Bill, a company abandoned a platform. That is an important point. As I mentioned earlier, powers are available to prevent that. All platforms have required consent for their emplacement under the Coast Protection Act 1949. A condition of that consent is that a platform must be removed to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State when it is disused. Powers also exist under model licence clauses which provide that the licensee shall not abandon any well without the consent of the Secretary of State. Back-up powers exist. It was because of questions about the adequacy of those powers and their unspecific nature that we introduced the Bill.

I hope that as we proceed with the Bill no abandonments will occur and that it will not be too long before the Bill reaches the statute book.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman asked some detailed questions about the adequacy of safety zones. The 500 m zone is that which is allowed under the convention on the continental shelf. There is no evidence, so far as I am aware, that it does not provide, in normal circumstances, adequate protection. The hon. Gentleman asked from what level of tide one would measure clearance. I am told that it is the lowest astronomical tide. I hope that that answers his question.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow asked me an important question about environmental impact. Until now, that has been covered by conditions in the licensing rounds. For example, in the 10th licensing round we proposed to license some blocks close to the shore of the Moray firth. That is an example of an environmentally important area. We are imposing specific environmental conditions regarding blocks in such areas. We are rightly sensitive to the issue of environmental impact.

On the standards that we might require for the total removal of a platform as against its partial abandonment, the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow asked a specific question regarding the American experience. He is correct on that point. The Americans require total removal, but one should be careful when making a comparison between different countries because the Americans require removal in relatively shallow waters where platforms can be fairly easily removed — conditions akin to our southern basin. In our discussions with the oil industry and fishing interests in areas where the water is shallow and the structures are smaller we, too, would envisage total abandonment of the platforms——

Mr. Home Robertson: The removal.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I stand corrected. In those circumstances, one would envisage the total removal of the platforms.

Dr. Godman *rose*——

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: There is not much time left. I shall be happy to return later to any specific query the hon. Gentleman may have.

I shall now mention what I regard as the more fundamental areas of the Bill on which anxiety has been expressed. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney and others fairly made the point about consultation. They asked what consultation had taken place up to now, how detailed it was and what consultation would take place in the future under the provisions of the Bill.

One must make a distinction here between two different elements in the Bill. One element is the general procedures and framework which we are setting up to clarify precisely the Government's powers, and the other is the general liabilities of the oil companies so that we may proceed to more careful planning regarding abandonment. Until now, the consultations have taken place in the latter direction.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney was especially critical of the fact that, during the more detailed consultations, we had not spelt out more specifically the extent to which removal would be considered necessary, and whether it should be total or partial. We have not yet reached that stage. That stage will be reached when regulations are introduced under the powers of the Bill and discussions on them take place. That distinction must be made because of the approach that we have chosen. It is the right approach. I defend it again, as I did at the outset. We are dealing with what will occur some years in the future. The legislation enables people to focus on the problems and tackle and discuss them in a much more detailed way within their proper framework. But no matter how much general consultation there may be, the position will still develop and evolve in the light of experience, not least in the light of what happens in relation to international agreements, as the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney correctly drew to the attention of the House.

The approach that we have adopted on some major issues, making it clear where we stand but leaving open the matter of further consultation as to how the precise provisions will apply in the case of abandonment, is much more appropriate to the problem that we must tackle.

Clause 11 deals with the regulations on the consultations with the interests involved. I envisage that fishing interests will be covered by those regulations. I will check the position, but the words used in that clause are precisely those used under present legislation when fishing interests are consulted. The legal obligation for proper consultation when the regulations are introduced is written into the clause. However, I am sensitive to the point that, if we are to approach the matter within the

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

framework of the regulations which will be introduced later, and if we shall require companies to produce plans and programmes for the abandonment of structures case by case—I would expect that this could be laid down by the Secretary of State in the requirement that he makes for the programme — consultation should take place. How that is done formally is a subject which I would be happy to return to and discuss. I intend that those consultations should take place at that stage case by case. Precisely how we shall give effect to them may be more appropriate for discussion in Committee. I will be happy to return to it later.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Minister acknowledge that the fishing industry believes that the abandonment of platforms is not the same as their installation? It seeks a right of consultation and wants its views to be taken into account. That is a stronger right than its rights in the discussions relating to the installation of fields.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am in no doubt about the strong feelings of the fishing industry. I am under no illusions about it. At present, all the fishing organisations support total removal and nothing less. That is the official and public view of the fishing organisations. I do not wish to mislead the House in relation to that.

I hope that in the further consultations that take place the industry might be prepared, without prejudice to its stated position, to consider what other alternatives might exist in relation to partial abandonment, in which its interests might not be grossly interfered with or affected in any major way and where cost savings might be achieved. In that sense, I have invited leaders of organisations to enter into further consultations on what we should do.

Much of the debate has centred on the liability of the oil companies to discharge their obligations. I am grateful to hon. Members on both sides of the House for supporting the principle that it is correct for the Government to ensure that a company does not walk away from its responsibilities.

I hope that all companies, particularly the larger international companies, will live up to their responsibilities. But there is always a risk that a company could, for example, bankrupt its United Kingdom subsidiary at the time of abandonment, thus causing the cost of abandonment to fall on the British taxpayer. Hon. Members have all said that that would be wrong, so the Government are right to legislate for that. Indeed, my hon. Friends the Members for Bedfordshire, North, for Exeter, for Rochford, for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) and for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) all made that point. Thus, if there are alternatives, I am prepared to consider them with those interests representing the oil companies.

This measure is not without precedent, and I should not like any hon. Member to think that it was. If, for example, banks lend to a company, they may require a parent company guarantee or other security. Equally, in the case of a small company, the bank may require a guarantee or other security to be provided by the directors. Therefore, there is a precedent in normal commercial affairs. Furthermore, in the case of large construction or supply contracts, the customer may require performance bonds or guarantees fom the supplier's parent company. Thus, there is a precedent in the commercial world for wider responsibility being required.

Under the Insolvency Act 1985, wider responsibility is also required in the case of a company's wrongful trading. But notwithstanding that, I assure the House that as long as the objective is achieved, I am prepared to consider any practical approach.

We have had a good debate on the Bill. I apologise to those hon. Members who raised detailed points that I have been unable to respond to in the detail that is my custom because of the shortage of time. But I am grateful to hon. Members for the general welcome that they have given the Bill, and I look forward to a very constructive and improving Committee stage. In that spirit, I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

PETROLEUM BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Petroleum Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenditure incurred by the Secretary of State under provisions of that Act relating to the abandonment of offshore installations or submarine pipe-lines, and

(b) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under section 40 of the Petroleum and Submarine Pipe-lines Act 1975.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

PETROLEUM BILL *(WAYS AND MEANS)*

Resolved,

That for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Petroleum Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the charging of fees in respect of expenditure incurred by the Secretary of State under provisions of that Act relating to the abandonment of offshore installations or submarine pipe-lines; and

(b) the payment of any sums into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

European Community Budgets

7.3 pm

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Peter Brooke): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 5484/86, key figures for the 1987 Budget; 7113/86, Preliminary Draft Supplementary and Amending Budget No. 1 for 1986; 7068/86, updated key figures for the 1987 Budget; 7927/86, Preliminary Draft Budget for 1987; 9192/86, Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1987; 8877/86, Letter of Amendment No. 1 to the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1987; COM (86)360, Letter of Amendment to the 1986 Budget; 8876/86, Preliminary Draft Amending Budget No. 1 for 1986; 8883/86 and Addendum 1, Commission Communication on recent developments affecting the 1986 Budget and 1987 Preliminary Draft Budget; and supports the Government's efforts to achieve tighter restraint and better balance in the Community's Budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I have to announce that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Brooke: The motion before the House list nine sets of documents relating to the European Community budget procedure which the Scrutiny Committee has recommended for debate. These documents relate to the annual budget procedures for 1986 and 1987. For the convenience of the House I propose to summarise the budget procedure over the past nine months, placing each of these documents in context, before commenting briefly on the current position in the 1987 budget procedure.

I should like to begin by offering warm thanks to the Scrutiny Committee, under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), for its sterling work on these and very many other documents. The Government are conscious of the need to safeguard the interests of the House in these matters, and supports the Scrutiny Committee in its vital watchdog role. I had myself the pleasure of giving evidence to the Scrutiny Committee on the Community budget procedure recently, as background to this evening's debate.

The House will recall that the 1986 budget procedure was interrupted by the European Parliament's adoption of a disputed budget in December of last year. Following this, the Council of Ministers decided to commence legal proceedings against the European Parliament before the European Court of Justice. Simultaneously, the United Kingdom brought an action for interim measures suspending implementation by the Commission of the disputed elements in the 1986 budget until the court had given substantive judgment. On 17 March, the court accepted the United Kingdom application for such measures and ordered the Commission to implement the budget on the basis of the draft established by the Council on 27 November. The court also ordered the Commission to refund the £18 million which the United Kingdom had already contributed on a "without prejudice" basis towards the disputed part of the budget.

In the autumn of last year, the Council had asked the Commission to consider further the question of commitments outstanding which had yet to be paid—the so-called "cost of the past" problem. In April of this year, the Commission produced a report relating to the level of outstanding commitments in the structural funds—notably the regional and the social funds. On the basis of this report, and of the need for additional agricultural expenditure due to the sharp and sudden fall in the value of the dollar against the European currencies, the Commission brought forward on 20 May a draft supplementary and amending 1986 budget—that is, EM 7113/86—which proposed additional increases of 1,811 mecu in payment appropriations, and 1,146 mecu in commitment appropriations.

In line with an agreement reached at the October 1985 ECOFIN Council, the draft budget also included an increase of some 500 mecu in the United Kingdom abatement for 1986. Although the 1986 budget dispute was not yet resolved, the 1987 budget procedure began in parallel.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Do the Government believe that the fall in the value of the dollar necessarily involved a staggering increase in EEC expenditure? If so, why did the price of some of the foodstuffs not covered by the CAP, such as coffee, bananas and pepper, rise despite the collapse in the value of the dollar? Does my hon. Friend the Minister have any evidence to show that the fall in the value of the dollar was directly responsible for the sharp increase in Common Market spending?

Mr. Brooke: The Government accepted that there was an exceptional circumstance as a result of the fall in the dollar, and had to apply their attention to the overall impact of that fall in the value of the dollar. The products that my hon. Friend mentioned are not natural exports for the Community. The Community could not really be said to be part of a banana regime, and coffee and pepper cannot be regarded as sensitivities.

In April, the Commission produced a document giving key figures for the 1987 budget—EM 5484/86—and its subsequent revision — EM 7068/86. These gave the broad lines of the Commission's spending plans for 1987. They were superseded in June by publication of the preliminary draft budget for 1987—EM 7927/86. These showed that the Commission proposed a 1987 budget just within the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling, in which the agricultural guideline was respected but non-obligatory expenditure rose by more than the maximum rate of increase of 8·1 per cent.

The start of the United Kingdom presidency in July of this year saw the Community still without a 1986 budget at the beginning of the 1987 budget procedure. The European Court gave its substantive judgment in the 1986 budget dispute on 3 July. It found that the European Parliament had exceeded its powers in adopting a budget for 1986 with provision for non-obligatory expenditure and a new maximum rate at the level which the Council had not agreed. The court ruled that the 1986 budget procedure remained incomplete and should therefore be completed in accordance with the treaty.

As president, the United Kingdom called a Budget Council for 7 and 8 July to agree a new Community budget for 1986. On 10 July, following three days of intensive negotiations, the Council and Parliament reached agreement on a new budget for 1986. Although this is not technically a depositable document, full details of the 1986 budget are contained in the White Paper statement on the 1986 Community budget, Cmnd 9907, published on 3 October.

The 1986 budget, as adopted in July, was some 7·6 per cent. larger overall than the Council's second reading

[Mr. Brooke]

budget of November last year. This involved an excess over the original 1986 agricultural guideline of 926 mecu. The United Kingdom Government regretted that increase, but took the view that it could be justified given the exceptional size and speed of the depreciation of the dollar over the period. That covers the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The budgets and budget discipline seem to have been accident-prone over the past year or so. Will my hon. Friend give a commitment to the House that in the 1987 budget the Government will not agree, in realistic terms, to a budget which without — or even with — creative accounting would go above the 1·4 per cent. VAT limit? Will he further give a commitment that this Government will never agree to an increase in the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling?

Mr. Brooke: The 1·4 per cent. ceiling is recognised by all parties to the budget process. My hon. Friend was tempting me with questions that might relate to the movement of future exchange rates. I remind him of the definition given in legal dictionaries of an act of God as being an act which no reasonable man would expect God to commit. We will clearly have to wait and see what happens.

Non-obligatory spending was increased by a further 16 per cent. compared with the November totals. The purpose of this increase was to cover the so-called "cost of the past" — commitments entered into in the structural funds but yet to be paid off — while monitoring the flow of new payments to the Ten as well as Spain and Portugal. We continue to believe that this problem could have been dealt with in less costly ways.

The Council met again on 22 July to consider the Commission's proposals for 1987. It proved unable to reach agreement by the necessary majority on that occasion, and reconvened on 8 September in Brussels.

During the intervening period, the Commission produced a communication on recent developments affecting the 1986 budget and preliminary draft 1987 budget — EM 8883/86. This document stated that the Community's revenue estimates from customs duties and agricultural levies for 1986 seemed likely to be over-optimistic and that there could be a revenue deficit of some 776 mecu, which the Commission proposed to offset by changes in agricultural and non-obligatory expenditure. Shortly, before the 8 September Council, the Commission produced formal proposals along those lines in its preliminary draft amending budget No. 1 for 1986—EM 8876/86. It also produced a letter of amendment to the peliminary draft budget for 1987—EM 8877/86—which incorporated certain small changes to the 1987 preliminary draft budget. These had been suggested informally by the Commission in July and their overall effect was slightly to reduce expenditure.

At the Budget Council on 8 September, the United Kingdom argued in favour of amending the 1986 budget to take account of the prospective revenue shortfall. But the Council decided against that. Part of the problem was that the Commission had not circulated its latest estimates until shortly before the Council meeting. The Council urged the Commission instead to take all possible measures to ensure that expenditure was reduced in an equitable way in order to maintain a balanced budget while taking account of the Community's obligations and avoiding the slippage of expenditure into 1987. The Council also noted that the Commission would provide more precise data on revenue and expenditure later in 1986.

On 1987, as well as establishing a draft budget EM 9192/86 the Council noted that the United Kingdom abatement would have to be increased by some 350 mecu owing to revenue adjustments and undertook that, to the extent that it was not possible to provide fully for this additional abatement in the 1987 budget, provisions would be made for it in the 1988 draft budget, due to be considered by the Council next summer. The Council is thus committed to providing this additional abatement somewhat earlier than is strictly required under the agreed procedures.

The draft 1987 budget, as established by the Council on 8-9 September, was fully in accordance with budget discipline. The 1987 agricultural guideline was respected, and non-obligatory expenditure was increased by half the maximum rate of 8·1 per cent. for payment appropriations and by rather less than that for commitment appropriations.

However, the Commission has warned of the risk of a substantial overrun in agricultural guarantee expenditure next year if the necessary preventive action is not taken. At the instigation of the United Kingdom, the October ECOFIN meeting discussed Community spending on agriculture. There was general agreement in the Council on the urgency and seriousness of the situation. The presidency conclusions, which received general though not universal support, stressed the need for policy decisions which allowed support prices to reflect more closely market conditions, returned the intervention system to its intended role as a safety net for times of particular pressure and not as a standard alternative marketing outlet, and ensured that price support policies were more flexibly operated so that commercial risks are not entirely borne by public finance. We intend to maintain the pressure for reform over the coming months.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): In relation to the Minister's points about ECOFIN, he will recall his written answer recently to my question about the reservations expressed by the Greek, Danish and German delegations. Those reservations cannot be brushed aside, because they are quite serious. The delegations maintained that agricultural policy had to take account of political and social aspects. I believe that the Greek delegation hoped that the money would be found almost regardless of the budget circumstances. Does the Minister agree that that is serious?

Mr. Brooke: I said that the presidential conclusions of ECOFIN enjoyed widespread support within the Council. That is an accurate statement. I would have been inaccurate had I not included a reference to certain reservations among individual countries. Those reservations were just as the hon. Gentleman reported.

The European Parliament has now proposed amendments and draft modifications to the 1987 draft budget in accordance with its role in the Community budget procedure. These were voted by the Parliament's plenary session in Strasbourg on Thursday of the week before last. When the Parliament's formal proposals are received, they

will of course be deposited in the House in the usual way. It may, however, be helpful if in the meantime I summarise them for the House.

The Parliament has proposed an increase in non-obligatory payment appropriations, compared with the Council's draft budget proposals, of some 520 mecu, some 170 mecu above the half maximum rate limit laid down by the treaty. The Parliament has also proposed a much larger increase, again compared with the Council's draft budget proposals, in non-obligatory commitment appropriations of some 1,020 mecu. On agriculture, too, the Parliament has proposed some substantial modifications including a reduction in dairy quotas, an increase in stock depreciation and a special fund to pay for the disposal of stocks. The Parliament's proposals will be considered by the Council at its meeting on 26 November, which I will chair, and where the United Kingdom will be represented by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury.

We are only halfway through the budget procedure for 1987. The Budget Council meets again on 26-27 November and the European Parliament has its second reading debate during the second week of December. We have considerable problems on the 1986 budget, due to the prospective revenue shortfall, and on the 1987 budget, in particular the substantial overrun of CAP expenditure. The negotiations that lie ahead are likely to be time-consuming and difficult, but a good start has been made and I have pleasure in commending the motion to the House.

7.19 pm

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): I beg to move, to leave out from first "Budget" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'and views with concern the increase of 39 per cent. in payment appropriations, the 10·8 per cent. increase in agricultural spending, and the increased shortfall in 1986; notes that the 1986 Budget exhausted the Communities' own resources income from the 1·4 per cent. value-added tax base, and that there is only 665 million ecu headroom in the 1987 Budget; and consequently calls on Her Majesty's Government to restrict the expenditure of the Community in 1987 to sources of income already approved by this House.'.

I am not surprised, I must say, at the——

Mr. Brooke: If the hon. Lady looks at the Order Paper, she will see that, perhaps by a typographical error, some crucial words have been omitted. Since I should not want the Opposition to mislead the House, it may be desirable to put them in by manuscript amendment.

Dr. McDonald: I have read the amendment that was submitted, and it is the same wording.

Mr. Brooke: I shall explain what I meant by my earlier intervention. The 39 per cent. in payment appropriations, to which the hon. Lady referred, is in non-obligatory expenditure. It will help the House if that is clearly identified.

Dr. McDonald: I should have thought that the reference to payment appropriations is clear enough. I am sorry if that is the Minister's objection.

I am not surprised that the Minister stopped his comments when he did. Of course, he knows full well that there are enormous problems ahead with the 1987 budget. I shall begin with the 1986 budget. I am glad that the Minister has reminded the House of what, at times, became the farce of the progress of the 1986 budget through Parliament, the Council, the EC Commission and, finally, the European Court. When the budget finally emerged on 11 July 1986, the Minister said:

"the new budget uses up all the available revenue within the 1·4 per cent. ceiling, together with the surplus carried forward from 1985."

He went on to spell out the various alterations that were made and commented:

"the United Kingdom's representatives made clear their profound and continuing concern about levels of expenditure in the new budget, and the implications for budget discipline."
—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1986; Vol. 101, c. 613.]

At that stage in 1986, the Minister was already concerned about the nature of the 1986 budget. Since then, we have a revenue shortfall of 776 million ecu — approximately £450 million to £500 million—which the Commission document of 25 August states

"could have serious implications for the resources available in 1987."

Already, the 1986 budget is running into difficulties, and they will carry over into 1987. In his opening remarks, the Minister referred to the ECOFIN meeting of 13 October and to the British document, which he declared received widespread support. That document suggested that Community support prices will more closely reflect supply and demand and market conditions. But the intervention system will be regarded as a safety net rather than an alternative market. Price support policies will involve commercial risks rather than be borne entirely by public finance.

When the Minister referred to the main items in the British document, he no doubt noticed that some mirth was expressed by hon. Members. I am not surprised that the document commanded widespread support. If he had announced that he was in favour of motherhood and apple pie, the document would have received widespread support. It was just a lot of pious waffle. There is no likelihood whatsoever of any item being adopted by the Community in the near future. We all agree with the sentiment that support prices should reflect market conditions, because otherwise the intervention system will be regarded as a safety net rather than an alternative market, but the chances of that happening in the present state of the EC are remote.

The Minister went on to refer to the 1987 budget, which we can at best describe as a stop-gap budget. Of course, the Minister has received much praise in the press for the way in which the negotiations have been conducted, but some of that praise was properly qualified. For example, an article in the 10 September edition of *The Times*, praised the Minister for his tactical success, but it went on to comment on the Minister

"securing majority agreement on a draft Budget for 1987 and managing to have the crisis on this year's budget put on one side."

That crisis will certainly not be put on one side for long, for in those discussions, many of the warnings that had already been given by Commissioners had been ignored. For example, the Commission President, Jaques Delors, warned EC Finance Ministers on 17 October, as reported by *Agra Europe*, that the 12 were facing a shortfall of 3 billion ecu in 1987. They talked about the rising cost of agricultural spending as the main reason for the expected shortfall. For example, another of the Commissioners, Andriessen, produced figures to show that, on cereals alone, expenditure would have to rise by 1·5 billion ecu above the originally planned level because of the fall in value of the United States dollar. He also warned that

[Dr. McDonald]

continuing requests from member states for green currency devaluations were contributing further to the increase in expenditure.

Commissioner Christopherson told the Ministers that if the USSR were to ask to buy 1 million tonnes of butter from the Community, the EC could not afford to sell it to them — not 1 million tonnes, perhaps, but we have managed to afford to sell some of it to Russia — once again, quite rightly, incurring the wrath of all hon. Members and also, no doubt, upsetting many citizens throughout the Community, who cannot understand why they have to pay through the nose for butter when Russians get it on the cheap.

That is only part, of course, of the crisis faced by the European Community. Here is another part of the crisis which, it appears, the Government are belatedly recognising. We have 1·5 million tonnes of surplus butter, over 1 million tonnes of surplus milk powder and 16·5 million tonnes of surplus cereals. The costs of storage continue to rocket. Total surplus food is valued, in the EC's books, at £7·5 billion to £8 billion, but of course there is no possibility of it ever being sold on world markets at its true price. At the moment, the Commission estimates its value at about half its book value. That is about £4 billion.

Already, there are great losses in that surplus stock, together with the continuing obscenity of those surpluses remaining in storage. Food is continuing to waste while poor people throughout the Community find it difficult to pay for some of this stock, and while many in the Third world continue to starve. It is an obscenity. It continues and it will create a crisis in the Community. Yet, as *The Times* today comments, not on the front page but on an inside page:

"near the end of a six months' tenure of the presidency of the EEC Agricultural Council we have little to show for this opportunity"

to carry out any sort of reform.

It is not surprising that that is the assessment. The shortfall in 1986 is likely to be carried over into 1987, thus throwing the 1987 budget out of line. We said that specifically in our references in the amendment to the shortfall in the 1986 budget and the small headroom in the 1987 budget, to show that, no matter what else happens, for that reason alone the 1987 budget is likely to overrun.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Did my hon. Friend notice that, when the Minister, in a rather brief introduction, mentioned the November meetings, he referred to the carry-over of the 1986 shortfall into 1987, which the Council may take up instead of blaming the Commission, but did not tell us whether, if that shortfall is added to the 1987 budget together with the amount the Assembly added, we shall still be within the 1·4 per cent. ceiling? It might be useful if the Minister were to make that point. Perhaps it will not be within the ceiling.

Dr. McDonald: I thank my hon. Friend. We have clearly said that the 1987 budget looks likely to overrun.

The Minister referred briefly to another feature of the 1987 budget — the possibility of further changes in the dollar-ecu rate. He mentioned that such changes could be regarded as an act of God. I thought that the Chancellor regarded such changes as examples of the wisdom of the operation of the free market. Be that as it may, the Minister chose to regard this as an act of God, and I did not get the impression that he thought it was particularly reasonable. The Minister was not exactly helping the House in its consideration. As he made perfectly clear to the Select Committee in its recent deliberations, the 1987 budget is based on a dollar-ecu rate of 1·10. The current rate is already 0·96. Each 10 per cent. decline costs between 750 million ecu and 1 billion ecu.

So the "act of God" is not a future event to be feared. It appears that it is already happening. The Minister said: "you will see that from that there is a potential further shortfall."

The Minister has already made it plain that he expects budgetary discipline and the 1987 budget to be thrown out of line by changes in the dollar-ecu rate. I think that he was misleading the House in his somewhat witty references. The Minister should tell us more about the consequences for the further deliberations on the 1987 budget which, he tells us, will be forthcoming in the European Parliament and the Council meetings during the rest of this week.

All this underlines what has been said many times by Opposition and Government Members. In June 1986, the Prime Minister told us over and over again on her return from Fontainebleau that she had secured budgetary discipline. Opposition and Government Members told her that budgetary discipline could not work without reform of the agricultural policy. We have been proved right in 1986 and will be proved right again in 1987. She said that a first step had been taken on reducing the amount of surpluses in the Community. She told us that two and a half years ago but today, on the front page of *The Times*, we are told of the

"Thatcher bid to slash £8 billion food mountain".

Those first steps are a long time coming. The *Daily Telegraph* of 17 November sums it up clearly:

"It is now brutally clear that the much-praised financial settlement at Fontainebleau in 1984, to control farm spending and put EEC finances on a secure footing, has failed miserably."

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Dr. McDonald: Plainly, there is much agreement on both sides of the House on that point. However, today we are told that the Prime Minister will act and all the problems will be solved by 31 December, when the British presidency of the European Community comes to an end. We are told:

"In a courageous bid to tackle a crisis which European leaders have been dodging for years, she will fight hard to impose this British last-resort solution at a crucial EEC summit meeting in London next month."

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Does the hon. Lady agree that that article was an extraordinary, sycophantic piece of writing in a major front page story in a supposedly independent paper?

Dr. McDonald: I could not agree more with the hon. Gentleman, especially in view of the fact that the article on the inside page contradicts most of the sentiments in the front page article in a much more careful analysis of the workings of the agricultural policy. I have already quoted from that page.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I cannot understand this. Why does the Labour party object to this dramatic new plan called "set aside"? Surely, if it was applied to all other industries, including engineering, shipbuilding and mining, we could solve unemployment totally by paying everyone for doing nothing.

Dr. McDonald: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will commend his solution to the Prime Minister, who presumably is anxious to solve that problem in time for the election. I shall leave him to his own devices.

I am glad to note that, having belatedly recognised that the problem still exists—it is really only in the article that the Prime Minister admits that budgetary discipline has not solved everything—and having finally taken note of what has been said so often by both sides of the House, the Prime Minister at least has taken up the view expressed by Opposition agriculture spokesmen, my hon. Friends the Members for Pontypridd (Mr. John) and for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) in agriculture questions and in speeches outside the House. The Labour party's policy is that land should be taken out of production of surplus products but, for environmental and employment reasons, it does not want that land to be left idle. We would prefer it to be used for other profitable and important industries, such as forestry.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Has the hon. Lady noticed that the Agriculture Act, which was introduced by the Government, was amended, when in Committee, to allow persons in agriculture to obtain grants to enable them to go into ancillary industries along the very lines she has advocated?

Dr. McDonald: I have noticed that. We are waiting for the exemplification of the Government's political will to bring that about. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is glad to note that the Labour party is about to produce a detailed document on that matter. My hon. Friends have given a little precursor of that.

The Prime Minister hopes to solve this matter by the end of December. However, it will also involve the agreement of other Agriculture Ministers in the Community. She will no doubt have noticed the difficulties faced by her own Agriculture Ministers in endeavouring to bring it about. I refer to a report in *Agra Europe* dated 3 October 1986 which is entitled

"Playing the Fool in Windermere."

It says:

"While the EEC's Ministers of Agriculture may have enjoyed the Cumberland wrestling, sheep dog trialing and shepherd's crook sampling laid on by the UK government at their 'informal meeting' in England's Lake District this week, it is clear that this meeting suffered from an even greater degree of unreality than is normal at Agriculture Council gatherings."

It goes on to describe the meeting as a "Mad Hatters' Party" and refers to the French Agriculture Minister who expects to be taken seriously

"when he suggests that the Community's claimed reduction in milk ouput since 1984 has been replaced in the world market by increased output from New Zealand and the United States."

It goes on:

"of course he knows, his colleagues know, and anyone who knows anything about the dairy industry knows, that the Community is now producing and processing just as much milk now as it did in 1984 when quotas were introduced."

Whatever the intention of the Prime Minister may be, it is obviously a little bit more difficult for the British Ministers to obtain agreement on those matters within the European Community.

As the Prime Minister is pursuing the matter she should further realise that there are delays in reducing milk surpluses which are partly due to Britain's unwillingness—I do not in any way condemn that—to part with one particular method, known as method B, of calculating the levy, which is done for us through the Milk Marketing Board. That may well be understandable. I am not proposing to comment on the details of the matter. All I am pointing out is that there are delays in reaching agreements in the Agriculture Council, some of which are due to understandable objections raised by British Agriculture Ministers. When the Prime Minister says that she is going to push the EC farm plan and all is to be solved by 31 December, all I can say is that she is about to become a magician. I doubt whether she will succeed.

The article in *Agra Europe* also refers to the bid to slash the 8 billion ecu food mountain. Of course, that is something everybody wants to see. However, how is it to be achieved? How do we dispose of the surpluses? The Minister will know that the European Parliament voted for a separate fund outside the budget to deal with the problem of surpluses in accordance with the recommendations of the Baron report on future financing, which was voted in October. The Minister did not tell us his views on the matter. Is the Prime Minister intending that her right hon. Friend and his hon. Friends at the meeting in Brussels and subsequent meetings should agree to a separate fund to dispose of the surpluses in time to fulfill the Prime Minister's word? What is the Government's decision on that?

Although we all agree with the sentiments expressed by the Prime Minister—it must have been in one of the Lobby briefings which are not supposed to take place any more—we regret that she has come to that view so late. We wonder how on earth she will achieve it and can express only scepticism. Will it not be another failure in the Government's record of sorry failures in dealing with the EC, especially its agriculture spending?

7.45 pm

Sir Edward du Cann (Taunton): I shall deal in a moment with some of the points made by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald). First I should like to refer to the typically elegant speech made by my hon. Friend the Minister of State. It was a valiant attempt to defend the indefensible. He reminded us that the Scrutiny Committee recommended that we should debate nine papers this evening. If one goes to the Vote Office, as I did before the debate, one is handed a great mass of 20 papers. I took them to the Library and weighed them. They weighed no less than 1·55 kg. To put that in English, they weighed 3¼ lb.

I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will not mind if I speak in English. I find it difficult to get used to the new jargon such as FEOGA, ECOFIN and, worst of all, mecu. Why do we talk about mecu? Why has my hon. Friend the Minister introduced mecu? Why do we not talk about the pound sterling, which is our own currency? It is the pound sterling in which our national accounts are written and in which our fellow citizens pay their taxes. It is pounds sterling, too many of them, which the House votes in order to support the European Community. We should stick to the use of the term pound sterling.

Whether one talks about nine or 20 documents, kilograms or pounds or pound sterling and mecu, the point at issue is essentially simple—the validity of the budget. In my view, I say plainly and at once, the budget is bogus and a sham. I say that because everyone knows that the budget will not be kept to. That is admitted. The Prime Minister said on 18 November:

[Sir Edward du Cann]

"the Commission has warned that on present policies a substantial overrun . . . is likely." — [*Official Report*, 18 November 1986, Vol. 105, c. 85.]

Indeed, the Minister, with typical honesty and straightforwardness, reminded us of that. It is common knowledge that there will be an overrun. The amount is variously estimated. Some say that it will be £1 billion and one Member of the European Assembly said that it would be £2 billion. I am talking about pounds sterling. What is clear, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, is that the pressure is always upwards. The pressure for expenditure comes not least from the European Assembly itself.

Whatever the amount of the likely overrun, it is clear that this is not a budget in the ordinary sense. It is misleading so to describe it. One end of the account is open-ended — the spending side. It is obvious, nobody can possibly deny it, that the spending side is out of control.

It is true that the 1987 revenue figure is fixed at the legal limit; that is, 1·4 per cent. of the take from VAT.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): This is an important point which is universally misunderstood. If it were only 1·4 per cent. of the VAT take, we would not be so concerned. But the calculations, varying a little from year to year, show that it is between 12 per cent. and 14 per cent. of the Treasury's VAT take. It is 1·4 per cent. of the VAT base which, rather like rateable value, is placed upon the United Kingdom by a Commission calculation. The right hon. Gentleman will see that the amount that we pay each year is approximately 10 times what some people think that we pay.

Sir Edward du Cann: The hon. Gentleman does the House a service in spelling things out exactly, but I shall continue to use the phrase "1·4 per cent. VAT" as a kind of shorthand. We were told that that limit was intended to last for several years, but again the House was misled. Paragraph 4 of the White Paper states:

"The budget uses up virtually all available resources within the new 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling."

In other words, as sure as we are in the Chamber today, the European Community will be coming back for more money and the European Assembly or Parliament, which is certainly no watchdog, will do nothing to prevent that.

I appreciate the point made earlier by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). The White Paper puts the matter modestly. In fact, this near-balance has been achieved only by a series of accounting adjustments such as the advance payment of contributions — the postponement of rebates to the United Kingdom, delayed intervention payments and levies on member states in respect of storage — for which "creative accounting" is the professional term and "fiddling the books" the vulgar one.

The hon. Member for Thurrock rightly referred to the interesting articles in *The Times* today. *The Times* states: "an unreformed system would bankrupt the Community." That is an accurate description of the situation. Remarkably, those of us who are in favour of the Community, as I am, and those who are against it find that their interests coincide in this respect. Whether one is for or against the Community, everyone agrees that there must be reform. The complaint is of the lack of political will to achieve that reform. In this respect the hon. Member for Thurrock was less than fair to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who, alone among Community Heads of Government, has shown that political will. My only reservation in stating that plainly is, alas, in having to disagree with my hon. Friend the Minister's comment today that a good start has been made on reform. The whole nation knows that no start whatever has been made.

As the hon. Member for Thurrock said, in the year of grace 1987 the bill will come in and it will have to be paid. One can only speculate as to how it will be paid — more delays in repayments, more one-off subventions, more advance payments — but paid it will have to be. Again, Parliament has been misled. It is impossible not to reflect that the Government are practising double standards. I regret having to say that, but it is the truth. It was good to see my right hon. Friend the Chancellor present at the beginning of this debate. In his autumn statement he prided himself on his ability to control Government expenditure and, indeed, local government expenditure — that is, domestic expenditure — but when it comes to control of European Community expenditure there is apparent indifference.

I do not know how one is expected to explain these things to one's constituents. Perhaps Opposition Members have the same difficulty. How can I tell my constituents that expenditure must be curbed, that the second stage of the new Taunton hospital cannot be brought forward and that people in attractive places such as Norton Fitzwarren and Dulverton cannot have a desperately needed bypass because the nation cannot afford it? What do I say when they refer to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's statement to the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service that the promised reduction of standard rate income tax to 25 per cent. is now unlikely because these things are not easy to achieve? When people tell us that the highest rate of income tax in the United States is now to be less than the United Kingdom standard rate, what are we expected to reply? Are we to tell them that the Chancellor says that we have careful control over expenditure, or do we say that things would be very different if only we could control expenditure in the European Community?

The House itself cannot escape criticism on the same account. We are tigers in following up the competent work of the National Audit Office in pursuing folly, incompetence and carelessness in the spending of taxpayers' money voted by us for expenditure by Departments of State, but with the exception of debates such as this, which are not particularly well attended, we have no machinery for the scrutiny of European Community expenditure. That is why our decision on this matter tonight is of special importance. Indifference to the way in which money is being squandered in Europe would be intolerable.

I believe that we have been misled in two other respects. First, the House set great store by the Fontainebleau agreement, to which the hon. Member for Thurrock has referred. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was widely and rightly congratulated on her achievements in that respect. But the practice has been markedly different from the promise. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor said in his Budget statement that the figure for the 1986-87 United Kingdom net contribution to the EC would be about £600 million. No doubt that sounded fine to most hon. Members, but in the autumn statement the figure was revised upwards to more than £1,000 million. In other words, despite all the talk and all the understandings, all

the boasts and all the promises, after all the rebates and all the refunds, our payments for 1986-87 represent an all-time high. Again, the House has been misled.

The second respect in which the House and the nation may have been misled relates to the budget itself. In 1984, there was a massive increase of 40 per cent. in the VAT levy, but it was agreed that agricultural spending would rise only in line with the rise in the resource base—that is, in proportion to receipts. It was agreed that any overspending one year would be recouped the next. Last but not least, it was agreed that there would be strict budgetary controls. In reply to the hon. Member for Newham, South, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that the new controls would be binding on the Council and that that was the basis on which an uneasy House of Commons assented to what was proposed in our name. All those undertakings have been ignored.

The hon. Member for Thurrock referred particularly to agriculture. As the House knows, some 70 per cent. of planned Community spending is for agriculture and about half of every penny spent by the Community goes on storing, dumping or destroying food surpluses. A recent House of Lords report estimated that the common agricultural policy added 10 per cent. to food prices in the United Kingdom. We all know that consumers are not happy about that. Equally—I can speak only for those in my own area—I have never known a time when farmers were more worried and uncertain about the future. It is a skilled political exercise to make both consumers and producers unhappy at the same time — an extraordinary political Left and Right.

Another matter to which the hon. Member for Thurrock referred requires further comment. The common agricultural policy is now one of the strongest supports of Communism. Exports to the Soviet Union have risen by 1,100 per cent. since 1978. With net prices of 3p to 4p per pound for butter, 11p per pound for meat —these are delivered prices—and wine at 7p per litre, we are virtually giving away the European Community's food stocks. In Russia, bread costs between 14p and 25p a large loaf, whereas in our supermarkets it costs 57p. How many SS20s does that folly help to fund? One the one hand, the United Kingdom taxpayer supports the defensive Alliance of NATO, but on the other, his political masters are subsidising the offensive might of the Warsaw pact. What folly! We should end it at once.

The hon. Member for Thurrock also referred to the cost of storage, for example, of grain, wine, butter, milk powder and beef. A third of farm spending goes on storing the butter mountain alone. Here is mismanagement on the grandest possible scale. It is said that if the CAP—the sacred cow of the European Community—continues as at present, the unwanted surplus of cereals alone will treble by 1991. I do not know about that, but I do know that year after year this sovereign Parliament is expected to acquiesce supinely to this state of affairs. We are expected to write yet another blank cheque. It is high time to say, "No, we have had enough." We could not give my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister a better support than to do that.

What of the other assertions to which I have referred? We were given three undertakings, but there are no proposals for recoupment and none for any sort of budgetary control. Since every understanding has been broken, my own view is that we would be right to show our profound disapproval in the best way open to us. We have every right to say that we will not approve any budget until the undertakings given to Parliament—which we accepted in good faith—are kept. Indeed, that is our duty.

The historic purpose of this House is to supervise and if necessary, to control the activities of the Executive. On the Back Benches we can question, we can debate and discuss — as we do tonight — and we can criticise. However, in the end the only power that we have if we are dissatisfied is to deny Supply until we achieve reform. Sooner or later we should do that, and it should be sooner rather than later.

8.3 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): As we are reviewing Community policy, I should like first to put on record my disagreement with the decision of the Leader of the House to continue the so-called experiment of excluding European Community questions from a fixed slot within Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs questions, on the ground, according to a letter that he wrote, that it is "generally acceptable". I am not clear on what basis he reaches that conclusion. I suspect that it is by guess and by God rather than by any systematic approach. There is no evidence that it is "generally acceptable".

Apart from our regular debates, there should be some means for regular oral questions on the Community. They need not necessarily be a part of foreign affairs questions because, despite the remarks made by the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), I no longer consider Community affairs to be foreign affairs.

The Minister adopted a narrative approach when he introduced the debate. It is a well-known debating device in this Chamber when issues are somewhat controversial —as we know this issue is—to introduce a lawyer to lower the excitement level. The Minister succeeded admirably in that objective. From phrases such as "a good start has been made", and "we intend to maintain the pressure for reform", one did not obtain any sense of compelling urgency in his approach to the matter.

In my view—in this case, my view accords even with those of some who are opposed to the Community and have long been so—there is no doubt whatever that the Community faces the gravest crisis, which, if it is not resolved within at least a year or a couple of years, or if clear guidelines for reform are not laid down, could lead to the complete break-up of the Community.

In successive debates I have repeated the view—I do not apologise for it—that, while it is not possible to achieve any immediate reduction in surplus productivity, such a reduction must be achieved. It can only be achieved by means of a four or five-year phased policy covering all commodities.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: So irresponsible.

Sir Russell Johnston: That is true. However, I advise the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) that the policy should cover all commodities. If restrictions relate to only one area, farmers will inevitably switch production. If necessary, such a policy should enable people to leave production and it should also take some proper account—I doubt whether the hon. Member for Southend, East would do that — of the wider rural economy in less favoured areas.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Would the hon. Gentleman give the House the broadest outline of how the Liberal party

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

recommends that this reduction in agricultural output over a five-year period should be achieved? Would he give us a broad outline of how a Liberal Government would go about that task?

Sir Russell Johnston: I shall probably have answered the hon. Gentleman's question by the time I sit down.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): I bet you a tenner that you do not.

Sir Russell Johnston: I assure the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) that I make a principle of giving way to the hon. Member for Southend, East. It may be a misleading principle, but never mind.

Where the Government are open to the greatest criticism is that, until today's dramatic story in *The Times*, to which the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) referred, they had not taken any lead in looking for ways to bring down production and to deal with the soaring costs of intervention. There is no evidence in the past, the recent past and certainly during the period of our present presidency of the Council, of the Government taking any lead in that matter.

We all remember that before the introduction of quotas into the dairy sector, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was addressing dinners and telling people to increase their production. With respect to the hon. Member for Southend, East, there has been no shortage of proposals for achieving that objective, in particular from the Commission and more recently from the Parliament.

The hon. Member for Thurrock referred to the European Parliament's proposal under article 200 to have some sort of war chest to set about dealing with the accumulated surpluses. She also criticised the Minister—quite rightly, in my opinion—for making no reference whatever to that and to what view the Government might take.

We cannot reform the agricultural policy unless the problem of the existing accumulated surplus is tackled. I should like to know whether the Government support that approach and, if not, what alternative they advance. Incidentally, at the same time, the European Parliament proposed an additional cut of 5 per cent. in the milk quota. I should like to know the Government's reaction to that.

At this point I should like to pick up part of the question put to me by the hon. Member for Southend, East. If one accepts the need to regulate production, as I do—I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman does not, but perhaps I should not be surprised, considering how long I have known him—one requires the establishment of comparable methods, not necessarily the same as those in the dairy sector, but a quota by one name or another.

It could also take the form that Dr. Sicco Mansholt talked about in an interview in *The Times* today, where a certain amount of land is taken out of production compulsorily on a phased basis. However, that must be done across the board, but it cannot be done all at once. It could not be done simply by the price mechanism because, to have any effect on cereals, for example, one would require something like an instantaneous 25 per cent. drop in the price mechanism, which the big boys would be able to absorb, while the smaller producers would be decimated. That would not be socially or politically possible or desirable.

Such a phased approach would work. Let us do credit to the European Parliament—we should not forget that it is dominated by people from other member countries of the European Community whom certain Members in our Chamber often condemn as irresponsible. It suggests, having seen the introduction of the quota system in the dairy sector, that the slow tightening of the screw be achieved so that production is further reduced. That is the approach that I would recommend to the House and the hon. Member for Southend, East.

Hon. Members will recall that on previous occasions I have argued repeatedly for more Community spending and Community programmes in the areas of what we describe as non-obligatory expenditure — that is, unemployment, regional development, social concerns and research and development — but because of the overspend on agriculture, it is there that we have cuts. In the new technology, Japan and the United States are pulling far ahead, yet the budget for European research has been cut, and four out of five applications for research funds are turned away. We cannot even agree a framework programme for technological co-operation. I regret to see that Britain was associated with France and Germany on that.

I am sure that the Minister of State will recall having listened to or read a speech by Jacques Delors at the recent CBI conference, in which he properly criticised that and said that, in his opinion, such a framework programme was an essential part of the drive for a single market by 1992, with which the Government have been so strongly associated.

There will be a major shortfall in the European Community budget, as the Minister and the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) said. The guideline for agriculture is given as 22,960 mecu—I say that with apologies to the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), but that is the description——

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Million ecu.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am sorry—million ecu.

The estimated need for 1987 is 26,130 million ecu. That leaves a deficit 3,175 million ecu. If, as the hon. Member for Thurrock said, one adds the overlap from 1986 of 700 million ecu, one gets a total of 3,875 million ecu overspend. The 1986 deficit can be associated to a large extent with the change in the value of the United States dollar, but I do not think that the overspend for 1987 can be similarly easily explained.

This is a short debate, and I shall not hold up the House for any length of time. I must confess to hon. Members that I was very much tempted to vote for the amendment on the Order Paper in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, but the final phrase is:

"calls on Her Majesty's Government to restrict the expenditure of the Community in 1987 to sources of income already approved by this House."

That is an impractical and inflexible approach. Were it not for that phrase, I could easily have supported the rest. Her Majesty's Government have not covered themselves with any distinction in their approach to the matter. The sadness is that if, as *The Times* has reported to us, the Prime Minister is about to embark on a serious approach to the CAP, the plain fact is that her political clout and capacity for influence have been gravely damaged by the long previous wrangle about the British contribution.

I believe that we can solve the problem, first with a phased reduction of production, on the lines that I gave when I responded to the hon. Member for Southend, East. Secondly, it will be necessary to reduce existing stocks. That may mean doing things, which, on the face of it, are foolish. There will be no option unless we become overwhelmed by them totally. In tackling those two problems, we must try, if we can, to separate them from the development aspect of the European Community in the area of research and development, regional development, approaches to unemployment and the social consequences of the decline of older industries. I very much believe that only in an effective development of those areas does our future as a country lie.

8.16 pm

Mr. Tom Normanton (Cheadle): As a member of the Budgets Committee of the European Parliament, I am in a somewhat unusual position in being able to make a contribution to the debate. I should like to concentrate my comments on the Community budget for 1986 and on what I call the draft budget for 1987 because it is only in an early stage of development.

Before I come to those two main items, I should like —at the risk of being accused by the Opposition of being sycophantic—to place firmly on the record of the proceedings of this House the negation of what was said by the Opposition Front Bench. It was implied that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury had been wrongly praised for his handling of the acting presidency of ECOFIN since Britain assumed the presidency of the Council.

I should like to say firmly that, in the months that my hon. Friend has been acting president, he has won an enormous amount of understanding and support from his fellow Ministers and also from Members of the European Parliament who are concerned about negotiating the budget arrangements for 1986 and 1987. Taking over the duty of acting president on 1 July, as he said in his speech tonight, he was faced with settling the conflict that had existed between the Council and the Parliament over the 1986 budget. By the exercise of what I can truly describe as skill and diplomatic expertise—and, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) suggested, by charm — he succeeded in resolving the many differences relating to objections from the European Parliament, which threatened a deadlock among the member states.

I confess to a sense of deep anxiety during that period over the working of the Community in 1986 and 1987. If my hon. Friend failed to achieve that agreement in July, there would have been no prospect of resolving the problems—immense as they are—in the rest of this year. He did not fail, but let there be no doubt that the action brought against the European Parliament by the Council, by the British Government, though confirming that the European Parliament was constitutionally out of order and had acted illegally in connection with the 1986 budget, proved that in financial and budgetary terms the Parliament's analysis was fully vindicated. That was the finding of the European Court about the compromise agreement between the Council and the Parliament.

The Council is still failing to come to grips with political problems and procedures underlining the constitutional relationship between the two budgetary authorities—the Parliament and the Council. I could present many illustrations of that, but I shall quote the failure of the Council in its draft budget. It failed to make budgetary provision for the accession of Spain and Portugal to the Community on 1 January 1986. I should place it on record that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury was not occupying the presidency of any of the European Community councils at the time.

In a sense, the councils are a collegiate body, and they completely failed to make provision for the entry of Spain and Portugal. The political problems and the terms and conditions for joining were negotiated and settled, but the 1986 budget, which the Parliament opposed, made no financial appropriations for the implementation of the decision to admit Spain and Portugal. Those matters have already been spoken about and, to use the jargon, the burdens are past. No doubt my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton will criticise that jargon, but the term relates to European Community practices and policies and to the regional development funds. This was an aspect of the 1986 budget which the Parliament rejected and bitterly fought.

The CAP worries all hon. Members, and the Council has constantly ducked the issue. First, it has failed to come to grips with avoiding surpluses. Secondly, it has not made provision for writing off what one would call bad stock, if one were engaged in normal business activities. Thirdly, it has made no provision for write-off, either physically or financially. We are constantly witnessing schizophrenia between Ministers of the member states which make up the various councils of the Community. It is between those who make policy decisions which incur expenditure and Finance Ministers who have to find the cash and make provision for paying bills. The European Parliament's Budgets Committee, and even the Parliament in full session, constantly try to force the Council to face those two conflicting realities.

If an industrial undertaking were to follow the practices pursued by the Council of Ministers, that undertaking would soon be out of business, in Carey street or in the Old Bailey. My hon. Friend the Minister of State is striving to prevent the Community institutions from moving into any of these embarrassing positions. I pay tribute to his efforts in that regard. During one late sitting of the Budgets Committee, which perhaps would be better described as an early-morning sitting, he spoke to it on behalf of the Council and tried to persuade it to meet in trilogue discussion. Some critics may say that that is part of the jargon of our membership of the Community. It means to meet in discussion with the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission. Only by doing that did he think that consensus could be reached.

Perhaps, when he is winding up, my hon. Friend will comment on how he sees the prospects for a successful outcome to such a trilogue. Will he also give the House his assessment of the way ahead? He is the acting President of ECOFIN and perhaps he can tell us what he is trying to achieve.

Perhaps hon. Members are not aware of the way in which a Community budget evolves. That is hardly surprising, because the budget has no counterpart, either procedurally or constitutionally, in this House. We as MEPs have a role to play and a responsibility to bear in the development of a budget. The 1987 budget is referred to on the Order Paper, and MEPs have responsibility on the principle and detail of the budget. The European

[Mr. Tom Normanton]

Parliament shares that responsibility with the Council and without the agreement of both there cannot be a budget, spending commitments or payments.

The House should note that the European Parliament has some significant powers through its budgetary control committee and through the court of auditors. It also has the power of discharge. All three are extremely valuable weapons with which to influence the decision-taking process on financial matters in the Community.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a slight problem, in that a budgetary discipline is applied to the amount of money paid out? I think that Mr. Christopherson made that clear in July, before a House of Lords Committee. However, there is apparently no budgetary discipine for the amount of commitment. There is a serious problem related to the difference between the amount to which one is committed and the amount that one pays out. Will my hon. Friend comment on that?

Mr. Normanton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point because, in a sense, the conflict between the Parliament and the Council centres on that point. The vice-president, Mr. Christopherson, is in the Commission responsible for the budget and has repeatedly made the point that my hon. Friend makes. I have already spoken about the schizophrenia in the Council of Ministers which makes policy decisions without attaching to them an evaluation of cost. The bills have to be picked up afterwards, but there is no link between policy making and financial provision.

The 1987 budget is still being negotiated between the Council and the Budgets Committee, and between the Budgets Committee, the Parliament and the Parliament's spending committees. On 13 November, the European Parliament completed the first reading of the budgetary negotiating cycle. There is far more mileage or, for the benefit of my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton, far more kilometrage to run before the 1987 budget is signed by the President of the European Parliament. There are many points of conflict, but one is the cost of financing additions to surpluses such as milk. Parliament voted for a cut in quotas. That will be received with great hostility in many quarters, including farmers in my constituency, but it is Agriculture Ministers who must grasp the nettle and make the decisions. Policies must carry a financial liability.

Unless expenditure on agriculture and FEOGA is cut, there will be no money to spend in areas which can most effectively be managed on a European scale, such as energy, research, industrial strategies and the development of European technology to enable Europe to match Japan or the United States. Does my hon. Friend the Minister agree that the draft budget is completely out of balance with the economic requirements and priorities of a European industrial community? Does he agree that the alternative which faces the EC is to rejig the balance of the budget, which inevitably means cutting CAP expenditure, or a major increase in the contribution of member states above the 1·4 per cent. which has been mentioned? I ask those two questions and present no answers.

I do not envy my hon. Friend the Minister his extremely difficult task. I and my hon. Friends who serve in the European Parliament wish my hon. Friend every success in the deployment of his political skill and expertise. He will need it. This relatively short debate in no way reflects the importance of the subject. If the House divides, I shall oppose the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) and that in the name of the Leader of the Opposition with complete determination and enthusiasm.

8.32 pm

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): I did not agree with very much of what the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Normanton) said, but he gave the game away towards the end of his speech when he said that an alternative was to consider increasing the 1·4 per cent. VAT limit. I am sure that he speaks for a great many Members of the European Assembly, and perhaps the majority of the Budgets Committee, the work of which he describes admirably, but I doubt whether he speaks for more than a handful of hon. Members, who have to justify the extra expenditure to our taxpayers.

I do not want to concentrate on the document because, as the Minister said, several of the factors involved could change in the next few months in respect of 1987's draft budget and the outturn for 1986. I shall concentrate on what is wrong with the financing side of the Community — its financial procedures. I increasingly regard the catalogue of errors, supplementary budgets and court cases as a Whitehall—perhaps it should be Brussels—farce. We will go through it all again next year, and the European Court may be dragged in if the Council's budget for 1987, which will be settled this month or next, is unacceptable to the European Assembly and it decides to do what it did last year.

The EEC's procedures are inadequate to deal with all financial matters because agriculture expenditure is open-ended. It is not axiomatic that such expenditure has to be open-minded. From 1947 to 1973, agriculture expenditure in Britain was kept within reasonable margins by Treasury control and various other mechanisms. We gave that up when we entered the EEC.

The common agricultural policy system has many defects, but it is absurd because the budget is open-ended. It is even more absurd when one considers that the Council of Ministers recently decided that any excess agricultural expenditure in one year should be clawed back in subsequent years. It took no account of extra expenditure required by agricultural policies.

Can anybody in their right mind imagine that, in 1987 or 1988, EEC Finance and Agriculture Ministers will agree to claw back excess expenditure? Of course they will not, but that is the principle to which the Council of Ministers has committed itself.

We should bear in mind the pressures to increase expenditure on agriculture. As I said in an intervention, Greece, Denmark and West Germany, of all countries, are saying that we must be careful when talking about a cut in expenditure and reform of the CAP, as there are political and social considerations to bear in mind. They represent one quarter of the members of the Community. I doubt whether they represent a blocking minority, but that is a taste of what is to come. They have a lot of farmers and do not want expenditure to be cut if it will hurt their people.

As the hon. Member for Cheadle said, expenditure is decided by spending Ministers, not by Finance Ministers. That is a complete reversal of the system employed by

nearly all national Governments and, as long as it continues, we shall never have radical reform of EEC spending.

The financial guidelines were much trumpeted 18 months ago as the quid pro quo for agreeing the increase from 1 per cent. to 1·4 per cent. of the VAT limit. I was fairly sceptical about the impact that the guidelines would have at the time but, as a Minister in another place has observed, I was charitable enough to say that we must give them a chance to work. We have. Can anybody now be sanguine about the guidelines restraining CAP expenditure? One would have to be optimistic to believe that they will.

The Government probably share my view in regard to my next worry, but I am not sure what, if anything, is being done. I refer to the fact that commitment appropriations on the non-obligatory side and on one part of the obligatory side bear no necessary relationship to payment appropriations. That has led to the so-called problem of the "cost of the past."

That is not the end of it. We shall also get the cost of the past coming up in the future. I draw the attention of hon. Members to the fact that the cost of this problem in the future will increase. This year, the Assembly, in voting for the budget for this year and that for next year, has suggested further increases in non-obligatory expenditure. Leaving aside the principle of the increases, it is noteworthy that the increases in payment appropriation are different from the increases in commitment appropriation. Once again, we are building up further problems for the years ahead, if the Assembly has its way over the imbalance between commitment and payment appropriations in a particular financial year.

My fifth criticism of the financial procedures of the EEC, typified by what we have heard from the Minister, is that the expenditure grows and little can be done to stop it. It is growing in accordance with, and in relation to, the increases being made available to it. Is it not astonishing that, in the first year of the 1·4 per cent. coming in, total expenditure for the year comes very near 1·4 per cent.?

Mr. Cash: Is this not like a recent film, and are we not going back to the future?

Mr. Deakins: I did not see the film, but I can understand the hon. Gentleman's sentiment.

If the House were foolish enough at some time in the future—next year probably—to agree to the VAT limit being raised to 1·6 per cent., with effect from 1 January 1986, who can doubt the expenditure implications of such a rise in the own resources of the EEC? The EEC expenditure is encouraged to rise by the very fact that procedures are inadequate because last year, the year before and this year, we indulged in bailing out procedures. As the Minister has admitted, we shall have to indulge in that next year.

We also have the intergovernmental agreements and supplementary budgets. Who can doubt that expenditure will not be contained by the budget or by the financial guidelines? Everyone knows that, whatever has been spent, or has been committed to be spent, the money will have to be found from somewhere. Even if it is not found legally as part of the budget, it will be done not within the framework of the European treaties but by means of intergovernmental advances and other such subterfuges. That is not a satisfactory state of affairs.

A sixth criticism of the financial procedures of the EEC, which has not been touched on, and on which the Minister might care to comment, is that the Assembly and the Council have for the past few years had different definitions of non-obligatory expenditure. I do not profess to know the basis of the differences, but there are differences, and this is highlighted in the Commission's public relations document on the budget and its differences and problems. It makes the point that there is a difference between the Assembly basis and the Council basis. If the Community cannot even agree on the base figure of such important items as non-obligatory expenditure, how on earth can we expect to get proper financial control?

My last criticism also has not been touched on, and again I would welcome a comment from the Minister. The budget procedures, up to and including the conclusion of each year's budget for the following year, take no account of what are called agrimonetary changes. There is no mechanism in the financial procedures for bringing this into the calculations.

There are two sorts of agrimonetary changes, and it is important to be clear on the differences between them, although they both have the same impact on the budget. The first, which we have seen this year, is the major realignment of exchange rates within the EMS. I asked the Minister a question only a few weeks ago. I asked whether, in future, he would

"seek to require the EEC Commission to make estimates of the effects of EMS realignments on EEC budget costs and on a resources revenue".

He replied:

"I agree that the Commission should be asked to make such estimates, even though they must be very uncertain." —[*Official Report*, 23 October 1986; Vol. 102, c. *947*.]

I am grateful for that reply, but they are not so uncertain, because there is an amount in the supplementary budget, which has been mentioned in other answers, for the impact of some of these agrimonetary changes.

As long ago as April this year, an article in the *Financial Times* from its Brussels correspondent said:

"The recent realignment of the European currencies within the European Monetary System . . . is estimated to cost Ecu 380m in 1986 and Ecu 600m in 1987."

That was almost at the time when the changes were taking place. How is it that a Brussels correspondent of a major newspaper can get a reasonably accurate assessment of the changes, when Her Majesty's Government, some months after the event, cannot give the House of Commons some idea of the impact of the agrimonetary changes?

The EMS realignment was only part of the problem of agrimonetary changes. Every year that we have been in the EEC, and possibly more, we have had a variety of arrangements for rearranging the green rates for currency. This is a complex subject, on which I do not claim to be an expert, so I shall put this as simply as I can. Whatever prices are decided by Agriculture Ministers at the Agriculture Council each year for the coming agriculture price year they are not necessarily, and indeed in most cases are not, normally prices that will be received by farmers in their national currencies.

The Government trumpeted the 1986 settlement as being another start on a major reform of the CAP. I quote from the *Financial Times* of 28 October, again from the Brussels correspondent, who said:

[Mr. Deakins]

"The key to the farm price of the deal . . . was the devaluation of the 'green' currency rates of all the members except West Germany and the Netherlands. This move will soften the impact of the price freeze"—

note those words—

"by granting effective price rises for some products ranging from 3 per cent. in Britain and France to 5 per cent. in Italy".

When the Agriculture Ministers are making price cuts across the board, and in particular on agriculture commodities as a result of green currency devaluations and revaluation, and altogether apart from EMS realignments, which is another factor, farmers in many countries are getting more than they should be according to the determination of Agriculture Ministers.

The agrimonetary changes are being used, sometimes deliberately, to subvert the decisions of the Agriculture Ministers. What a crazy system. The agriculture system is appalling, but when Ministers, perhaps genuinely, have tried to modify its impact and reduce spending, the green currency exchange reduces the impact. If prices go up, farmers are encouraged to increase production rather than decrease it.

On this, I have an important question to ask the Minister. In previous answers and statements, the Prime Minister and Ministers have said repeatedly that this year, and by implication in future years, there are certain exceptional circumstances which mean that the financial guidelines have to be exceeded. The major exceptional circumstance has been, and one understands this, the decline in the rate of the dollar-ecu relationship. However, exceptional circumstances, in the normal sense of the term, using the English language correctly, are circumstances for which one cannot be responsible. Now they are beginning to say in parliamentary answers that agrimonetary changes are exceptional circumstances. But agrimonetary changes are within the sphere of operation of the Commission and the Councils. They are brought about by decisions of Ministers. How on earth can they possibly be exceptional circumstances? However, they are not taken account of in the draft budgets. Now Ministers say that they will cause increased spending and that therefore these are exceptional circumstances.

I quote from an answer from the Minister of State, Treasury, to me on 6 November 1986. He said:

"at the October ECOFIN council . . . the Commission warned that, unless action is taken, actual expenditure"—

for 1987—

"is likely substantially to exceed the guideline figure. This assessment took a number of factors into account including a further fall in the value of the US dollar and recent agrimonetary changes . . . Whether any additional expenditure will involve a breach of budget discipline will depend on whether there were genuinely exceptional circumstances which made such expenditure necessary."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1986; Vol. 103, c. 522-3.]

It is clear from that—at least, it is clear to me, but I hope that the Minister will clear up this point if I am wrong and I shall certainly apologise to him—that agrimonetary changes are regarded now by Her Majesty's Government as exceptional circumstances that would allow something beyond the financial guidelines in relation to expenditure on agriculture.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend has unearthed a matter of potential importance. Does he agree that the only possible excuse for including in the formula the change in agrimonetary rates would be if the circumstances in each of the countries concerned were exceptional and that that would have to be proved to legitimise this devise?

Mr. Deakins: Yes. My point is that this is something about which I am in doubt and about which the House must be in doubt, since contradictory answers have been given by the Government. The issue is not clear and it needs to be clarified. However, it is only one of a number of financial procedures that cause me concern and that should cause the House concern. Until the financial procedures are put right the budget will not be put right, nor will the spending or the own resources be put right.

8.52 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Like the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) I, too, am gloomy about the common agricultural policy, although perhaps I am more genuine in wanting to see it improved.

My contribution will be brief, although it will not be particularly welcome to anyone. My hon. Friend the Minister of State is carrying out his extremely difficult job very well. Europe is aglow with good will towards him for his skill, his patent honesty and his assiduity. However, the job is impossible. The pessimists are right—as, indeed, they usually are. Sooner or later, financial disaster looms for the European Community. It is helpless to avoid it because there is no way in which the decisions necessary to postpone, let alone avert, that disaster can be taken. The Single European Act was a step in the right direction but it was completely inadequate. Neither the machinery nor the will to take the necessary decisions exist even now.

The current villains of the piece are the Germans who, faced with critical elections in a few months, dare not take any decision that is even slightly unpopular with their farmers. But when the German elections are over, there will be another Government facing an election, or a vote of confidence, or a financial crisis, which will make it impossible for them to take a decision. As, one after another, they exercise what my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) would call their sovereign right to refuse to accept what they particularly dislike, the only thing on which they can agree is to slap down the only institution in the Community which has anything sensible to offer — a superanational Commission.

The British record is as bad as any. Since the days of Labour's botched renegotiation, through this Government's short-term — but oh how short-term! — achievements in getting the provision for a British refund written into the budget system to the present half-hearted and last-minute attempts to get a grip on the escalating cost of encouraging surplus production and then financing the storage or wasteful disposal of that surplus — provided always that we do not upset our own farmers too much, or do not push up the price of food to our consumers, or do not hand over any more power to the bureaucrats in Brussels, or do not weaken our national veto — it is a sorry tale of the country's long-term interests being subordinated to the real need to demonstrate to the Labour party how completely it failed to stand up for this country's interests, whether long-term or short-term, and to prove to a small group of malcontents, led by my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton, that this Government, while firmly committed to the European Community, are as staunchly nationalis-

tic as any. Indeed, through our preposterous refusal to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system, when it comes to cutting off our own noses to spite our faces, we yield to no one.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton and his supporters have a bad case but some very good arguments. Their case is bad because they seek to weaken this country's involvement in the European Community. We have no choice but to remain in the European Community, for it is the only economic and, to an increasing extent, the only political base that is available to us. Unless we can make it work a great deal better than it is working now, it will be a disintegrating base—like badly laid concrete in an earthquake. However, my right hon. Friend and his supporters are quite right to point out that the surpluses that are being generated by the CAP, and the gigantic costs of storing or disposing of them and the damage that is thus being done to world trade, to our relations with the United States and to the hopes of the developing countries by disposing of them on the world market, will bring the whole edifice of the CAP, and in due course the Community itself, crashing to the ground.

Furthermore, they are right—this may surprise some of them — when they question the real value of the Government's achievement in securing offsetting European Community expenditure in the United Kingdom, mainly through the European regional development fund, so as to reduce the United Kingdom's total net contribution to the European Community budget. They ask what sense there is in financing the construction of roads, bridges, schools and hospitals in our assisted areas with money that was contributed in the first place by the British taxpayer, sent to Brussels as part of our budget contribution and then sent back to us via the ERDF, having passed through a number of sticky hands on the way. They are quite right to query the logic of using the huge potential power of the world's largest trading bloc in order to build a bypass round a village in north Wales.

As long as we go on like this—with some of my hon. Friends seeking every means to discredit British membership of the European Community, with the Opposition led by "the hon. Lady Mrs. Facing Both Ways" leaving us in the dark as to whether they want to stay in the European Community and yet demanding that Her Majesty's Government get more out of it, and with the Government contenting themselves with proving both lots spectacularly wrong but doing so by the shortest of short-term expedients—we shall get nowhere.

The time has at last passed when the budgetary crisis in the European Community could have been dealt with usefully and relatively painlessly by using the huge potential wealth of a truly unified Common Market to finance industrial modernisation and expansion so that agriculture was relegated to a secondary role in European politics and funding.

That chance was lost because member Governments — none more so than Her Majesty's Government — refused to contemplate either the radical removal of barriers which would have enabled the Common Market to emerge, or to accept the increase in the Community's budget which would have been necessary to create such an industrial investment and reconversion fund. They feared that any increase in the budget would be largely swallowed up by agriculture.

There will now have to be an increase in the budget and, instead of being largely swallowed up by agriculture, it will be completely swallowed up by agriculture. I fear it is now too late for reforms of the CAP to be carried through relatively painlessly. It is too late to avoid unacceptable damage to the legitimate expectations of our own farmers.

The choice now facing us is a good deal less inviting than it was even a year ago. But we do still have a choice. We can either go on as we are and allow the CAP to burst, inflicting irreparable damage on the Community and leaving it as an empty shell providing its members with no real benefits, or we can tackle the problem of agricultural over-production now, which will mean paying a heavy price—a heavy price in terms of cash now and in terms of political concesssions — to those European Governments most of whom are more at the mercy of their farmers than we are.

If we do that we can just retain some of the option of achieving a true common market by the elimination of obstacles to trade as Lord Cockfield has been urging so gallantly and so fruitlessly for so long. But, even so, we must face two extremely unpleasant certainties, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Normanton) pointed out. The first is a substantial increase in our net contribution to the EC budget. There is now no getting away from that. The second is a dose of medicine for our farmers very much nastier than even the most pessimistic of them have been expecting.

That is the choice facing the Government. I do not envy them. But I am at least relieved that it is they, not the professional malcontents on the Conservative Benches or the short-term opportunists on the Opposition Benches, who will have to make the choice.

9 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): One need not be a professonal malcontent to express dismay at developments within the European Community and vis-a-vis the budget. I have a great deal of sympathy for the concern expressed by that dark prince of malcontents, the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir Edward du Cann), especially when he talks of the deep unhappiness of consumers and producers alike.

Two industries are deeply affected by budget constraints in my constituency. One is shipbuilding and marine engineering. One must look hard through the huge collection of documents to see anything that is at all sympathetic to the United Kingdom shipbuilding industry. When I talk about the shipbuilding industry I am also referring to the important marine engineering industry, or rather, the vestiges of that industry that remain.

The other industry, again of crucial importance to my constituency, and, indeed, to the Scottish food and drink industry, is cane sugar refining. Again, one must look hard and long to find anything that is at all sympathetic to that traditional industry.

The draft proposal for a Council directive on aid to shipbuilding—document COM (86) 531 final/2 dated 17 October—says:

"It is therefore proposed to authorise a level of production aid up to the level of a common maximum ceiling, based on compensation for the cost disadvantage of the most efficient European yards compared to the price of the most competitive Far Eastern price leaders in the categories of

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

ships for which the European yards are relatively more competitive. All forms of production aid, both direct and indirect, will be included in the calculation of the ceiling."

That is poppycock.

A report in that august journal, the *Greenock Telegraph*, on Friday 21 November 1986 said:

"Scott Lithgow"—

a shipyard in my constituency known to some right hon. and hon. Members—

"were secretly excluded in 1984 from receiving European subsidies for shipbuilding in the foreseeable future."

I had examined those documents and nowhere is that statement contradicted. That means, as the article goes on to say:

"It is expected that aid of up to 26 per cent. will be agreed on shipbuilding and conversion contracts accepted on a loss-making basis by European yards.

These are aimed at helping to bridge the gap between Europe and the Japanese, who can build at half the cost, and Koreans who build at a third.

Scott Lithgow, who have just landed a £8 million contract to lengthen the Atlantic Conveyor"—

the replacement vessel for the one sunk so tragically in the Falklands campaign—

"are thus at a 26 per cent. cost disadvantage to other British and continental yards."

Where then is the assistance that one should be able to expect from the European Community, and where are the budget provisions for this important industry? It is a scandal and I sincerely hope that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will defend the interests of Britain's shipyards and Britain's marine engineering industry. To make a constituency point, which I try to avoid doing, Scott Lithgow is now one of the best yards in western Europe, just as the Clark-Kincaid of Greenock is one of the finest marine engineering builders in Europe.

Mr. Cash: With reference to Scott Lithgow and any other industrial or commerical enterprise as regards the legislative and industrial policies of the EC, does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is up to the companies, the industries and trade associations concerned to make the most of the EC by arguing effectively — which, regrettably, often appears not to be the case?

Dr. Godman: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, but I would say that it is essential for the Government to argue a strong case for British shipbuilding industry interests. The Government have signally failed to do that on the proposal for a new directive on shipbuilding aid. The House should debate such a directive because the existing one ceases on 31 December 1986 and we shall be saddled with a new directive, I suspect, on the basis of no discussions whatever in the House.

I shall turn quickly to the problems of the cane sugar refining industry. Since the accession of the United Kingdom to the EC, cane refining has suffered badly under the European Commission's sugar regime, which is dominated by beet interests. In recent years cane sugar capacity has been severely reduced and four out of the United Kingdom's six refineries have been closed. Since 1977, 4,200 jobs have disappeared.

Under the EC sugar regime, cane sugar is allowed a much smaller refining margin than beet which means, for example, that British Sugar plc can always win business from the cane industry. It is in the public interest that the United Kingdom cane sugar refining industry survives. It will enable the United Kingdom and the EC to honour their obligations to the African, Caribbean and Pacific sugar-producing countries.

The House passed two resolutions, one in November 1974 under the Labour Government and a similar one in December 1985, without any Divisions about the need to protect those developing nations and the United Kingdom cane sugar refining industry.

If the cane sugar refining industry survives, we shall secure the jobs of those in the cane industry, which is important for my constituency and Scotland. The most effective way to maintain United Kingdom cane refining would be a merger between Tate and Lyle and the British Sugar Corporation. It would remove the risks to cane sugar that would arise from the much stronger position of British Sugar. It would make further investment possible and bring about economies in production and distribution that would enable cane to be cost-effective under the beet-dominated EEC sugar regime. Finally, it would realise the advantages recognised by a Conservative Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in 1973, when he advocated a unified beet and cane sugar industry in the United Kingdom. Mr. Godber, as he then was, said:

"It is essential to have an efficient and viable refining industry in this country ready to take, and committed to take, the Commonwealth raw cane sugar available to it.

My own view, however, is that that purpose could best be served by having an integrated refining industry which has both port cane refineries and inland beet factories at its disposal."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1973; Vol. 861, c. 1302.]

I agree entirely with that Conservative Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Such a move would also give the United Kingdom sugar industry a unified voice in Brussels, which we do not have now; hence the powerlessness of the cane industry in Brussels. A merger between Tate and Lyle and the corporation would have no adverse effect on competition. The real competition comes from the threat of imports from other European Community nations, and that will continue to be the position. There is more than enough surplus quota sugar available on the continent to satisfy the entire United Kingdom demand. There is over 1·7 million tonnes just across the Channel in France, and most of that sugar is to be found stored in Picardy and the Somme valley.

I turn to the dangers that are facing our cane sugar refining industry from an Italian company that is being encouraged from Brussels. I refer to the Italian company of Ferruzzi, and I must offer a serious warning about its bid for British Sugar. If it were successful, it would mean the rapid demise of the cane sugar refining industry in Britain. Under Ferruzzi, the incentive to wipe out the cane sugar refining industry would be even greater than it is now, and the ability to do so would be increased.

The incentive would be greater because Ferruzzi would gain a valuable means of access to our market. With the disappearance of Tate and Lyle and the demise of the cane sugar refining industry, Ferruzzi would be able to sell French surplus sugar into the United Kingdom through British Sugar's distribution network. That would be dangerous for Britain's cane sugar industry. Ferruzzi could use the French surplus to take business away from what was left of the cane industry.

Ferruzzi, with some encouragement from Brussels, has become the largest sugar producer in the EEC. With the control of British Sugar it would have 25 per cent. of the

EEC's sugar market. Unied Kingdom prices for the industrial and retail consumer would probably be higher under Ferruzzi than at present or under a British Sugar Corporation-Tate and Lyle merger. Any suggestion that benefits would accrue to the British farmer from Ferruzzi because of its stronger voice in Brussels are likely to be outweighed by the disadvantages from the conflict between Ferruzzi's French, United Kingdom and Italian interests.

I make no apologies for saying that in terms of shipbuilding and the cane sugar refining industry, the EEC has let British interests down badly. That does not make me a professional malcontent or a sympathiser with them, but a tough critic of the European Community. I shall continue in that role until my constituents in the shipbuilding and the cane sugar refining industries are given a fair deal. God knows they are not getting it now.

9.15 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): This debate is pretty useless because whatever we say or agree tonight will not have the slightest effect on the EEC's spending or on the simple fact that it is overspending it's legal maximum, which was determined by agreement of the Council of Ministers. Despite that, the debate has been worth while just to hear the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer). I hope that all hon. Members who were not here will read his speech and learn what was behind it.

I do not wish to spoil my hon. Friend's speech by trying to paraphrase his remarks and possibly misinterpret them, His speech was most honest and despairing. It was made by someone who had hoped for great things from the Community and who was regarded in the House as a great enthusiast for the Common Market. My hon. Friend said that, sadly, the Common Market appeared to be heading for disaster and that the constitution of the EEC and of the Council of Ministers was such that difficult decisions simply could not be taken. In those circumstances, it was honest of him to express his fears for something that he had regarded with great hope and expectation. I do not criticise him for that in any way, despite the remarks he made about the little group to which I belong.

The debate was also worth while because we heard at last the Liberal party's solution to agricultural problems. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) said that he and his party would support the so-called European Parliament in the proposal for a war chest. The war chest is a substantial additional sum of several hundred thousand million pounds which will be used to sell off the mountains more cheap by than they are sold at present, thereby somehow to get rid of them.

Last week, we heard a report of the sale of 200,000 tonnes of beef to Brazil, at 12p a pound, which will, of course, return to Britain in the form of corned beef. Is it the policy of the Liberal party that extra hundreds of millions of pounds should suddenly be made available to offer the beef to Brazil at an even lower price?

The crucial matter is that we are discussing an entirely bogus budget. The Government are well aware that there is not the slightest chance of the EEC budget being kept within the legal maximum which was declared in the budget. The Commission has clearly said, as the Prime Minister reported only last week, that there was not the slightest chance, on present policies, of those figures being adhered to.

The Minister has a duty to say something more about the specific assurances which were given to the House to persuade hon. Members to vote for the 40 per cent. increase in Common Market funding. The Minister must recall that we were told that there was a binding agreement whereby Community spending would be subject to strict restraint. We were specifically told that farm spending would increase only in terms of the natural increase of the own resources base—about 3 or 4 per cent. a year. We were also told that a safeguard existed to ensure that if, by any mistake, the EEC budget was overspent one year we would get the money back in future years. We were also told that the money would last for several years.

This is the first year of strict budgetary control, but within a few weeks of the beginning of the year the Ministers met and agreed that it would be an exceptional year. We are right up to the maximum of 40 per cent. which was meant to last for several years. We know that 1987 will be another exceptional year, and that the year after that will also be exceptional. I wish that my hon. Friend the Minister would accept the plain fact that Common Market spending is wholly out of control and that there is nothing, on present policies, that the Government can do about it. We want to know what can be done about it in future.

The excuse has been given that, sadly, the dollar fell in value, so the cost of the CAP increased enormously. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will think about the consequences of currencies going up and down. Our understanding is that if the value of a currency falls, prices tend to rise, and vice versa. The prices of foodstuffs, such as bananas and peppers, which have nothing to do with the Common Market, did not fall when the dollar fell. Prices change in accordance with supply and demand, and the price of Common Market foodstuffs plunged simply because we are loading more and more on to the world market.

The Common Market is now spending more than £100 million every week on storing, dumping or destroying foodstuffs. According to the Common Market's own consumer unit, the average British family has to spend £13 a week because of the cost of the CAP. Yet only last week, the Government agreed to a devaluation of the green pound, which will increase the price of food in Britain by 5·5 per cent. All the time, appalling damage has been done to the Third world. The Common Market appears to care nothing about that. Damage, distress and starvation are being inflicted on the Third world because, by our crazy dumping, we are depriving it of a fair price for its food.

Mr. Cash: Having read last year's report of the Court of Auditors does my hon. Friend agree that it was extremely critical of the way in which the Commission distributed food to people in the Third world? Should not that situation also be remedied?

Mr. Taylor: I absolutely agree. In addition to the way in which food aid is wasted, we must consider what we are doing to those countries which cannot pay their international debts or afford to buy British machinery. We are killing the economies of the poorest countries in the world by dumping vast surpluses on the world market, so forcing prices down to nothing.

It would not be so bad if the budget had reached the legal limit and been kept to it. But we all know that devices are used and that there is cheating in order to get above

[Mr. Taylor]

the expenditure level. We had the unpopular co-responsibility levy, and people discussed whether it would help or hinder agriculture. It was meant to do neither. The aim was simply to get more money in and to increase spending. It went up by £400 million. There was also advance payment of our contributions, which served only to help overspending.

Britain's rebates have been postponed, which has also helped to increase spending. Moreover, foodstuffs in intervention are now not being paid for on time. This week, I was told by the Intervention Board that payments for butter in intevention are now being delayed by eight months. Member states are also now having to pay 25 per cent. of the cost of storing foodstuffs in intevention. Every one of those measures enables the Common Market to spend a bit more. Thus, we are now talking about a budget that is well in excess of the legal maximum.

Why have things gone so far wrong since even July of this year? Then, my hon. Friend the Minister said:

"We see no case for the provision of any additional funds."
—[*Official Report*, 21 July 1986; Vol. 102, c. 68.]

Again, on 21 July, we were told that there would be no "carrying forward" of expenditure from 1986 to 1987. My hon. Friend the Minister should ask himself what he intends to do about the increase in spending. The House was assured that 1·4 per cent. was the absolute limit, and that it was legally binding. But we all know that the Common Market will spend much more than that. How will the difference be met? Are we not heading for an explosion in the CAP that could have devastating effects on British agriculture?

It would not be so bad if there was the slightest sign of change, or the slightest possibility of realistic CAP reform. Instead of reform, the ludicrous, old, helpless idea of set-aside is being floated. Instead of paying farmers for producing food and then dumping it, we are paying farmers for producing nothing. There is a real chance that it will be taken up by the Common Market.

The Opposition appear to think that it is a grand idea. Perhaps they would like to extend it to the motor car industry and all the redundant industries in Britain. We know that the Liberal party supports that idea. It always supports spending more money from the Common Market, irrespective of how that money is spent. Before my hon. Friend the Minister jumps at the ludicrous idea of set aside, he should consider what has happened in the United States and in this country. Of course, it might buy some time—perhaps two years. If there is a set-aside of 20 per cent., and we pay out a fortune, Common Market policemen will have to be employed to check that farmers are not growing where they should not be growing. If we did that even on 20 per cent. of our land, the Minister should accept the advice of the chemical industry, the National Farmers Union and others who have said that yields are increasing all the time. Indeed, on the continent yields are also increasing. Even if we were to pay off, sterilise or shoot 20 per cent. of the farmers, and all that goes with them, we would find that—*[Interruption]*. I was referring to sterilising the land, not the farmers. The latter is a different thing altogether.

Before the Minister accepts the proposal as a possible solution, will he consider what has happened in the United States and accept the common-sense argument that agricultural yields are soaring all the time? Even if 20 per cent. were cut out, within two or three years we would be back to square one, with surpluses mounting as before.

In much the same way, if the Minister spends billions of pounds on a war chest, as urged by the Liberal party, on selling food to Brazil even more cheaply than the 12p per pound at which we sold it beef this year, again the mountains will rise substantially.

I want to make one suggestion, which I believe is the only hope for containing Common Market expenditure, for improving the Common Market, and for British agriculture. Instead of fiddling the figures with our European friends — I do not mean this unkindly; it happens under all Governments — instead of trying to find devices to get through legal limits and instead of bringing out bogus schemes to control expenditure—but which do not — the Government should accept the simple proposition of repatriating agriculture from the Common Market. In other words, every country should be left to deal with its own agricultural problems.

If the Government would decide their own future instead of looking over their shoulder to see if one country is getting more than another or depending on what election is taking place in a particular place, they might find that to be one way of containing expenditure. In Britain, it is one way of safeguarding agriculture, instead of facing the dramatic crisis that will come with overspending and breaking through budgets. There is no surplus of food production in Britain. There is a surplus to some degree in cereals and dairy products, but not an overall agricultural surplus. We could offer our farmers not a future of expansion, but a deficiency payment system based on standard quantities related to national needs. We could then safeguard agriculture from the disaster that lies ahead.

Such a proposal would improve, not wreck, the Common Market. It would take away from the Common Market the one policy that eats up 70 per cent. of spending and which, as my hon. Friend the Minister knows, gives the Common Market a bad name because of the repulsive policy of dumping at crazy prices.

That is the only answer to what my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West rightly described as an insoluble problem. Those who think that Common Market Ministers can sit around a table and solve the problems of the CAP are living in cloud cuckoo land. That happened with milk quotas. They were meant to improve matters, but sadly, all that happened was that we paid out money to farmers to go out of milk production and they moved into other areas of production, such as beef, where there was already a surplus.

I hope that the Government will at least consider the possibility of repatriation of agriculture from the EEC as a possible solution to the problem. The Minister will find that the agricultural community will regard this not as the answer to all its problems — because it will bring it under Treasury discipline again — but as something which could avoid an agricultural catastrophe. The Minister will find that some of the most enthusiastic supporters of the Common Market will say, "If only it could get rid of the CAP, the Common market might do some sensible things."

We are discussing a nonsense budget that the Government know they have not the slightest chance of keeping. They must accept that spending is wholly out of control and that the budget mechanism has been a disaster

and has achieved absolutely nothing. I hope that, in the circumstances, the Government will examine real, radical decisions, not other nonsense such as putting in £5 billion or £6 billion in the hope that the problem will disappear. The real solution is to repatriate agriculture and let the Common Market take other measures that it considers to be more sensible.

9.30 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): A few weeks ago, as a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation, I had the honour and pleasure of cross-examining my hon. Friend the Minister. These documents—3 kg of them—have been placed before the House in pursuance of a recommendation for debate by the Select Committee. It might be appropriate for me to comment on the implications of these documents.

I speak as one who takes a constructive and pragmatic view of the European Community. In no sense am I anti-European. Since I have been a Member of the House, I have made a number of points in debates, questions and at other times which I hope have amply demonstrated that I believe that the European Community is a constructive framework within which we can achieve a great deal for this country and the rest of the world.

A Treasury memorandum about the policy implications of the documents stated that there were "none at this stage." I was left wondering precisely at what stage the policy implications are likely to appear.

I have heard much this evening about creative accounting. The creative accounting of the kind to be seen in the Commission's document makes genetic engineering look like child's play. Above all else, we must try to place some kind of segmentation limit on the European budget as it develops. An independent group of experts recently considered ways and means of constraining the overall apparently limitless European Community budget. That group recommended that we should have a form of segmentation whereby the weak parts of the budget—the social fund, the development fund, and so on—should be allowed to expand but the other parts of the budget, particularly agriculture, which has now hit 62 per cent., should be restrained within an overall box. That segmentation policy should be pursued.

I should like to hear what my hon. Friend the Minister has to say about the experts' report. On 30 October, when the Committee had the privilege of having him appear before it, he was cross-examined on that point. He said that, as we move to the end of the year, the independent experts' report will be considered by Treasury and that we are likely to have some guidance on the Government's reaction to it. The hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) asked a puzzling question about the control of public expenditure. It seems extraordinary that the Labour party, whose lack of control over public expenditure is notorious, should be so articulate when seeking to control public expenditure in the European Community. I hope that the House will take note of the Labour party's grave inconsistency.

I am concerned about two main sectors—manufacturing and farming. There are farmers in my constituency who are deeply worried about the CAP. There is no doubt that many would like it to be reformed. They regard it as a policy that creates great uncertainty for them. Recently, it was proposed that in the dairy sector there should be a reduction of as much as 6 per cent. in the quota. The differences between what goes on in other countries and what happens in this country—the same will apply to the set aside policy—must be handled carefully by Agriculture Ministers.

Dr. Godman: Reform of the CAP should not be seen as an impossible task. The common fisheries policy was no less controversial, although of less significance than the CAP. By and large, that issue has been resolved to the satisfaction of the overwhelming majority of fish producers in the Community.

Mr. Cash: It is possible to negotiate within the existing framework of the common agricultural policy a policy that will fairly represent the interests of British farmers. I fear that the set-aside policy—I am thinking of the Mediterranean programme and similar programmes—will be used to provide what is effectively a social wage for other farmers in the Community at the expense of ours. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will ensure that, when the set aside policy is brought in, British farmers will get a fair slice of what is going on. It has become apparent to farmers in my constituency that they have been given less than a reasonable and fair deal in respect of dairy quotas and other aspects of the CAP.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his amendment to the Agriculture Bill, which has provided for grants to farmers to enable them to become involved in alternative production. As one who is in favour of a constructive European policy, I urge that the set-aside system should be combined with the grant aid system so as to ensure that the land is not regarded as of no value and as not to be used in any way but is used to enhance certain activities. for example, recreation and fishing.

There is no doubt that the Court of Auditors has been deeply critical of the way in which the European Community operates. It is a pity that the court's report is not taken more seriously. If the European Community is to be put into some shape, even with all the difficulties ahead of us, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury, must follow up the advice he gave the Select Committee on European Legislation. He said:

"it is essentially an issue to which the Court of Auditors should address itself. As the Committee will recall we have a regular debate in the House on the Court of Auditors' report where they are specifically commmenting on Commission work."

I urge my hon. Friend to ensure that the Court of Auditors' report is made available to the House in good time so that we can examine it and build on the useful criticisms that it continually makes of the workings of the European Community.

9.39 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): In this short debate we are considering nine documents, the sight of which is positively fearsome. The nine documents are being dealt with by the European Scrutiny Committee in a way that is almost completely unsatisfactory. The documents have nine separate reports attached to them. Indeed, the Minister's interrogation cannot even be published as a report because his evidence is not a document as such. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who chairs the Committee, has said that it has unanimously asked for the terms of reference to be changed so that coherent reports can be made on the sort

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of documents being considered. There have been no objections of any type or from any quarter but there has still been no response to that proposal. That matter deserves urgent consideration so that the House can more properly consider the important matters we are talking about tonight.

These debates are, of course, repeat performances. Sadly, we have all been here too often before. They would be hilarious if they were not so tragic in their effect. The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) who has left the Chamber, made a contribution to the work of the Select Committee on European Legislation. He said:

"Do you not think, Minister of State, that we are getting a little obsessive about EEC budgetary discipline control (although it is desirable and necessary) when you compare it with the relative indiscipline which applies to national budget discipline, including our own country?"

That is a seductive argument. There is an attractive point hidden deep within that.

Will future generations look back on these debates and the squabbling over 1 billion ecu here and 500,000 ecu there and condemn us for the apparent petty-mindedness we display on these occasions? Will they, enjoying the marvellous benefits of a barrier-free integrated market of 250 million people, think in some wonderment of these debates? Will they, revelling in the fruits of massive research projects in the highest of technology throughout the Community, reaping the rewards of a co-ordinated energy plan and looking in wonder at the pearls bestowed by appropriate regional and social fund programmes, think us mean-minded in the extreme and nit-picking to be so fastidious and spend all our time and effort looking with such painful thoroughness at these accounts? Of course, the truth is that, if those benefits were there to be enjoyed, that might be an accurate view to express. When it is only the costs that are to be the burden of future generations of Europeans, they will thank us for taking the time and effort to highlight this Alice in Wonderland comedy and expose it for what it really is.

On 10 September *The Times* said:

"Mrs. Thatcher has vowed to make budget discipline a hallmark of Britain's handling of EEC finances during its six month presidency."

The job of making budget discipline a hallmark lies on the shoulders of the Minister of State, Treasury. In August of this year the *Financial Times* said he is

"A patient and courteous man with (so it is said) an impressive grasp of financial detail even at 3 o'clock in the morning."

Sometimes we get close to that in these debates, but so far we have not had an EEC budget debate at 3 o'clock in the morning. Perhaps we would have to do so in order to see that courteous and able man display the mastery of figures that he all too clearly does not have when we have debates earlier in the day.

This courteous and honourable man spoke in a broadcast direct from Brussels — at 8 o'clock in the morning—after negotiating the 1986 budget. The House had sweated through an evening's debate on the budget which, thinking to escape that punishment, he had left to the Economic Secretary. To the astonishment of those of us who had sat through the debate, we were told from Brussels that the 1986 budget settlement was "a victory for common sense". Those are the words of a conjuror, not an accountant.

The Government took the European Parliament to court because it had approved a budget 1,102 million ecu over the Council's 1985 budget. They went to all that time, trouble and, no doubt, enormous expense and won the court case, only to shell out an extra 3,457 million ecu the very next day in the budget settlement. Replacing a 1 billion ecu deficit with an overspend three and a half times the size is some victory for common sense. It should be enough to gain the Financial Secretary a place in the Magic Circle.

The action in the European Court was a charade, a synthetic crisis blown up to cover the incompetence of the Council of Ministers. The hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Normanton) usually lauds the European Parliament and the European Community, but as a member of the Budgets Committee of the European Parliament he blew the gaff in a remarkable speech today. The fault in that crisis, which was developed and then taken to the European Court, lay within the Council of Ministers. It was a worthless charade — a crude attempt to siphon off people's proper indignation at the utter collapse of budget discipline into an accusation against the European Parliament and European parliamentarians.

There is better yet to come. Leaving aside the convolutions of the 1986 budget and its death throes, the pantomime of the 1987 budget is still to come. The ink was scarcely dry on the 1986 budget — that victory for common sense — when a deficit was discovered. It has been passed off today as trivial and a matter of no consequence, a mere shortfall in revenue. That is Eurospeak for a cash shortage of 776 million ecu. The Minister coined a new expression today, referring to the deficit as 776 mecu to make it sound even less, but it actually means £500 million. That is more than the Government are being asked to provide to finance the teachers' pay settlement, but it is wafted away in the guise of 776 mecu, instantly eliminating the entire budget deficit.

Through the magic of the market, that deficit is then called a "negative reserve". It is a standing joke that this country does not have terrible debates about the budget deficit as the Americans do, because we do not call it a budget deficit — we call it the public sector borrowing requirement. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), I believe, once said that most people probably thought that the PSBR was the parcel service of British Rail. By such convolutions, we avoid the problem. The European Community has what the rest of us would call a debt, an overdraft or a shortage of cash, which it promptly calls a negative reserve and puts on to next year's budget.

The budget, which was the victory for common sense, is now in the past, apart from the £500 million debt problem. What a legacy, and what a commentary on the so-called budget discipline, leaving behind 926 million ecu above the agriculture guidelines, and, of course, getting worse every day. Some 63 per cent. of the whole Community budget was devoted to agriculture.

The 1986 budget was almost the good news, but for no other reason than that it would be better than the 1987 budget. The 1987 budget—we are not even in 1987—is bust already. The President of the Commission, Jacques Delors, now openly says that it will be £2 billion—not mecu, ecu or anything else, but pounds—short of what is necessary and what is available on the own resources of the Community, and that by the middle of 1987, if the Minister survives that long—survivability is not long in

that job—he will be back again with his begging bowl for another intergovernmental agreement, a non-reimburseable advance or a reimburseable advance, all feeble disguises for more cash and fewer goods.

The Minister even dared to wander on to the subject of the famous IGAs, another euphemism for yet more cash, but we can take the prediction that there is no possibility of an IGA next year with exactly the same pinch of salt as we have taken every other guarantee on that matter from any one of his predecessors.

The Minister says that there is now 665 million ecu of headroom. That is what he told the Select Committee on European Legislation. But since the Committee's meeting, the European Parliament has managed to use its margin, which it always knew it would use in any event, and has reduced the so-called headroom even more. On top of that headroom, the marvellous £400 million or so of headroom that is apparently there before we hit the ceiling, we have 776 million ecu of revenue shortfall. That is another £500 million that has to be found from last year's budget. Again, in an offhand way the Minister says that, because the dollar-ecu rate is still being misjudged, another 750 million ecu, another £500 million extra, will have to be found this year on top of all that, to fund the mistakes in the accountancy.

We have all that—we are in crisis already—and what will we get for it? Overseas aid has been cut substantially—£138 million has been cut from the Commission's proposal. There are cuts in energy, research, industry and transport budgets. The regional and social funds will not even rise by the rate of inflation in the Community. There will be more of the cost of the past and nothing has been set aside for the cost of implementing the Single European Act and the commitments in that legislation that we were told were so important.

All that is being done to fund the uneatable, the unsaleable, the unusable, the untenable, and, of course the wholly unacceptable surpluses. Nothing is being done about them. We are also told in some of the newspaper articles from which we derive most of our information that there might be a delay in the British rebate being considered. Will the Minister tell us whether that is true? We are also told that the President of the Commission is now considering a new system for borrowing on the world markets to destock the butter and the grain mountains. Can the Minister enlighten us on how that new foreign flotation of the ecu will take place? Or will the same geniuses who are selling British Gas to the British people who own it in the first place be in charge now of selling the uneatable surpluses to the Third world? We wait pregnantly to find out the answer on that count. It is a lamentable farce. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have underlined only too vividly the disasters of the common agricultural policy, which has brought this great Community to the borders of ruin in that way.

If the documents and these two budgets are to be paraded as the genuine hallmark of what the Prime Minister sees as budget discipline, then no wonder there is trouble. The debate has highlighted the hallucination that is financial common sense in the European Community. That is not a condemnation of the Community but a sickening condemnation of the political leaders who know the scale of the challenge before our continent and who know with startling and vivid clarity what is preventing them from getting down to dealing with it. So long as successive Ministers in this House and the rest of Europe continue to chicken out from dealing with the blindingly self-destructive farm policy, the only thing ahead for the European Community is disaster.

In this debate we see the same picture as before, and all the sycophantic whitewashing of the Prime Minister's so-called courage in taking on what she has never dared touch before will not convince anyone. Only the House can stop this madness and our amendment is a moderate and minimum way in which it can be done. I commend it to the House.

9.56 pm

Mr Brooke: This has been an admirable debate. The number of hon. Members present for the debate has been spoken about and I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth). The hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr McDonald) was a little casual in her disclaimer about the words in the Opposition amendment. She implied that because it contained a reference to payment appropriations everyone would understand what she meant, the implication being that payment appropriations for anything other than non-obligatory expenditure were somehow not payment appropriations. I shall remember that for future debates.

The hon. Lady talked about the 776 mecu shortfall, and for the purposes of brevity I shall continue to use the term "mecu". She also spoke about the serious implications that that might have in 1987. When we debated this matter in the Council on 8 and 9 September my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary argued on behalf of the United Kingdom for the budgetisation of the revenue shortfall of 776 mecu. It is a matter to which we shall return when we meet in Brussels on Wednesday at which time the Council will have other matters to put to us.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) put a question, in a sense via his hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock, about the 1·4 per cent. I shall answer at a little length to make sure that I clarify matters. Whether the 1986 budget is strictly in balance and, if it is not, whether it is illegal, was implicit in the hon. Gentleman's appropriate question. The budget adopted is in balance. The predicted revenue deficit has not been budgetised, at least not until now.

Mr. George Robertson: It will sound much better at 3 o'clock in the morning.

Mr. Brooke: It will read terribly well. To the extent that the necessary offsetting savings are not found this year there will be an end of year deficit to be carried forward. The financial regulation makes clear that the carrying forward of a surplus or deficit from one year to the next is normal budgetary procedure. There is no question of illegality. A usual procedure would be for the Commission to bring a deficit to account in a preliminary draft amending budget, in this instance in the summer of 1987. The Council will discuss this matter again at Second Reading on the basis of revised and updated Commission figures. I shall carry the matter forward in the context of 1987 because it has obviously informed the debate.

The Commission took into account the prospective revenue deficiency in 1986 when drawing up the preliminary draft budget for 1987. The main effects on the 1987 budget are the likelihood, which must be even greater now, given the upward revision of the Commission's revenue deficit in 1986, of a substantial deficit being

[Mr. Brooke]

carried forward from 1986, revised calculations for the United Kingdom's abatement in respect of the VAT adjustment which we paid on 1 August, and the proposed change in the 1986 VAT assiette. There is no question of expenditure in the draft 1987 budget exceeding that allowed under the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling. If the funds are not available, they cannot be spent and expenditure over the VAT ceiling would have to be cancelled or deferred.

Mr. Deakins: The hon. Gentleman has raised an important point of principle, which I had not appreciated, which is that deficits in one year can be carried forward to the next. Might that be one way in which weaker spirits in the Community might want to postpone resolution of the financial problem—by having a bigger and bigger deficit each year and carrying the deficit forward to the next year?

Mr. Brooke: We are not talking about something new. There have been budget deficits and surpluses in previous years. It goes without saying that those who might be described as stronger brethren in the Council would be anxious to prevent what the hon. Gentleman describes occurring.

The hon. Member for Thurrock referred to the effect of the 0·96 dollar/ecu rate and quoted freely, as did the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), from *The Times*, which I thought was not acceptable reading on the Opposition Front Bench. I listened to everything that they said. In regard to what was discussed in the ECOFIN Council on 17 October, the hon. Lady said that there was no likelihood of anything like that happening in the Community in the near future, but the seriousness of the matter indicated by the 0·96 rate is having a powerful effect on everybody concerned.

The ECOFIN to which the hon. Lady referred was the first that anybody can remember to which the agriculture Commissioner, the budget Commissioner and the President of the Commission all came to discuss the issue with the Council. When I attended a cross-examination by the Scrutiny Committee on 30 October, I said that I thought that there was a distinct movement in the European Parliament on this issue. That view was confirmed by the votes on the European Parliament on agriculture issues on 13 November.

In view of the stance taken by the hon. Member for Thurrock, I am slightly surprised that she seemed to forget price fixings under the CAP which were taken by the Labour Government. The Government have consistently advocated effective reform of the CAP to restrain its claims on the limited budgetary resources available to the Community and to reduce the economic waste involved in stockpiling surplus production. Effective reform is likely to involve several elements, and more realistic support prices and limiting the open-ended nature of price guarantees must play an important part. We have recognised that other measures may be necessary, and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food recently circulated a suggestion for a scheme to divert some land out of cereals production.

During our presidency, top priority has been given to considering the Commission's proposals for reform in the beef and dairy sectors. Those proposals are still before the Agriculture Council, which will meet again on 8 and 9 December. My right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) rebuked me about mecu. My plea is that, in the 3·5 pounds of paper which compromise the explanatory memorandums, all of the figures are given in mecu and sterling. The problem with dealing in sterling is that one has constantly to refer to the exchange rate, whereas mecu remain constant in these transactions. My right hon. Friend mentioned creative accounting, but I do not think that he challenged its legality, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). My right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton said that no start has been made. That phrase was picked up by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston). When the Council reached its budget first reading on 8 September, budgetary discipline was maintained, as was loyalty to the agriculture guideline. There was still substantial headroom below the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling in the budget which we sent to the Parliament.

My right hon. Friend referred to double standards and the difference in terms of the autumn statement remarks on domestic expenditure and the Community's apparent indifference on these matters. I would claim credit for the Government for the manner in which they have, both in the Council and in the Parliament over the past year, convinced an increasing number of people that the method by which commitment appropriations increase faster than payment appropriations is the road to ruin and needs to be reined back.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton said that the House had been misled and be referred to the great store set by Fontainebleau. He specifically referred to the change that had occurred in the current year between the figures originally predicted and the figures in the autumn statement. Although I agree that there is a difference in the wrong direction of over £400 million in these figures over the course of the next two years, if he reads further on in the document he will see the trend in the opposite direction of £800 million in the United Kingdom statement.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton referred to the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling, but it is worth reminding the House that the United Kingdom paid 0·68 per cent. My right hon. Friend gave a broadcast, which I much enjoyed listening to this morning, in which he said that his support for the Prime Minister was total. I can only express my personal regret that this does not extend to supporting the Government in the Lobby tonight.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber implied that I am a lawyer, but I am not. He referred to my quotation about a good start having been made, and implied that it had not been. I was making that statement in the context of the budgetary process for 1987 and the fact that we delivered the First Reading within the budgetary guidelines. I am not sure what he meant in implying that that was not so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Normanton) said some kind words about me, for which I am grateful. He implied that the Council is failing to come to grips with the difficulties and complications. He went on to ask about the process of trilogue, which is a triangular meeting between the Presidents of the Commission, the Council and the Parliament. While the Council has been pressing for a trilogue to take place and for that process to be advanced there are some practical difficulties in the fact that, for perfectly understandable

reasons, officials on the Parliament side have greater difficulty in committing their masters than do those on the Council side.

My hon. Friend referred to enlargement. There was no change in the provision for Spain and Portugal between 27 November 1985, Council Second Reading, and the budget that was adopted on 10 July. My hon. Friend said that the budget was out of balance, and that reflected what many hon. Members feel about the CAP.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) made a thoughtful speech, as he does on these occasions, and asked a number of questions. The 1·4 per cent. ceiling and the ex novo review into which the Commission is going are not within the bounds of that at which we are looking tonight. We are debating three reports which the Commission will be bringing forward, probably before the end of the year, or, if not, early in the new year, on the future financing of the Community, the structural funds and the common agricultural policy.

The hon. Gentleman asked about clarification and such questions are being taken to the trilogue for resolution, with the Commission holding the ring in terms of convening the meeting and conducting the debate. The number of lines involved in very small.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow then asked me whether agrimonetary changes are regarded as exceptional circumstances under budgetary discipline. The Government do not accept that the budgetary effects of agrimonetary changes should necessarily be regarded as exceptional circumstances, justifying an excess over the budget disciplone guidelines. Although the Commission has advanced this argument, the timing and effect of EMS realignments cannot readily be forecast in advance. The question whether there are exceptional circumstances in 1987 will be considered by the Council next year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), to whom I apologise for having been out of the Chamber at the beginning of his speech, also made some kind remarks about me. A great characteristic of these debates is that a number of hon. Members participate in them regularly, which very much contributes to their sense of continuity. The emphasis that my hon. Friend placed on the common agricultural policy was characteristic of the move that has occurred in the European Parliament on this issue, where real movement is taking place on policy thinking.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) made an avowedly constituency speech. It was worth being reminded that the 3·5lbs of paper to which reference was made have an impact in the constituencies of every hon. Member, although I appreciate that, as the hon. Gentleman said, the impact is not always satisfactory.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East argued that the budget was wholly bogus. I recount to him also the fact that there is headroom within the 1·4 per cent. ceiling in terms of the budget which the Council sent to Parliament. Budgetary discipline is not bogus. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that policy changes are needed to bring spending into line with the figures.

My hon. Friend referred to cheating and to illegalities, but I do not believe that he was implying that the co-responsibility levy is illegal. I am not entirely clear how the advance payment of contributions would help overspending since it is essentially a cash flow exercise. I agree with my hon. Friend about late payments. However, they are an indirect way of reducing the intervention price, which the Government support.

My hon. Friend also referred to the implications of the 1·4 per cent. ceiling in 1987. I referred earlier to the point raised by the hon. Member for Walthamstow concerning the ex novo reviews. I see little prospect of the Community accepting my hon. Friend's idea of repatriation of the CAP. However, I hope that he will take comfort and encouragement from the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) about the report of the Centre for European Policy Studies on the future financing of the Community. The report refers specifically to segmentation of the budget, with the agriculture policy being separated from everthing else.

The Government regard this as a serious contribution to the consideration of reform of the Community budget. The key message is that there is no prospect of further substantial progress in the Community until the growth of spending on agricultural price support has been brought under control. We fully support this aim. The study advocates the separation of agriculture from the rest of the budget. That is worthy of future consideration.

The suggestion that the agriculture budget should have its own resources and should be required to live within its means reflects the need to exert greater discipline over agricultural spending. The ideas in the study about how to achieve greater discipline are interesting. I hope that the Commission will take full account of the basic principle set out in the report when it publishes its ex novo review. The precise mechanisms will require full discussion.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber said that I was a lawyer and the hon. Member for Hamilton said that I was the Financial Secretary, both of which descriptions I regard as compliments, although, in fact, I am neither.

The hon. Member for Hamilton went on to say that he had heard me at 8 am in Brussels. I was actually broadcasting at a civilised hour in Strasbourg. He said that the action of the Council in bringing the case before the court was a charade. I am delighted to say that the court did not take that view. I have to say in a low and quite voice that the hon. Gentleman does not understand the negative reserve, but, for the benefit of the House, I shall explain it to him in another place and at another time.

As to the survivability of Ministers in my position, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer did it for two years, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment did it for two years, my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary did it for nearly two years. I have, so far, done it for one year and I am greatly enjoying it. That is long enough to live with the consequences of one's own actions.

The hon. Gentleman implied that there was likely to be a delay in the British rebate. I am delighted to say that as a result of what the Council of Ministers decided on 8 September the payment of the British rebate was accelerated rather than delayed.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 82, Noes 174.

Division No. 6] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Ashton, Joe	Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Bermingham, Gerald
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Bidwell, Sydney

Boyes, Roland
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Neillist, David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. Mark Fisher.

NOES

Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Bruce, Malcolm
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Penhaligon, David
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Gerald Malone.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 5484/86, key figures for the 1987 Budget; 7113/86, Preliminary Draft Supplementary and Amending Budget No. 1 for 1986; 7068/86, updated key figures for the 1987 Budget; 7927/86, Preliminary Draft Budget for 1987; 9192/86, Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1987; 8877/86, Letter of Amendment No. 1 to the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1987; COM(86)360, Letter of Amendment to the 1986 Budget; 8876/86, Preliminary Draft Amending Budget No. 1 for 1986; 8883/86 and Addendum 1, Commission Communication on recent developments affecting the 1986 Budget and 1987 Preliminary Draft Budget; and supports the Government's efforts to achieve tighter restraint and better balance in the Community's Budget.

Altrincham General Hospital

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

10.29 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I am grateful for this opportunity to raise what is purely a constituency matter—the future of Altrincham general hospital. I wish to express to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security the anxiety that is felt in my constituency about the plans for Altrincham general hospital.

Hospital provision in the south of Trafford is not very good. Indeed, it is abysmal. We hoped that that would be rectified when we were promised a new south Trafford district hospital. In 1983, we were told that it would be on the provisional programme for the financial year 1988. We all thought that it would be the answer to our prayers and that the hospital, which we had been promised for so long, would be built.

At the beginning of 1984, it was suggested that the new hospital should be appraised, and the so-called Wythenshawe option was mooted by the regional health authority. It decided on the Wythenshawe option, which was the extension of Wythenshawe hospital to include 112 acute beds, but they would not be for the exclusive use of patients from south Trafford; they would be part of the total south Manchester provision. To complicate matters further, Trafford health authority made further proposals for what it called an alternative strategy based on Park hospital. The regional health authority has not yet made a final decision.

There, in a nutshell, is the tangled web of hospital provision in south Trafford. I am sick to death of being told how fortunate and privileged we are because south Trafford is such a desirable residential area. Those who live in my area have worked hard and made sacrifices to buy their homes and they are entitled to fair treatment, yet south Trafford has by far and away the worst hospital provision in the entire borough of Trafford. Recent events, including the question mark that hangs over Altrincham general hospital, have only aggravated matters.

I do not know whether my hon. Friend knows Altrincham, but the general hospital is in the middle of the town. It is easily accessible, it is a landmark and, over the years, it has acquired a reputation for excellence. It enjoys a special place in the affections of Altrincham people, and there is enormous anger in my constituency at the prospect of acute beds being removed from the hospital. I speak with some feeling about the hospital, because, in 1978, my gall bladder was removed there. I said at the time that my treatment had been excellent and that, if I needed another operation, I would have no hesitation in returning there. I visit the hospital each Christmas, and in each ward I hear the same story from patient after patient—praise for this small, caring hospital with a hard-working, caring staff. In view of all that, my hon. Friend will not be surprised that the balloon went up with a vengeance when the story went round that Altrincham hospital would become little more than a geriatric unit.

The general hospital currently has five wards with a total of 73 beds and there is an accident and emergency department. The local people seem to believe that those facilities should remain. On 29 October, the community health council organised a public meeting attended by more than 300 people. That gives a clue about the strength of public opinion. I should add that I have been bombarded with letters from anxious constituents. I had hoped to attend the meeting, and I told the chairman of the community health council that my plan was to travel up in the afternoon and to return on the sleeper. As my wife remarked, "What a wonderful way to spend your wedding anniversary." The other two hon. Members who represent Trafford were also invited. In the event, none of us could attend because on that evening Parliament debated the Westland affair and there was a three-line Whip.

However, the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) wrote to the community health council to say that the problem at Altrincham general hospital was caused by underfunding. At the meeting, that point was repeatedly stressed by others of a similar political colour. Not to be outdone, the prospective alliance candidate for Altrincham and Sale—who also announced himself as the next Member of Parliament for Altrincham and Sale—underlined the point. A representative from the National and Local Government Officers Association claimed that the north-west is the worst place for health care and the poorest provided in funds. It is a great pity that they tried to score political points in an issue that greatly worries local people.

It would be helpful if my hon. Friend the Minister, when she replies, could give the true facts and let me know just how much extra is being spent on the Health Service in the north-west, where that money is going and whether the position in south Trafford is connected in any way with the problems of the Resource Allocation Working Party set up by Lord Ennals when he was Secretary of State in a previous Labour Government. I ask for that information because I believe that the record should be set straight and that the political point scorers should be shown up for what they are—adept at empty and fallacious rhetoric.

At a time when the Government have increased the resources for the National Health Service above and beyond the 24 per cent. already achieved since 1979, it is essential that the funds should be employed to correct the errors and failures of the past and to translate six years of words into action. In south Trafford we have, for too many years, been waiting to hear about hospital provision. Are we to get a new district hospital? Will we have the Wythenshawe option or the Park option? The people in my area have been very patient. We are entitled to know why there has been such a long delay and who is responsible for it. As long as there is uncertainty, rumours will abound and fears will be created where perhaps no fears should exist. People are confused; they simply do not know what is going to happen. The position at Altrincham hospital has brought matters to a head.

At least the fears of the public have had some effect. If there had been a move to close Altrincham hospital, that seems to have been scotched. The chairman of the regional health authority has said:

"The immediate future use of the Altrincham General Hospital is that it is to continue as an acute hospital with the Accident and Emergency Department continuing to be open daily from 9 am to 5 pm. The present long-term strategy for the South Sector of the Trafford District envisages, as you know, that Wythenshawe Hospital will become, for the majority of the South Trafford population, the District General Hospital; a small part would be looking to North

[Sir Fergus Montgomery]

Trafford and Park for these services. The current proposal is that once Wythenshawe Hospital takes on the acute services from Altrincham General Hospital then the unit will be converted for use as a 55 bedded geriatric unit with 38 day places. This scheme is presently due to commence in 1994/95 with an anticipated opening of 1995/96. Although the Accident and Emergency Department will close (with accident and emergency admissions taken to Wythenshawe or Park hospitals), it is not intended that out-patient and associated diagnostic facilities should be affected; these are to remain in Altrincham, and the Trafford Health Authority intend to increase these services. I must apologise for not writing earlier but. Trafford Health Authority have put forward proposals to make greater use of Park instead of Wythenshawe. I had hoped to let you know the results of our examination of these proposals but this is not yet complete. I will let you know when this is done but meanwhile will bear your views in mind in regard to Altrincham General."

I have also heard from the chairman of Trafford Health Authority, who states:

"At its meeting on 16th October 1986, the Trafford Health Authority again considered how to prepare a plan for 1987/88 which will enable it to stay within the estimated allocation whilst continuing to meet service objectives. The Authority decided to put a plan to the Regional Health Authority showing how the necessary savings of approximately £600,000 can be made without making major permanent changes to the patient services at Altrincham General Hospital."

The chairman, Mrs. Alexander, continues to list several points. She concludes:

"In putting forward this plan to the North Western Regional Health Authority the Trafford Health Authority has indicated that it was not prepared to commit itself to extensive and irrevocable changes at Altrincham General Hospital at this time, because of two major points of uncertainty. First, the North Western Regional Health Authority is to undertake a review of its bed and caseload targets for District acute services and it is, therefore, possible that some changes of policy may take place on the overall level of hospital beds to be planned for and, secondly, the Regional Health Authority has still to decide whether to re-open the option appraisal for hospital services in South Trafford."

The reference to two major points of uncertainty is of particular importance. Therefore, the ball is very much in the court of the regional health authority.

Perhaps my hon. Friend can discover when the review of bed and case load targets for district acute services is likely to be announced and also what is to happen with the option appraisal. I draw her attention to a letter written by the chairperson of the Trafford area health authority to the previous Minister, dated 30 June 1986. The reply from my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), dated 5 August, said that the chairman of the regional health authority would write to her direct. To my knowledge, that reply has not been received.

However, this morning I received a letter from the chairman of the regional health authority saying that tomorrow, 25 November, he would ask his authority if it would like to examine the position again. That is where matters stand. We need a decision so that people know where they are.

I hope that tonight my hon. Friend can shed some light on why we did not get our long-promised south Trafford district hospital. Is it still an option? If we are not to have it, I want to know why not and which of the two options is to be put forward. After all, if a district hospital was promised in 1983, it must have been shown that there was a need for it in south Trafford. If that promise had been kept, I would not have requested this Adjournment debate tonight and my hon. Friend would not have to reply to it. If the promise had been kept, I would have been perfectly happy with the hospital provision in my constituency.

However, for reasons best known to people unknown, the promised new district hospital has not materialised. Therefore, I cannot say tonight that I am happy about hospital provision in my constituency. I assure my hon. Friend that I am expressing the anxieties of many people, of all shades of political opinion, who are genuinely concerned about what is happening. Above all, I want to know the future plans for Altrincham general hospital, because that is a matter of great concern to my constituency.

10.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) on winning the ballot, and by so doing bringing his concerns about Altrincham general hospital before the House. I know that he has been an energetic and tireless campaigner in the cause of his constituency and, indeed, is doughty in the cause of the health care of his constituents. I am sure that his efforts are appreciated locally.

I wish first to put my hon. Friend's mind at rest, at least on the immediate concerns. There are no current proposals to change the use of Altrincham general hospital in Trafford health authority. The district health authority has said so, as has the regional health authority. Indeed, both authorities have given assurances on that matter. It was briefly discussed, but was firmly turned down.

Before going into detail, I shall answer some of my hon. Friend's specific questions. He asked about the north-western region, the funding of the Trafford district health authority and about the importance and influence of the RAWP formula in some of the discussions that have taken place. I am glad to put some figures on the record. The north-western region is a growth region, and has been since the Government took office. Spending has risen by 22·8 per cent., compared with an England average of just under 19 per cent., between 1978-79 and 1986-87. Back in 1978-79, the north-western region was 8·9 per cent. below its RAWP target. Last year, we calculated that it was within 1 per cent. of that target, which is a considerable improvement. Indeed, the north-western region has benefited considerably from redistribution from the better-off parts of the country to the north.

The allocation of funds for 1985-86 to the north-western region is the magnificent sum of £904 million—a 6·4 per cent. cash uplift over previous years. The region has the second highest capital allocation in England, the highest being the west midlands. That comes to a total of £71·5 million for the current year. It could not even begin to be said that the north western region has in any way been neglected. We have carried out faithfully the principles of the RAWP reallocation, and the north-western region has benefited considerably.

I am sure my hon. Friend is aware that the Trafford district authority is about 15 per cent. over its RAWP calculation, but he will also be aware that we have been taking a close look at the way in which RAWP is now calculated to ensure that we get the balance right between the different regions. It is for the region itself to decide how the money is allocated between its districts.

It is not just a matter of the input of resources. We are actually seeing something come out for the money that is going in. My hon. Friend will know that we are spending a total of around £30 million on Manchester royal infirmary Phase II and subsequent building. My hon. Friend the Minister of State will lay the foundation stone very shortly for this most important acute and teaching hospital, which will serve the whole of the north-western region, including my hon. Friend's constituents. My hon. Friend will know about the Fairfield hospital in Bury, which was topped out in November by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. That is being built at a cost of £6·6 million. He will know about a number of other capital schemes, all of which add up to a considerable sum of money, many of which are replacing worn-out, old facilities throughout the north-west region.

We are treating far more patients. Last year, compared with 1978, in-patients were up by 20 per cent., out-patients were up by 10 per cent., day cases were up by the magnificent figure of 70 per cent. and direct care staff were around 15 per cent. more last year than they were in 1978. So the money is going to real, direct care.

One small item of particular interest, perhaps to myself, is that before 1985-86 there was a computerised call and recall system for cervical cytology in only one of the 19 districts in the whole of the north-west. Within the next 17 months, with assistance from the Government, there will be such a system, which will be of great benefit and will prevent the unnecessary deaths of women in every single one of the 19 districts.

The Trafford district health authority serves three constituencies, including the constituencies of Davyhulme and Stretford. It is a well-populated area and it nestles close to three important teaching districts of Salford, central Manchester and south Manchester. One would naturally expect at least some of my hon. Friend's constituents to enjoy the benefit of being close to those teaching districts for their more difficult problems. The main district general hospital is Park hospital, which is in the north of the district. It is separated from the south by the river Mersey. As a result of that, the residents in the south, I understand, tend to use Wythenshawe hospital in south Manchester for some of their DGH services and the acute beds at the Altrincham hospital as well.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: My hon. Friend is right about the people who use Park hospital and Wythenshaw hospital. Part of the difficulty is commuting from south Trafford to both of those hospitals. It is all very well if one has a car. If one is old or does not have a car, there are tremendous difficulties, because transport services are not good between those two hospitals in my constituency.

Mrs. Currie: I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that the realities of communications bedevil simple planning done on a piece of paper. I am sure those points are taken into account in the development of the services that we are discussing. The revenue allocation that Trafford is spending is £28·82 million this year — in other words, nearly £29 million. Again, that is a substantial improvement on recent funding. My hon. Friend will know of the developments at Park hospital at a cost of around £3·7 million, which are intended to provide a geriatric unit consisting of 96 beds and 50 day beds and a physiotherapy department. These were opened by my noble Friend the Parliamentary Secretary in September 1986.

I have said that there is no change planned at Altrincham next year, and I hope my hon. Friend can accept that assurance. As he knows, this hospital of 73 acute beds with one operating theatre and day-time accident and emergency services, which was built around 1870, has been progressively upgraded in the last 10 years and provides an excellent service. It has been the subject of discussion on two different grounds and on two different time scales. The first and the most urgent, which I believe has led, in the immediate instance, to tonight's Adjournment debate, was the overspending of the Trafford district health authority. Its calculation for 1987-88 suggested that it was likely to overspend nearly £600,000 more than would be available. It therefore, responsibly, decided to discuss what might be done about that potential overspending.

Among the schemes that came up was the possibility of reducing the number of acute beds at Altrincham and increasing the number of geriatric beds. This was discussed with the community health council on 11 September, but at the district health authority meeting on 16 October, which was attended by the CHC, the health authority decided against making changes at Altrincham next year to reduce overspending. It decided on a range of other measures which I believe were communicated to my hon. Friend. As I understand it, none affected direct patient care. Some of them simply involved better management of resources, which would keep the authority within its spending limit in a sensible way. However, on 29 October, the CHC organised a public meeting. The district general manager, Mr. Milnes, informed it of the decision of 16 October that no further steps would be taken. I am glad to have the opportunity to say that the DHA decided on 16 October that no action would be taken along the lines it had originally suggested.

As my hon. Friend has said, Altrincham general hospital has been the subject of discussion in the longer term. Trafford will need more hospital beds for the elderly. This reflects the growing number of elderly people in our society. The north-western area expects about 15 per cent. of its population to be aged over 65. In Britain as a whole, there are 3 million people aged between 75 and 84 and about 750,000 people aged over 85. Sensible planning demands that provision be made for services for the elderly. I do not accept my hon. Friend's comment about Altrincham becoming little more than a geriatric unit. Geriatric medicine is an extremely respectable part of medicine, as I am sure my hon. Friend will agree. In so far as we are successful in alleviating people's acute problems through our acute services and, we hope, stopping them from becoming ill due to preventable diseases in middle age, it seems to be axiomatic that, sooner or later, we shall need more services for our elderly people that take into account of the effects of aging. I am sure that we are right to expect that districts which are underprovided in those types of services give sensible thought to them.

The DHA and the RHA are looking at a long-term plan to spend £2 million on Altrincham, probably in 1994-95, which would provide 55 geriatric beds, 38 geriatric day places and an out-patients department with diagnostic facilities for elderly people. For that to happen successfully would mean the transfer of acute beds elsewhere. As my hon. Friend accurately said, that is the subject of considerable discussion. Any change of use from acute to geriatric or to any other use in Altrincham would require the full consultation procedure. If there were any local

[Mrs. Currie]

disagreement, the matter would, of course, come before Ministers. We do not expect to hear of any such discussions for many years, but we are pleased to think that the Trafford health authority and the north-western region health authority are giving some thought to how geriatric facilities are to be provided: I ask my hon. Friend whether, with his local knowledge, he will consider how the services sought for Altrincham might be provided elsewhere. We have to provide the services somewhere. It will be a matter of considerable concern if they are not available.

My hon. Friend rightly referred to a number of letters. I have received copies of them as well. I draw attention to the statement made by Sir John Page in 20 November which said that these matters will be discussed on 25 November. He said that he saw "little or no" advantage in the new Trafford proposals. It will, therefore, be for the region tomorrow and, no doubt, at subsequent meetings, to consider how to achieve the right balance between acute care and geriatric care in Trafford to benefit my hon. Friend's constituents.

I hope that I have answered at least some of the points raised by my hon. Friend, but I shall be happy to meet him on another occasion, if he wishes, to discuss further how to meet the needs of local people. I know that my hon. Friend has made considerable use of local contacts and has been in close touch with the regional and district authorities. I hope that he will continue to represent local people's views and that he will maintain those close links, and perhaps help the planners to get things right for Trafford's old people. We all want the same thing—the best possible services for all the people of Trafford and, indeed, the whole of the north-west.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 25 November 1986

The House met a half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

QUEEN'S SPEECH (ANSWER TO ADDRESS)

The Vice-Chamberlain of the Household reported Her Majesty's Answer to the Address, as follows:

I have received with great satisfaction the loyal and dutiful expression of your thanks for the Speech with which I opened the present Session of Parliament.

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Northern Region (Report)

1. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take on the report "Inequalities in Health in the Northern Region", a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): Much of the report raises issues for consideration by the regional health authority, which commissioned it and will no doubt take it into account in its planning. For their part, the Government remain committed to the principle of ensuring equitable distribution of NHS resources throughout the country, through policies which have raised NHS expenditure in the northern region by significantly more than the national average since 1979.

Mr. Dormand: Is the Minister aware that this report demonstrates a consistent link between ill-health and material deprivation? What does he say of the report's claim that no fewer than two thirds of the 678 local government wards in the northern region have levels of permanent sickness that are worse than the average for England and Wales? Does he recall that the Black report said similar things a few years ago, so when will this uncaring, hypocritical Government do something for the region, or has the Minister already consigned us to the scrap heap?

Mr. Newton: I am aware of two things. The first is that there is considerable academic debate about the linkages between some of the statistics to which the hon. Gentleman referred. The second is that, out of the rising total of NHS resources, the northern region's expenditure has risen from less than £300 million in 1978-79 to well over £600 million in 1985-86, and that is substantially above the increase nationally. I am also aware that 11 major capital developments have been completed in the last few years in that region, at a cost of nearly £100 million. The Government are committed to the improvement of health services in the northern region.

Mr. Boyes: The report "Inequalities in Health in the Northern Region" only adds to an enormous amount of data showing the relationship between unemployment and health, and only Ministers are ignoring that data. Despite the proven need in my constituency for a new hospital, why will the Government not bring forward the resources to build the hospital which they know is needed, instead of leaving it to private capital to build it, as a result of which the very people suffering from ill-health will be denied access to it?

Mr. Newton: There is absolutely no question of the Government leaving it to private capital to build new hospitals. I have already said that 11 major capital developments have been completed in the northern region in the last five years. Nine schemes are currently under construction at a cost of £31 million, and three more schemes costing £27 million are shortly due to begin. That is all part of the biggest capital building programme in NHS history.

Mr. Dobson: Despite all the blather from the Minister, will he confirm that the Government have reduced the northern region's population-weighted share of spending on new buildings and equipment by no less than 16 per cent. since 1979?

Mr. Newton: I will not be lectured about blather by an expert on the subject. The Government's record in capital building speaks for itself. It far outstrips anything for which the Labour Government were responsible.

Drug Advisory Councils

2. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a report on the achievements to date of the drug advisory councils.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): Drug advisory committees have been established now in 187 of the 192 health districts in England, and in all the health regions. These committees are responsible for three things; monitoring the prevalence of drug misuse locally, advising authorities on the development of services; and promoting collaboration between the various statutory and voluntary agencies working with drug misusers. All regions are expanding the services available to drug misusers and the Department is monitoring their development closely.

Mr. Rathbone: I welcome that statement from my hon. Friend. Will sufficient funds be made available in future years to continue this good work, which is something which is particularly difficult in those health authorities which are not funded up to resource allocation working party standards, particularly in the south of England?

Mrs. Currie: I know that my hon. Friend takes a close interest in this subject and has been working with the standing conference on drug abuse. I commend him for his efforts. We have allocated an additional £372,000 in this financial year to the South-East Thames regional health authority for drug misuse, and it has added £200,000 of its own money. I am delighted to say that every district in the region has set up drug advisory committees, which are making considerable progress.

Mrs. Roe: Given the obvious concern about, and the threat to health posed by, the re-use of hypodermic needles by heroin addicts, has any progress been made in the development of needles that cannot be re-used?

Mrs. Currie: It is a matter of considerable concern to us that AIDS and other diseases may be passed on by re-usable needles. These matters are under consideration elsewhere and I believe that an announcement may be made shortly.

AIDS

3. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the projected estimated growth rate for acquired immune deficiency syndrome over the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): The latest published predictions by the communicable disease surveillance centre estimate that in the United Kingdom there will be 550 new cases of acquired immune deficiency syndrome diagnosed in 1986, 1,300 in 1987 and 3,000 in 1988. Inevitably, these estimates involve a significant degree of uncertainty. There are no published predictions for the United Kingdom beyond 1988.

Mr. Kennedy: Given the one certainty that the problem will not go away and will get significantly and exponentially worse, will the Secretary of State further clarify the points that he made in his welcome announcement last week to the House, in particular the assurance that his colleague, the Minister of Health, gave over the future of the Public Health Laboratory Service? Given that assurance, may we take it that no reduction in either the funding or numbers of those laboratories is envisaged as part of the laudatory efforts being made to combat AIDS?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. Expenditure on the PHLS has not been cut. Indeed, spending has gone up in both cash and real terms. There are no plans to cut it, and no question of allowing AIDS work to be prejudiced by a lack of finance.

Dame Jill Knight: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to make a clear and specific estimate of the cost to the NHS of treating the enormous number of AIDS victims up to 1988?

Mr. Fowler: Not as such. We estimate that expenditure by the Government on treatment and public education is running at about £17 million this year, and that figure will approximately double next year.

Mrs. Renée Short: Will the Secretary of State be more specific about the resources that he is prepared to allocate for the treatment of this problem? What will be provided for the regions, which have to deal with the majority of cases?

Mr. Fowler: We shall take into account the special needs of some regional health authorities which face particular problems, and the need for services for AIDS victims will be taken into account when the allocations to the health authorities are considered. For the next financial year, that consideration will take place over the next month or so.

Mr. McCrindle: If, as we all must hope, the public education campaign on AIDS is successful, is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the sizable number of inquiries that it is likely to generate can be adequately coped with by the hospitals and health authorities? Is he satsified, too, that the co-ordination between the various charities operating in the area is adequate, and does he see himself as having a role to play in achieving adequate co-ordination?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, we shall do anything that we can to achieve better co-ordination of voluntary organisation work, which, as my hon. Friend suggests, is very important. As for health authority spending, we have asked every health authority in the country to send us its analysis of what is required in its district. Those reports will be with us by the end of next month.

Mr. Madden: Will the Secretary of State consider setting up regional Freefone telephone numbers to give callers advice and information on AIDS? On Saturday night I telephoned the Bradord AIDS line for information and was referred by a recorded message to the Terrence Higgins Trust in London. I rang that number every 10 minutes from 6.30 to 9.30, to be told that I was the 28th caller and that up to 400 calls a minute were being received. It is clear that the national publicity campaign that the Secretary of State is introducing will generate a mass of inquiries, with which the present arrangements are completely inadequate to deal.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is right when he says that there has been a very steep increase in the number of calls being received. A number of lines are giving advice. The College of Health has a national service and charities like the Terrence Higgins Trust also provide counselling. Other lines will become available literally within the next few weeks. We are taking advice from the organisations concerned, and if there is anything that we can do to help to keep the lines open by providing more lines, the Government will do just that.

Mr. Sims: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the relatively brief trials in the United States on the drug AZT suggest that although it may not be a cure it could delay the progress of this disease? Is he further aware that the Wellcome Foundation is putting a great deal of resources into work on this drug and that the development work is four times ahead of normal progress with a drug of this character? Will my right hon. Friend also confirm that, despite reports to the contrary, adequate quantities of this drug are now available for clinical trials in this country and that the reason for any delay in setting up such trials is to ensure that the trials are properly set up, and not because of any shortage of the drug?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, I think that I can confirm my hon. Friend's last point. Clinical trials are being set up in the United Kingdom. As my hon. Friend said, AZT is not a cure for AIDS, although in some cases it can prolong life and alleviate the symptoms in some patients.

Departmental Expenditure

4. **Mr Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what changes have taken place in the expenditure plans of his Department following the autumn statement of his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 6 November.

Mr. Fowler: Spending on the health and personal social services in England in 1987-88 will be £630 million more

than previously planned and will reach £19·1 billion. Total spending on social security is expected to be some £1,700 million more than previously planned, and will reach £46 billion.

Mr. Wigley: On the question of personal social services, will the Secretary of State bear in mind that the fourth report of the Select Committee on Social Services published last July, said that a 12 per cent. increase in spending was needed over and above inflation to meet perceived needs, but that the rate support grant formula gives only a 3·5 per cent. increase? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that, even with the additional £600 million to which he referred, there is still a shortage of money to meet the perceived requirement? Will he also confirm whether the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 can be fully implemented with the resources to which he referred?

Mr. Fowler: On the hon. Gentleman's last point, we shall keep the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act under review. I recognise that there are very severe pressures on the personal social services, but the hon. Gentleman will know that in this year's allocation we have made additional provision for community care, which is one of the most important areas covered by the Act.

Mr. Hayes: I welcome my right hon. Friend's reply, but will he look sympathetically at the 4,000 or so severely mentally handicapped people who are quite simply unable to walk, but are not presently entitled to mobility allowance?

Mr. Fowler: I shall look at that, but clearly there are a whole range of competing claims for additional social security spending. Under the plans that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has just announced, social security spending will reach £46 billion a year.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Secretary of State aware that, on average, 24 per cent. of hospital patients have to wait for over one year before they can have an operation? The percentage in the London regions is comfortably below that, but in north Staffordshire, 36 per cent. of patients have to wait for one year. How does he account for the fact that he has given an extra £30 million to the London regions and no extra money to the deprived regions, like north Staffordshire, which are far worse off? By doing that, is he not perpetuating discrimination against the deprived regions?

Mr. Fowler: That is simply not correct. It is a total misstatement of the position. Under the reallocation of resources policy, areas like the right hon. Gentleman's constituency are receiving extra resources. The £30 million that I announced is to deal with some specific problems, especially in some of the Thames regions, where we want the resources to be used to get over some transitional problems. That is entirely separate from the general RAWP policy, which works to the benefit of the right hon. Gentleman's constituents. As he will know, over the last four or five years new hospitals have been going up in his region at a rate which has not been matched in the history of the Health Service.

Mr. Galley: The additional resources for health are greatly welcomed, but can my right hon. Friend give the House an assurance that there will be an unremitting commitment to improved efficiency in the Health Service as it now stands so that more people can be cared for? Secondly, will he assure the House that top priority for new resources will be given, first, to community care and, secondly, to developing cancer screening?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. All the areas that my hon. Friend mentions are priorities for the Health Service and for the Government. What he said about the effective use of resources is also right. It is not simply a question of increased resources, but of ensuring that those resources are used for direct patient care.

Mr. Meacher: Since the autumn statement announced an increase in public expenditure of £4·5 billion, how can the Government conceivably justify their proposal to cut mortgage interest payments for those on the dole to save a mere £15 million? How can they justify paying £30 a week to people on £50,000 a year who are buying £500,000 houses like the one that the Prime Minister has bought at Dulwich, while at the same time putting poor people at risk of losing their homes as well as their jobs? Does it not show that the Government have an ineradicable prejudice against the poor and in favour of the rich, and does it not stink?

Mr. Fowler: As usual, the hon. Gentleman is over the top, and rather earlier in the day than usual. In due course we shall make a statement about supplementary benefit and mortgage interest, and clearly any regulation that comes forward will have to be debated by the House. From what the hon. Gentleman says, I detect a total prejudice against mortgage tax relief. It is about time the hon. Gentleman made clear his party's position.

Mr. Holt: When he is next talking to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will my right hon. Friend raise with him, with his usual courtesy and force, the recent Treasury decision to alter the death grant available for war pensioners? That alteration will reduce the money available to the widows of those who fought for Britain.

Mr. Fowler: That is not the general position for war widows, but I shall consider what my hon. Friend has said.

Salmonella

5. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what investigations his Department has made into the reasons for changes in levels of salmonella food poisoning between 1980 and 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Department, through the Public Health Laboratory Service and the notification of cases to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, monitors the incidence of food poisoning generally, including that from salmonella. The increase in numbers of cases recorded in recent years reflects in part an increase in reporting of food poisoning. There has, however, also been some increased incidence. Cross contamination of cooked food by raw contaminated products is particularly important, as is the survival of salmonella organisms in processed food and their post-process contamination. We have taken steps to encourage high standards of hygiene for all people handling food in their employment or in the home.

Mr. Meadowcroft: No doubt there are several reasons for the increase, as the Minister said. Is he aware that a recent outbreak at Raynville primary school in west Leeds,

which is a relatively modern building, spotlighted a problem, in that 11 out of the 24 district environmental health officer posts in Leeds are unfilled because of the lack of trained applicants? Surely the Minister can do something to ensure that there are more trained applicants so that the local authority can do its job.

Mr. Newton: I am aware of the salmonella outbreak in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. He will know that it is proving difficult to indentify the cause and that the school kitchen's hygiene is very good. I have to admit that the hon. Gentleman's second point has not before been brought to my attention and I undertake to consider it.

Mr. Pavitt: When studying the incidence of salmonella poisoning, has the Minister examined the figures according to whether catering services are provided by private contractors or by an in-house service? If not, will he make an analysis on that basis?

Mr. Newton: I shall consider what the hon. Gentleman said. I hope he agrees that the key problem, which was highlighted by the Stanley Royd hospital outbreak, is the quality of the supervisory management. That applies as much to in-house as to private catering.

Leicestershire (Budget Allocation)

6. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are being taken to ensure that Leicestershire is brought up to its full budget allocation within resources allocation working party.

Mr. Newton: Leicestershire has had a real growth in NHS resources of 34 per cent. since 1978-79. From 17 per cent. below its RAWP target in 1976, the district is now only 4 per cent. from target. Decisions on allocations to districts are for regional health authorities, but Trent RHA remains committed to further improvements in services in Leicestershire, and we intend to ensure that Trent can continue to honour that committment.

Mr. Janner: Although I appreciate the improvement in the Trent region's RAWP allocation, under pressure from county Members of Parliament of all parties, may I say how important it is that the Minister should understand the hardship that still remains because of the inadequacy of health resources in the county? In my constituency, for example, is he aware that the Groby Road heart hospital could cope with 750 open heart operations a year but, because of a shortage of resources, can manage only 500, while people are suffering, are in need and are shifted to other areas? Is the Minister aware that that would not be necessary if the Government would allocate to health the resources that they ought to provide?

Mr. Newton: The hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that his regional health authority has provided extra resources for cardiothoracic work in Leicester and is examining many other aspects of the problem with the district health authority.

Mr. Latham: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Can he assure me that, when Leicestershire Members of Parliament meet the district health authority this afternoon, we will be able to tell it without hesitation that the Government intend to meet the RAWP target by the stated date, irrespective of what is done for London?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's request. I spoke to the regional chairman last week. He has expressed himself well satisfied with the outcome of the public expenditure round and the position in which he expects Trent to find itself.

Mr. Clelland: Has the RAWP process not become descredited under this Government to such an extent that, in the northern region and Newcastle—[HON. MEMBERS: "What has this to do with Leicestershire?"] I am talking about the RAWP process. No doubt the same conditions apply in Newcastle as in Leicestershire. [HON. MEMBERS: "The question is about Leicestershire."] As in Leicestershire, resources for Newcastle are utterly inadequate—so much so that Newcastle district health authority is having to make savings on milk and sugar——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is very good, but a bit long.

Mr. Newton: I am afraid that I caught only about one word in three of the hon. Gentleman's question. However, I am happy to assure both the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) of the Government's continuing commitment to the process of ensuring a fair distribution of Health Service resources around the country. Perhaps I might take this opportunity to add to my reply to my hon. Friend and say that we certainly hope to be able to stick to the targets that have been set for Leicestershire.

Mr. Dorrell: Is my hon. Friend aware that his last comment is very welcome news and adds further to the details that he gave in his earlier answer, which will be widely welcomed in Leicestershire, and which shows the progress towards national average levels of funding for the Health Service? Is he aware that that has had a positive effect in Loughborough, which is now able to make plans to close a late 19th century hospital and a converted workhouse and replace them with a larger, modern institution designed to meet the needs of the 21st century?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I hope that the message will not be lost on his constituents. It is that the biggest ever modernisation of the Health Service is under way.

Mr. Dobson: If the Minister is so proud of what has happened in Leicestershire, how does he explain the latest hospital waiting list figures, which show that there has been a 28 per cent. increase in the number of people in Leicestershire waiting for an urgent operation? There are no fewer than 891 Leicestershire people waiting for an urgent operation.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know that those figures pre-date the initiative that the Government have launched, that we have set in hand a major programme to reduce waiting lists and that we have put £50 million of new money behind that programme.

Day Nurseries

7. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children attended day nurseries in the United Kingdom in each of the last six years; and what plans he has to increase the number of places available in day nurseries.

Mrs. Currie: In 1980 the number of places in local authority, private and voluntary day nurseries in the United Kingdom was 55,600. In 1981 it was 55,700; in

1982—55,300; in 1983—55,800; in 1984—57,500; and in 1985—59,700. That is an increase of more than 4,000 during the six-year period, most of which has occurred in the past two years. The estimates we have seen for 1986 suggests a further increase.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that much of that increase has been the result of converting full-time places to part-time places and that there is, in fact, a desperate need in many local authority areas for far more nursery provision in view of the increase in family poverty, the increasing number of one-parent families and the increase in child abuse? What discussions have the Government had with the Department of Education and Science to ensure that there is comprehensive under-fives provision rather than a fragmented service partly provided by the social services and partly by the Department of Education and Science?

Mrs. Currie: If the hon. Gentleman would care to look to his constituency, which is covered by the Stockport and Thameside local authorities, he will realise that since 1982 there has been a growth of 200 places in day nursery provision. I must tell him that that growth has occurred entirely within the private sector. I congratulate the private sector and hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that growth and initiative.

Mr. Key: Has my hon. Friend had time to read the report of the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, which recommended the transfer of departmental responsibility for nursery education from the Department of Health and Social Security to the Department of Education and Science? Will she consider that recommendation as a matter of urgency?

Mrs. Currie: Given the provenance of the report, I am not surprised at its recommendation. However, I believe that the social services, the departments of local authorities and the Government's under-fives initiative would wish to retain some responsibility for the care of those children in families under stress.

Ms. Richardson: In considering the implications of the Sex Discrimination Act 1986, which has just reached the statute book, and which lifts the restrictions on times and hours of women's working day, can the Minister say how many of the inadequate number of day care places will offer flexible hours for women working unsocial hours and shift work?

Mrs. Currie: I am sure the hon. Lady will agree that day nurseries are not the only form of available resource for working women. For example, there are also 57,800 registered child minders, with places for 126,000 children. They provide an excellent service and their numbers have been rising sharply. If I may put it to the hon. Lady in this way, child minders are the most flexible resource of all. I am satisfied that the majority of children of pre-school age receive an excellent service. The service is intended for the children first.

Wessex Region

8. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what reductions there have been in recent months in National Health Service waiting lists in the Wessex region.

Mr. Newton: Information on month-by-month changes of patients on the in-patient waiting lists is not available centrally. The latest published figures show a decline of 4·1 per cent. in the size of the lists between 31 March 1985 and 31 March 1986, although there was a small increase of 2·6 per cent. in the figures between 30 September 1985 and 31 March 1986.

Mr. Hunter: While acknowledging and applauding the Government's achievement in reducing NHS waiting lists during the past four or five years nationally in the Wessex region, may I say that the length of waiting lists remains a matter of some anxiety? What further measures does my hon. Friend propose to help the position?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will be aware of the initiative launched by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services earlier in the year. I am glad to say that we have received some positive and helpful reports from the regional health authority and its districts. At present we are considering how to use the £50 million over two years that will be put behind those efforts.

Dr. Marek: Does the Minister realise that if he had answered the question truthfully he would have said, "None. Waiting lists have increased. I regret that and I shall do everything that I can to bring them down."? The Minister would not only have announced the 2·6 per cent. figure. He would have said that, within that 2·6 per cent. figure, urgent cases have increased by 7·6 per cent. over the six-month period covered by the figures.

Does the Minister realise that 10,000 non-urgent cases have been waiting for more than one year in that regional health authority, and that more than 2,000 urgent cases have been waiting for more than one month? Does he realise that the peanuts that he has given as extra resources to bring down waiting lists will not achieve that? Waiting lists have not decreased, and are even worse than the Minister says because he has recently massaged the figures. Will he come clean about that?

Mr. Newton: If I sought to match the hon. Gentleman's evident desire to have a political punch-up, I would have made the point that the waiting lists now, whatever may have happened during the six months to March, are much lower than those that were left behind by the Labour Government.

North Western Regional Health Authority

10. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last met the chairman of the North Western regional health authority.

Mrs. Currie: My right hon. Friend meets regional chairmen every two months to discuss a wide range of issues. The last such meeting, which was attended by all the Health Ministers, was on Wednesday 19 November in Sheffield.

Mr. Sackville: Will my hon. Friend find an opportunity to congratulate the chairman on the success of his policies for care in the community? Is she aware that Bolton health authority has resettled nearly 50 mentally handicapped people in ordinary housing, a feat which at one time many said could not be done?

Mrs. Currie: Yes, I shall do that gladly. I am sure my hon. Friend is aware that the Bolton network, which is at the heart of the scheme that he mentioned, receives central funding. Indeed, a total of £1·7 million over three years has

passed from our Department to that scheme. We are monitoring it closely and watching it with interest. We hope to see it copied elsewhere.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Is the Minister aware whether, during the discussions, the PR management consultants' report relating to affairs in the Salford health authority was discussed? Is she aware that it recommended further funds for Salford? If they are not provided, despite all that Salford has done, there will either be closures of wards or lengthening queues.

Mrs. Currie: One or two districts in the North-Western region are planning to overspend in the next financial year. Discussions are under way as to exactly what they should do. I know that close discussions are being held between the region and the districts involved.

Mr. Robert Atkins: When my hon. Friend next meets the chairman of the regional health authority, will she remind him again of the anxiety being expressed in my constituency and many others adjacent to it about the proposed closure of the children's arthritic ward at the Wrightington hospital near Parbold? Will she assure him that there will be an outcry if that hospital ward is closed without at least a commensurate, if not better, service being offered in exchange?

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend is probably aware that I have already discussed that exact question twice with the regional health authority chairman. We hope to make an announcement about it shortly.

Mr. Terry Lewis: Is the Minister aware that in my constituency, in the Salford health authority area, there is a mental health day care centre that is still standing empty, although it was built in June this year, because of a lack of funding for staff? Answer that!

Mrs. Currie: With the greatest of pleasure. I am aware of these problems, but I am also aware that in Salford the number of in-patients treated has gone up from 38,000 to 42,000 in the past four years; the number of out-patients treated has risen from 284,000 to nearly 300,000 and the number of direct care staff has increased from 3,900 to 4,200. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to answer that.

Hospital Patients

11. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients were treated in National Health Service hospitals in the most recent year for which figures are available; and how this compares with the figures for 1978-79.

Mr. Fowler: In 1985, NHS hospitals in England treated some 6½ million in-patient cases, 960,000 day cases, and 37·4 million out-patient cases. That is nearly 1 million more in-patient cases, 400,000 more day cases, and almost 3½ million more out-patient cases than in 1978.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that these figures, more than any others, show the expansion of the National Health Service since the Government came to office?

Mr. Fowler: One of the figures illustrates that a record amount of health care is being provided. The other figures, which establish the same point, are those for the capital building programme, which show that a record number of hospitals have been built by the Conservative Government.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: These figures are one further example of how the Government fiddled figures. Is it not the case that when a patient is prematurely discharged and subsequently has to go back to hospital he is counted as a new patient in the figures for treatment?

Mr. Fowler: These figures—the exact measurements — were used by Lord Ennals, the former Labour Secretary of State for Social Services. Why was it not a fiddle when he used them, but a fiddle when this Government use them?

Mr. Dickens: Is it not a fact that the winter of discontent added to the waiting lists of hospitals throughout the United Kingdom? Was it not a Conservative Government who shortened those waiting lists? The Conservative Government are now having a drive to shorten waiting lists even further. Who are the Government of compassion? Who are the Government who care?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said. I agree especially with his first point, that in 1982 the waiting list went up because of industrial action. However, that industrial action was not condemned by the official Opposition.

Severe Weather Payments

13. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the trigger temperature of −1·5 deg. C. for the new severe weather payments will apply only where that temperature is attained for seven consecutive days.

15. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the trigger temperature of −1·5 deg. C. for the new severe weather payments scheme will apply where that temperature is attained only for seven consecutive days measured between a Monday and the following Sunday.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. John Major): The test will be based on the average temperature over the seven-day period. It is not a condition that each day in the period has to satisfy the temperature criterion.

Mr. Michie: As many people still feel that they will lose out next winter, can the Minister tell the House in how many of the past 30 winters the criterion has been met? Secondly, do the Government expect to spend more, or less, on the scheme this winter than was spent last winter?

Mr. Major: The criterion would certainly have been met in almost every winter within living memory. The effect of these regulations is to ensure that the criteria may be met in areas of the country that may be especially cold. It will therefore deliver the most help to people in most need in the coldest parts of the country.

Mr. Ross: Can the Minister confirm that, nevertheless, if the weather is cold enough in one week to meet the Government's criterion, and that week runs from Wednesday to Wednesday, no one will be paid?

Mr. Major: If the cold weather lasts from a Wednesday to a Wednesday, it is equally likely that it would trigger not one week but two weeks' payment. The hon. Gentleman should bear that in mind.

Mr. Michael Morris: Is my hon. Friend aware that the new, simplified scheme is much to be welcomed? However, will he think again about the capital allowance of only £500, when today's average funeral costs £700? Is £500 not too low a figure?

Mr. Major: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his first remark. With regard to the £500 cut-off period for single payment, this has been a stable part of our system for some years and I have no immediate proposal to change it. My hon. Friend will be aware of the changes proposed in funeral payments in the Social Security Act 1986.

Mr. Ward: My hon. Friend will be aware of the great welcome for the simplified scheme. He will also be aware that it will lead to short-term demands on DHSS offices. Is he satisfied that there will be enough staff to cope with these short-term demands?

Mr. Major: We are concluding a complement review to match staffing to the needs of the public. I am bound to add that my right hon. Friend also inserted an extra 5,000 staff earlier this year to meet the special pressures that exist in local offices.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Minister aware that the Government's proposals on cold weather payments are even more restrictive than last year's farce, when 22,000 more elderly people died than in the previous winter? Is he aware that if the minus 1·5 degree temperature rule had applied last winter, bitterly cold though it was, two thirds of the country would have been excluded? Is he also aware that, by limiting payments to those with less than £500 in the bank, he is excluding the vast majority of the poorest pensioners on supplementary benefit? When will the Government learn that the tragic death toll from hypothermia will never be halted as long as the Government are more interested in erecting trip wires to exclude the great majority of those who are most vulnerable?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman, typically, clearly does not understand the system. Nor does he appear to acknowledge that this is but a small part of the overall help available. I am bound to say to the hon. Gentleman that the amounts available for heating, through the supplementary benefit scale rates, the heating additions and special payments are substantially higher than anything the previous Labour Government ever contemplated.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Redmond** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a dinner in support of the Somerville college appeal.

Mr. Redmond: Will the Prime Minister consider during her busy day appointing a special project team to examine the high unemployment figures and to bring about positive recommendations for improvement?

The Prime Minister: No. I believe that the Government are doing everything possible to increase the number of real jobs available, by their general policy and by the number of special measures that are available to help those who are unemployed, and by their new plans to help the long-term unemployed.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Will my right hon. Friend cast her mind back to 1977 and the case of Agee and Hosenball, which affected national security? Does she recall that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition at the time acted in unison and maintained the traditional bipartisan policy on national security?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I recall that I was Leader of the Opposition at the time. Those on the Opposition side of the House upheld the bipartisan policy and supported the Home Secretary of the day, when more than 30 on his own side voted against him.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister aware of a disclosure that on 28 May, the very day on which Admiral Poindexter was assuring our representative, Sir Anthony Acland, that America was absolutely against arms for Iran, Mr. Robert Macfarlane was actually delivering arms in Iran, and doing so covertly? During the Prime Minister's recent visit to President Reagan, did she seek an explanation or an apology for this apparent lapse in the special relationship?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, our policy is that we do not give ransom of any kind for hostages. The President of the United States has made his policy clear in his several television interviews. I do not yet answer for the United States.

Mr. Kinnock: We heard what the Prime Minister said. Will she tell us, on another aspect of the same case, how she can justify the dropping of bombs on a source of terrorism in April and the giving of cut-price gifts of arms to a source of terrorism in May?

The Prime Minister: I do not answer for the United States of America, nor am I expected to. I have answered the point if the right hon. Gentleman is referring to our policy on Libya, which I believe was fully justified.

Mr. Soames: Will my right hon. Friend pause to reflect during her busy day that, if the security services are to retain the respect and confidence of the House and the public, the Government should establish forthwith a committee of senior and eminent Privy Councillors to provide parliamentary oversight?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, this matter has been raised before. It has been considered before and rejected. I believe that the reasons for its rejection were the same as they are now. One has to trust those who are in charge of the security services and our Ministers in the discharge of their duties, as has been the case in previous Administrations and remains the case in this one.

Q2. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lewis: Is the right hon. Lady aware that the decision yesterday to freeze the Sports Council grant to last year's figure will hit most severely the socially deprived

areas, because the extra money which was expected was earmarked in that direction? Will she reconsider that decision?

The Prime Minister: We recognise that the Sports Council fulfills an important role. It makes a significant contribution to the Government's policy objectives in deprived areas. The council's effective work has our continued strong support and confidence. I am aware of its concern about its grant for next year. The fact is that between 1979 and 1986 its grant has gone up by 67 per cent. in real terms. It received an increase of £6,372,000 in 1986-87—an increase of 16 per cent. in real terms over the previous year—and we informed the council then that it could not expect a higher figure in 1987-88. The Government's record on the Sports Council is outstanding.

Mr. Squire: Does my right hon. Friend accept that many people view with distaste the spectacle of someone who took a vow of secrecy during his working life and who now, having retired, seeks a large sum of money to break that vow of secrecy?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, I can say nothing about the conduct of this case. I can only point out, as I have pointed out before in the House, that, like all present and former members of the security service, Mr. Wright owes a lifelong duty of confidentiality to the Crown. Unauthorised publication of his manuscript would violate this obligation. Mr. Wright served in the security service from 1955 to 1976. His service therefore relates to a period before the Conservative party's time in office. The Government are concerned with upholding the principle of confidentiality and the obligations of staff, without which there could be no effective security service. I believe that these principles have been upheld by successive Prime Ministers and Home Secretaries of both parties.

Q3. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ross: Will the Prime Minister take time today to consider the response made by the Minister for Social Security on exceptionally severe weather payments? Does she agree that it did not deal with the problem of poor people who are frightened to put on the heat when they are cold? Will she consider the scheme proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) to pay a £5 winter premium from December until March to ensure that thousands do not die of cold this winter?

The Prime Minister: This Government's record on heating additions and severe weather payments is outstanding compared with the miserable record of the last Labour Government.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Has my right hon. Friend noticed the strange coincidence that, since my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer went quite a long way towards adopting the economic policies which I have urged on him, there has been some improvement in the employment situation? May we have more of the same?

The Prime Minister: The improvement in the employment situation stemmed from 1983. One million new jobs have been created since then. The improvement in the unemployment position has lasted for three months and I hope that it will continue. I am glad that my hon. Friend is pleased. I think that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was a little surprised at some of the things that he said.

Mr. Steel: Given the Prime Minister's resistance to the setting up of a special Select Committee of Privy Councillors on the security services, and given the principles of confidentiality which she has just announced to the House again, how can she explain the difference between allowing Mr. Chapman Pincher to publish his book based on information supplied by Mr. Peter Wright, with half the proceeds going to Mr. Wright, and her attempt to stop the publication of a book on the same subject by Peter Wright published under his own name?

The Prime Minister: I made it quite clear this time and in the previous answer I gave that the Government are concerned with upholding the principle of confidentiality and the obligations of staff in the service, without which there can be no effective security service. Mr. Wright served in the security service from 1955 to 1976 and therefore his service relates to a time before the Government took office. It is clear that the principle we are upholding is the principle of the obligation of staff to the service, without which there could be no effective service. I wish to uphold the efficiency and effectiveness of the service.

Sir Ian Lloyd: In the context of disinvestment from South Africa, does the Prime Minister believe that the destruction of apartheid should enjoy a unique and singular exception from the fundamental principle that the end does not justify the means? If, as I suspect, she does not think that, does she agree that the anti-apartheid movement now appears to be acquiring most of the characteristics of intolerance, bigotry and sustained discrimination which are common to the very system it seeks to destroy?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, the Government's position on sanctions remains the same as it was. With regard to Barclays, that is a commercial judgment for the bank. I must point out that all that has happened is a change of ownership of the properties and interests there.

Q4. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pavitt: Has the Prime Minister had time to study in depth Friday's excellent consensus debate on AIDS? Will she now take two new Cabinet initiatives? First, will she say that the necessary resources will be taken from the Contingencies Fund and not from the allocation regarded purely as NHS, which is comprehensive, and will be comparable in size to the amount found from the Contingencies Fund for the Falkland Islands? Secondly, will she now seek to establish the principle that all vaccines, which we hope will help to solve the problem, purchased by the NHS will be purchased as a service of the Crown, so that there will not be competition for somebody to hit the jackpot, and so that the drug companies' research officers can have cross-fertilisation, and research is not confined within single companies?

The Prime Minister: I have looked at the debate that took place on Friday, although, unfortunately, I could not be here. It seemed to be a very good debate and the action of the Government seemed very welcome. A considerable sum has been allocated for the prevention of this terrible disease and other steps have been taken. I think that the sum is as much as can be dealt with at the moment.

With regard to the hon. Gentleman's point about vaccines, my information is that there is no effective vaccine against AIDS. Although there is a great deal of research, I understand that it is unlikely there will be an effective vaccine for some considerable time yet. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman's second question does not arise.

Q5. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fallon: Given the serious football hooliganism this season at Middlesbrough, Exeter, Torquay, Shrewsbury and Darlington and the unwillingness of the Football League to put public safety before its own financial self-interest, will the Government act to protect the rights of residents to shop in safety on Saturdays in their own town centres?

The Prime Minister: The police are very much aware of the problems that can arise outside the grounds when football matches are being played. It is for them to decide how they deal with that and how they ensure the safety of citizens.

Q6. **Miss Boothroyd** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Miss Boothroyd: In the light of recent disclosures showing that President Reagan's admission of a limited supply of arms to Iran fell very far short of the truth, does the right hon. Lady still stand by her original statement that she believes implicitly in the President's integrity in this matter?

The Prime Minister: It is not for me to answer for United States policy. President Reagan made his position clear in a television statement. It is that the United States does not give ransom in money or in arms for hostages. That is our policy; that is his policy.

Mr. Marlow: As my right hon. Friend has said that the events which have been scrutinised by a court in Australia arise from circumstances which took place before she was Prime Minister, does she agree that she has no vested interest, whereas the Leader of the Opposition, in his goings-on, is indulging in low, nasty, dirty party politics?

The Prime Minister: I made it clear that the Government are concerned with upholding the principle of confidentiality—*[Interruption.]*—and the obligations of staff, without which there can be no effective security service. I believe that those principles have been upheld by successive Prime Ministers of both parties and by successive Home Secretaries of both parties.

Mr. Kinnock: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, that arises out of questions. During Question Time it was implied that somehow the well-established and entirely necessary bipartisan approach to national security was being breached. The issue involves a matter of order, not only because of its implications for the conduct of government in this country, but because of its implications for the attitudes of hon. Members. Any Government who do absolutely nothing to impede the publication of a book, knowing it to have been published with information directly from people under a duty of confidence—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I ask the right hon. Gentleman to direct his point of order to me?

Mr. Kinnock: No Government who do that can preach sermons about maintaining a bipartisan attitude towards national security. That bipartisan attitude is not best sustained, either, by ensuring that what the Prime Minister is not prepared to say in the House is said by a civil servant in secret briefings outside this place——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman must address his point of order to me.

Mr. Kinnock: The Government—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. How can I possibly hear if this shouting goes on?

Mr. Kinnock: The Government, who put the Cabinet Secretary in a very exposed position that ensures that attention is drawn to disclosures that are harmful to national security, are not in a position to lecture either. I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that the only question that I have raised, or would raise, is one relating to the decisions of the Attorney-General. The explanation of those decisions, which I have asked for, has no implications for the national security of my country whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that no hon. Member would seek to impugn the integrity of the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Gow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you take this opportunity to make your own comment and judgment on the point of order which has just been raised by the Leader of the Opposition? Is it not the case that, in accordance with all precedents, the point of order which was raised by the Leader of the Opposition was not a point of order at all?.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to the hon. Gentleman and to the House that in this place the Leader of the Opposition, whom I judged to be saying that his integrity had in some way been drawn into doubt, is, like every other right hon. and hon. Member, a man of honour.

Mr. Williams: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon we have seen yet another example of the Prime Minister's arbitrariness and her growing contempt for the House of Commons. You will recollect that in previous answers the Prime Minister has said that she will refuse to answer questions relating to the MI5 case. Because the Prime Minister has taken up that position, when my hon. Friends have gone to the Table Office and endeavoured to table questions they have found that there is a Prime Ministerial block and that they are not allowed to put questions to her. Yet this afternoon at the Dispatch Box the Prime Minister read a statement relating to that block, which is not subject to further questioning, although at the same time she brazenly refuses to come to the House and make a formal statement

that would be subject to questioning by hon. Members. In view of the antics of the Prime Minister this afternoon, does the block stand? If it does, what rules cover the conduct of a Prime Minister?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman well knows the rules about blocks on questions. Every day after Question Time I look carefully at the answers that have been given, and they will always be taken into account when questions are tabled at the Table Office.

Mr. Heffer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Some of us, I am sure most hon. Members, have been reading the various press speculations in relation to the court case taking place in Australia. We have also read, for example in the *Sunday Express*, that the Government are trying to stop the publication of the book because it says that certain sections of MI5 were bugging——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It must be a point of order that I can answer. I am not responsible for any answers that are given from the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Heffer: If you will allow me time, Mr. Speaker, I shall make the point. The point I am making is that, with all the speculation that one of our previous Prime Ministers was bugged, along with some Back Benchers, is it not time that the Government made a statement to the House? You have the right to protect Back Benchers, Mr. Speaker. That is your responsibility. Therefore, you should ask and ensure that the Government make a statement to the House on the reports in the *Sunday Express* and other papers about the matter.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has been here as long as I have and he well knows that it has never been the role of the Chair to demand statements from the Government Front Bench. That does not lie with me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is developing into an extension of Question Time. I am bound to have to take that into account in the subsequent debate, in which many right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part.

Mr. Winnick: This concerns you directly, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend has quoted the serious allegations of the wrongdoing which has been committed by the security service. We are supposed to be here to ask questions of Ministers. In the absence of any statement by the Prime Minister, and in view of the fact that she refuses to answer questions on the long-standing farce in Australia, can we now table questions relating to those aspects of the security service which have been the subject of questioning in the Australian court and extensive reporting in the press here?

When we go to the Table Office, Mr. Speaker—this is directly a matter for you — we are not permitted, through no fault of the Clerks, to table these sorts of questions. Will you now give authority for us to ask questions of the Prime Minister about the allegations that have appeared in the newspapers about the security service?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question was put in different words, but in the same terms, by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), and I have already answered it. I invite the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) to read my answer to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Hayes: It is the same every day.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Yes, until we get the truth.

I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that the Prime Minister has broken her own block on my questions of last Friday——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have dealt with this matter and I have nothing further to say about it.

Mr. Faulds: This is really in your defence, Sir, as always. Would it not be advisable if you were to remind certain Members—hon. Members—of this House that they should resist the temptation of trying to steal your wig? That applies particularly to the irascible hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow).

Mr. Speaker: Order. My wig is not for sale.

Mr. Hanley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is the point of order related to my responsibilities?

Mr. Hanley: I believe so, Mr. Speaker. There is a limit to the number of questions that hon. Members may table and place on the Order Paper. After all that we have been through so far in this Session, could there not now be a limit placed on the number of points of order raised by hon. Members?

Mr. Speaker: That is a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Civil Servant (Briefing)

3.43 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall have to take all of this into account when we come to the debate of the day.

Mr. Banks *rose*——

Hon. Members: Where is the silver?

Mr. Banks: I have melted it down and given it to the Arts Council.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I asked for your guidance on how one could raise the fact that a civil servant, Mr. Jim Coe, had attacked my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition in this place, apparently on the instructions, or with the certain knowledge, of the Prime Minister. I have tried to raise this matter, and have been told that, because this happened at a Lobby briefing and, therefore, did not really happen, it is impossible to raise it. Is it in order for a civil servant in the Palace of Westminster to attack my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition while we are not allowed to raise the matter with those who are responsible?

Mr. Speaker: I dealt with this matter yesterday. I do not know this Mr. Jim Coe. I am not responsible for what goes on at meetings that are not supposed to take place.

MV Kowloon Bridge

3.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): My Department was advised of reports of structural damage to the Hong Kong registered vessel Kowloon Bridge late on Tuesday 18 November. In view of the possible connection with the loss in 1980 of the sister ship Derbyshire, the Department agreed with the Hong Kong authorities that the Department's inspectors should investigate the damage to the Kowloon Bridge and conduct an inquiry on their behalf.

An inspector was immediately appointed to conduct a full investigation into the damage and report to the Department. He boarded the vessel at some personal risk on 20 November in Bantry bay, where she had put in for repairs. Although the inspector's report has not yet been finalised, early indications are that the damage to Kowloon Bridge was entirely consistent with the very severe weather conditions encountered during the voyage across the Atlantic.

Late on 22 November, the Kowloon Bridge broke away from her anchor. The master decided to put out to sea. She then suffered a loss of steering and a Mayday call was put out. The House will wish to acknowledge the skill and bravery with which the crew were taken off by RAF Sea King helicopters with no loss of life. The vessel eventually drifted on to rocks near Baltimore after drifting for 24 hours in severe weather conditions. She has since broken her back between No. 2 and 3 holds.

Inspectors from my Department have also been appointed to investigate on behalf of the Hong Kong Administration the vessel breaking free from her anchor, the loss of steering and the subsequent grounding. The inspectors will complete their work and submit reports on the two investigations as soon as possible. These reports will be published. When I have received them, I will consider what action needs to be taken and whether they indicate any link with the loss of the Derbyshire in 1980, which might be cause for appointing a formal investigation into the loss of that ship.

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): I thank the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for responding to my request yesterday to make a statement to the House on the circumstances surrounding the sinking of the Kowloon Bridge. May I on behalf of the Opposition join him in congratulating the Royal Air Force rescue crew, who showed considerable valour in rescuing the crew of the Kowloon Bridge in extremely dangerous and hazardous conditions? That should be placed firmly on the record.

The Kowloon Bridge, formerly the English Bridge, is one of six ships built by Swan Hunter in the early 1970s. In 1980, one of those ships, the merchant vessel Derbyshire, was carrying iron ore from Canada to Japan when it sank without trace in the South China sea with a loss of 44 British seafarers' lives. In 1982, another sister ship, the Tyne Bridge, suffered severe structural damage in the North sea in the region of frame 65. Her crew had to be helicoptered to safety. That was yet another performance by the rescue services in hazardous conditions. An inquiry by Lloyd's Register of Shipping discovered that the ship had not been built according to

[Mr. Roger Stott]

the designers' plans and, accordingly, all other ships in that class were substantially modified under the supervision of Lloyd's Register.

Since 1980, the families who lost their loved ones aboard the Derbyshire and the seafaring unions have been fighting a campaign to persuade the Department to hold a formal inquiry into the tragedy because they feel that the incidents that have happened to her sister ships are not unconnected.

The Department has had two internal inquiries into the loss of the Derbyshire and has decided that no formal inquiry is necessary. That view was conveyed to me by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State last Tuesday morning in a letter. Within half an hour of receiving that letter telling me that there was to be no formal inquiry, I was informed that her sister ship, the Kowloon Bridge, similarly en route from Canada and, similarly, carrying a cargo of iron ore, had put into Bantry bay in Ireland suffering from structural cracks in the region of frame 65 — yet another ship of the same class suffering from similar structural defects.

In his statement the Minister outlined what happened to the Kowloon Bridge thereafter and we shall await the inspectors' report with interest. Can he confirm that when the surveyor examined the ship in Bantry bay he instructed the ship's captain that it would be unsafe to proceed? Can he assure the House that the surveyor's report of structural damage before the ship broke free from her anchor will be made available to the House and will be considered and compared with the structural faults that occurred in the Tyne Bridge? Will the remaining ships in the class be inspected as a result of the inspectors' finding cracks in the Kowloon Bridge?

In his letter to me of 18 November the Minister made it clear that a report on the Derbyshire had been published in 1981. Neither the seafaring unions nor I have had sight of that report. Will he make it available to them and to me?

Surely it is now time that the Department of Transport acknowledged the depth of concern felt by hon. Members on both sides of the House whose constituents lost their lives when the Derbyshire sank, as well as the concern and anguish felt by the families of those 44 people. In the light of the evidence from the Tyne Bridge and Kowloon Bridge, should not this matter now be laid finally to rest, and that can be done only if the Secretary of State for Transport agrees to a formal inquiry into the loss of the Derbyshire?

Mr. Spicer: I thank the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) for his opening remarks. I know that he is extremely knowledgeable about the subject and that he has taken a great deal of interest in it over a number of months.

The hon. Gentleman asked a number of questions, perhaps the most fundamental of which was why there had not been a formal inquiry and whether there needs to be one now. There are two reasons why there has not been an inquiry to date. First, with regard to the Derbyshire, and as the hon. Gentleman acknowledged, there is no evidence to go on. It sank without trace, and that has bedevilled the investigations. I think that is common ground on both sides of the House. As the hon. Gentleman knows, there has, however, been a very detailed investigation indeed into the possible connections between the three sister ships that experienced problems in the early 1980s and the sinking of the Derbyshire. The lengthy report was published in March this year and is freely available to hon. Members and the public. It was by no means a whitewash, nor was it bland. For example, the final paragraph states:

"The fact that no distress signals were received might be thought to support the explanation that massive structural failure was the cause of the loss of 'Derbyshire'."

There is no mincing of words. The issue is whether there is anything more to find out. That is the only question. These formal investigations are elaborate procedures and are expensive, not only in terms of the public purse but for those who make representations. Therefore, there must be good reason to hold one, and the Government's position is that if any new evidence emerges from the Kowloon Bridge incident, and if there is good reason, they will seriously consider—given that there is something new to look at—the case for a formal investigation.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the advice that was given to the captain before the ship sailed. I must be careful because I cannot prejudge. Two investigations are going on at present, one into the damage itself as the ship arrived at Bantry bay, and the second into the events thereafter. I must not prejudge and, therefore, cannot go much further than what I said in my statement, except to say that effectively it was the master's decision to take the ship to sea. I must not further prejudge the investigations, which will certainly have to concentrate on the issue that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

I can categorically say that the reports of the two investigations now taking place will be made available.

The safety and condition of the remaining ships in the class are very important. They are formally certified as safe and comply with international standards. Those investigations have been undertaken by the appropriate authorities. If any matters arise out of the investigations into the Kowloon Bridge which affect those ships, I should have thought that the certification authorities would be bound to take them into account.

I shall immediately look into the availability of the report published in 1981 and make sure that the hon. Gentleman is sent a copy.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Is my hon. Friend aware that, in spite of all that he has said, there is no reason not to have a formal inquiry into the Derbyshire affair? Like many other hon. Members who have constituents whose relatives went down in the Derbyshire, I have files of circumstantial evidence, and all the evidence that is available about the loss of the Kowloon Bridge supports that circumstantial evidence.

My hon. Friend spoke about rough weather, but my information is that it was force 8 rising force 9, which is nothing to compare with typhoon force 11 rising force 12, in which the Derbyshire went down. Let us have a formal inquiry for the sake of the people and families concerned. This is not a narrow lawyer's point. On the lawyer's point, my hon. Friend is aware that the people can be found guilty of murder, even when there is no body.

Mr. Spicer: On the specific point about the potential connection between the Kowloon Bridge and the Derbyshire, the first signs are that the weather conditions were very tough. There had been 10 days at storm force 10 or 11 in the Atlantic ,which is tough by any standard, and another ship was even more severely damaged in crossing from Canada. There was 40 ft of water on the

boat deck and the aft was completely submerged and the ship had taken a tremendous pounding. It was not until 24 hours later that the ship began to break up. It did not break up in the area of frame 65, the area on which most interest has been concentrated in the Derbyshire case, because of the other ships that had had that problem. I repeat that if there were any further evidence from the affair we should look closely at holding a formal investigation.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Is the Minister aware that many people from Merseyside, some from my constituency and some from others who lost their lives, and some of us have been arguing for a long time that it should be taken as a priority that the families of those people should be given compensation? The responsibility for this is on those who built the ship with a bad design, and the Government could have taken the action before.

There should have been a formal inquiry before, but at least let us have one now. Will the Government assure us that this will take place immediately so that my constituents and others on Merseyside will get a square deal, after losing their husbands or sons? It is scandalous that the Government have done nothing about this since 1980.

Mr. Spicer: That last point is not true. The Government made a massive inquiry, the report of which has been published. It has been made clear to British Shipbuilders that compensation contingencies must be in the accounts should any compensation be required. Compensation, and who is responsible for paying it, has not been at issue. The issues are whether more information is required and whether a formal inquiry would produce more information on the basis of which claims can be made. Already, on the basis of the Government's published report, writs have been served with a view to compensation. We have made it clear that compensation arrangements would be made. The only issue in dispute is whether a formal inquiry will generate new information. If there are any signs that that would be the case, particularly in the case of the Kowloon Bridge, the Government stand ready to consider that.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): This is clearly not a partisan matter and all that we wish is to urge my hon. Friend the Minister to hold a full inquiry. The evidence in the report has been challenged professionally on dozens of points—for instance, the statement that the Kowloon Bridge, formerly the English Bridge, broke up purely because of heavy weather damage. The captain said of the damage that it was between the No. 9 hold and the pump room, which is the same place as on the other vessels—for example, the Tyne Bridge in 1982.

Some important questions were not addressed in 1982. For example, why did the shipbuilder deviate from the original design drawings for the six ships? Who authorised that deviation, and did the designer know? Until those questions are answered, there will be the suspicion of a cover-up. However uncomfortable it may be for ship owners, shipbuilders, Lloyd's and the other people involved, we must press for a public inquiry with full speed, because ships with the same faults are still afloat.

Mr. Spicer: I do not want to prejudge the results of the two inquiries. We shall publish the reports of those inquiries, the first one very soon. The first indications are, as I have already mentioned, that it is not hold 9 but holds 2 and 3 that are involved. I shall not trouble the House with the quotation, but today there is a lengthy article in *Lloyd's List* which confirms that the early signs are that the damage is consistent with storm damage. If there is any new evidence, we shall consider it. In no way are the Government prejudging the outcome of the inquiy, and we shall consider carefully what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Does the Minister accept that many people would consider that the sudden loss of a vessel of the Derbyshire's tonnage would, for that reason alone, merit an immediate inquiry? It is unfair to the relatives of those who were lost in the disaster that nothing has been done in the meantime. Does not the Minister agree that after the accident to the Kowloon Bridge it is imperative that the matter should be investigated without delay?

Mr. Spicer: It will certainly be investigated. There is no dispute about an investigation. The only dispute relates to the narrow point concerning a formal inquiry. If there is any evidence about new facets, or if there is anything that might connect this disaster with the Derbyshire disaster, we shall seriously consider whether a formal inquiry ought to be held.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): Does my hon. Friend know whether the iron ore that was loaded on to the Kowloon Bridge in Canada was in a dry or a wet condition? If wet, may I draw to his attention the very serious representations that have been made to me by a constituent of mine who is an expert in ship loading, all of which had been passed on to him, in which he offered very serious criticisms of the international regulations that apply to the loading of wet ore?

Mr. Spicer: I shall certainly look into that matter. I do not have an immediate answer, but I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Is the Minister aware that 17 of the 44 seamen who were lost when the Derbyshire sank six years ago were from Merseyside and that there is continuing worry, frustration and anger among the bereaved families on Merseyside? I hope that the Minister will take that into account when deciding whether to reopen the inquiry into the sinking of the Derbyshire. Will he also say whether the report in yesterday's edition of the *Financial Times*—that

"Swan Hunter said yesterday that it had no record of the construction of the Kowloon Bridge"

because of the intervening nationalisation—is true? Will he also say what discussions have taken place with the Irish Government about the pollution of the coastline from the spillage of oil from the Kowloon Bridge?

Mr. Spicer: On the hon. Gentleman's second point, this information was passed to the new owners. The records are with British Shipbuilders. There is no question of there being no records. I listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said on behalf of his constituents, just as I listened carefully to what was said by hon. Members on both sides of the House about their constituents. I repeat that if there is any new evidence, or if there is any sign that there is any connection, or any potential connection, between the two, we shall seriously consider holding a formal inquiry.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): Will my hon. Friend accept that he is right not to rush into an inquiry into the loss of this vessel? It is not unusual for vessels to break up in heavy weather. I have in mind the Neptune Sapphire and the Castletown which broke up in the 1970s. They were of a completely different design from the Swan Hunter design that is in question.

Mr. Spicer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but I maintain that the Government are open minded about this matter. There is no Government prejudice.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): As the Minister has repeatedly reminded us, we must not prejudge the matter. However, will the inquiry bear in mind that the master took the ship from a sheltered haven into violent seas, presumably against advice, presumably when a replacement cable could have been made available and presumably without the repairs having been carried out? One question that obviously arises is whether masters may now be under too much pressure to deliver on time. Incidentally, a further question which must be in the minds of most hon. Members, certainly those with maritime interests, is why a ship was abandoned rudderless, with the engines still running. What discussions will be held with the Irish Government about the ecological disaster that now threatens the coastline of County Cork?

Mr. Spicer: As to the events that led up to the taking of the ship out to sea, there will be two sets of inquiries. One inquiry will be concerned with the initial damage to the vessel. The other will be concerned with the incidents and events leading up to the vessel becoming a casualty —that is, being taken out to sea and thereafter breaking up. The results of those two separate inquiries will be published, the first very soon.

I am advised that there is very little likelihood of the United Kingdom coastline being polluted. As for the potential pollution of the Irish coastline, that is a matter for the Irish authorities. No doubt we shall be discussing the matter with them.

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): There is no more interest in this sad and tragic series of events than there is in the north-east. I am pleased that the Minister has made this statement today. If my memory is correct, on a cold, wet and damp autumn day I saw one of those ships launched in the river Tees in virtually a gale force wind. Will the Minister seek to assure as many people as possible, especially influential people in the shipbuilding industry, that the present management, design teams and work force of Swan Hunter are in no way linked with the design teams of the previous period? Every step must be taken to keep to the fore in the hard commercial world the name of Swan Hunter as a good shipbuilding company that has good design teams. Those who watch the Sir Galahad go down the slipway on Saturday 13 December—I hope that the Minister will be invited—will see what craftsmanship is. Despite all that has been said, I fear that the loss of the Derbyshire may go down in history as just as a great mystery as the loss of the Marie Celeste.

Mr. Spicer: I completely support the hon. Gentleman's general proposition about the quality of Swan Hunter and the superb workmanship that it produces. However, I must not go into too much detail, for fear of prejudicing the results of the inquiries and the legal action that might be taken. I cannot go into too much detail about linkages, but I completely agree with the hon. Gentleman's general point.

Sports Council

4.8 pm

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): I beg to ask leave to more the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the Government's decision within the Estimates of the Department of the Environment to discriminate against the work of the Sports Council, especially in vital inner city areas, the failure of the Secretary of State at any time since he has been in office to meet the chairman of the Sports Council, or his sports Minister to hold any discussions with the Sports Council upon the effect of these cuts, which amount to £25 million of sports development, and to call for their resignations."

This year there has been a £1·3 million cut in the Sports Council's budget. That is very serious. As a ratio of 19:1, that means that £25 million worth of inner city sports provision will not now go ahead. The cut has been justified on the basis that last year the Sports Council had an exceptional £5 million grant, but that grant was to compensate for the loss of the Greater London council and the metropolitan counties. Even on last year's showing, this amounts to a further confidence trick by the Government regarding sport in the inner cities.

I can give one or two examples of the serious nature of the situation. At Southwark, the conversion of a former Sainsbury's store into a community centre will not take place. At Brixton, an athletics track will not be built. At Darlaston, in the west midlands, the conversion of a bus depot into a sports centre for handicapped people will not take place. At Gorton in Manchester, a gymnastics centre and at Bury in Lancashire two dual use schemes will not be created.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman has one more minute.

Mr. Howell: Since he was appointed, the Secretary of State has not had the courtesy even to meet the chairman of the Sports Council, and the Under-Secretary did not discuss any of the cuts before they were imposed. Every other sector covered by the Department of the Environment has received large increases or at least increases to cover inflation. The House should consider urgently whether the two Ministers should resign.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member has asked leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the reasons why the Government have declined to provide adequate funds to the Sports Council for 1987-88 in order to carry out its inner city sports development programme."

As the right hon. Gentleman and the House know, I have to decide whether to give this matter precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised as being appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Restrictive Trade Practices (Services) (Amendment) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

Motion made, and Question put,

That the draft European Assembly Elections Regulations 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

Not fewer than twenty Members having risen in their places and signified their objection thereto, MR. SPEAKER *declared that the Noes had it, pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).*

Ordered,

That the draft European Assembly Elections (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

Orders of the Day

Coal Industry Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: I must tell the House that I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

4.13 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second Time.

I should like to give the House a brief explanation of the main clauses. Clause 1 changes the name of the National Coal Board to the British Coal Corporation, and clauses 2, 3 and 4 deal with financial provisions.

Clause 2 provides for the continuation of deficit grant powers. These are powers which the Government have had since the Coal Industry Act 1980, and the clause extends the power for two years, by which time the chairman, Sir Robert Haslam, has forecast that British Coal will achieve breakeven.

Clause 3 means that the present redundant mineworkers payments scheme will not be renewed after March 1987, and responsibility for future redundancies will be directly with British Coal. The clause establishes a flexible regime under which, by the introduction of annual orders, grants can be paid towards a broad range of expenditure associated with restructuring, maintenance of concessionary coal and social welfare provisions. The power to make these orders applies to the financial years 1987-88 and 1988-89, but may be extended for a further three years. The forms of expenditure eligible for grant are listed in schedule 2, which includes specific references to such matters as retraining and the promotion of new employment. It is under these provisions that the Government will be able to continue to support the important activities of the British Coal Enterprise company.

Clause 4 deals with support for redundancies. The suggestion made in the strangely worded amendment of the Opposition, that future costs resulting from recent redundancies will not continue to be met by the Government is wrong. The Bill does not affect past RMPS commitments which continue in force. The costs of past non-industrial workers' redundancies are safeguarded by clause 4, which gives power to pay grants for expenditure incurred before 1987 and which would previously have attracted pit closure grants.

The next four clauses are needed to ensure that all those employed in the industry will have fair rights of representation. Indeed, they give basic rights for employees in the coal industry. Since the strike those rights have been denied to a very large number of miners throughout the country; miners represented by a democratic trade union, albeit a trade union refused affiliation by the Labour party and by the TUC. These provisions of the Bill, therefore, help thousands of miners to have fair representation on the institutions of their industry.

The High Court confirmed in June that the coal industry's previous conciliation machinery had to be changed. British Coal is discussing the new machinery with the unions and there is no need to deal with this in the legislation. The Bill deals with three specific areas in which powers are to be taken. They are: miners' welfare trusts, coal industry social welfare organisations and superannuation schemes.

Clause 5 empowers the Charity Commissioners, after receiving an application from an employee organisation, to amend charitable trusts related to the coal industry if the members of that organisation constitute a substantial proportion of those who may benefit under the trust. The NUM has denied the UDM and such unions as APEX a proper role in the management of social welfare organisations in the industry, and in particular the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation.

Clause 6 empowers me to amend the constitution of a coal industry social welfare body if it appears to me, after receiving representations from British Coal, that any organisation which represents a substantial proportion of British Coal's employees does not enjoy full participation in that body. Clause 7 gives me similar powers in relation to the coal industry superannuation schemes. Clause 8 makes provision for a six-week limit to the time in which legal challenge can be made to orders under clauses 6 and 7.

The basis of the Bill is to try to encourage the industry and to see that it is successful over the next few years in improving its viability and in improving performance in production and marketing. The provision to change the name follows a request from the management of the National Coal Board because it felt that in terms of its marketing activities in presenting the attractiveness of its fuel, and in terms of its various other schemes for coal promotion, the title British Coal was more appropriate.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): Could it also be that the name National Coal Board would be unacceptable to the Registrar of Companies if the board were to be put on a corporate status with a view to privatisation or something like that?

Mr. Walker: I have no idea what the Registrar of Companies would do. I presume that if one wanted to float off the National Coal Board, which is a proper company, one would be able to do so. The request about the title came from the management and very few people would consider that a title such as the National Coal Board is anywhere near as attractive in marketing the product as British Coal.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): It is the product that matters.

Mr. Walker: It seems from the voices of the Opposition that they would prefer to adhere to the title of National Coal Board, irrespective of the marketing attractiveness to the management of British Coal. We intend, through the Bill, to go ahead and give the management the title that it wants. The financial provisions envisaged by the Government and set out in the Bill allow the corporation to embark upon a continuing and massive investment programme. It is envisaged that over the next three to four years more than £2 billion of new capital investment will go into the industry.

I hope that the country and the House will realise that very few industries in Britain are ensured of a capital investment programme of that dimension. Certainly no coal industry in western Europe will enjoy a capital investment programme of that dimension, and under no

Labour Government has the industry enjoyed a capital investment of that size. It is important to recognise that the financial provisions in the Bill are positive ones for the industry. In contrast to the Opposition's amendment, which I shall deal with shortly, the Bill accepts the continuing costs of the restructuring that has taken place in the industry over the last few years.

The Government have embarked upon the most generous programme ever for any industry to ensure that reorganisation can take place and that there are no compulsory redundancies. There have been incredibly generous early retirement provisions and incredibly generous payments for those who have decided to go voluntarily. The costs of those schemes will continue for many years. The Bill ensures that those costs remain with the Government and are not put on the corporation. That will represent a considerable cost to the taxpayer.

Such provision is in sharp contrast to the reduction of 168,000 in manpower under Labour, when there were no such generous schemes and no enterprise companies endeavouring to provide alternative employment in mining areas. Future redundancy programmes will represent a cost to the corporation. The scheme that has been announced is generous compared with that of any other industry and continues the policy of only voluntary redundancies. Those financial provisions are a positive approach to the industry.

The Opposition's amendment says that the Bill paves
"the way for a further contraction and de-regulation of the industry".
It is a remarkable contraction in which the Government provide for £2 billion of capital investment. It is a remarkable contraction in which the industry has more investment in plant and machinery than any comparable coal industry in western Europe. The amendment is blatant propaganda and has no foundation in truth.

I am puzzled by the mention of deregulation. No doubt the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) will describe the deregulation to be found in the Bill. I do not know of any. It is extraordinary that the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Cabinet should have the audacity to speak of a further contraction of the industry when, under the past two Labour Governments, the industry contracted by 182,000 men. Did they table motions deploring the contraction of the industry then? That contraction was far greater than anything that has happened under the present Government, and there were no generous voluntary redundancy programmes, no early retirement schemes and no enterprise companies then. Labour's contraction does not compare with the Government's civilised approach.

The Opposition's remarkable amendment refers to the
"future for the coal industry within a viable energy policy".
A Government who put in £2 billion of capital investment are making it perfectly clear that coal is extremely important in the country's future energy policy. We are then told that the Bill
"jeopardises the financial needs arising from past redundancies".
That is utterly wrong. the Opposition could not have read the Bill, or perhaps they simply did not understand it. Perhaps the right hon. Member for Salford, East will remove that part of the Opposition's amendment by moving a manuscript amendment now that I have explained that it is a fiction.

The amendment speaks of
"low morale in the industry".
For an industry in which morale is low, it is performing remarkably well. I am sure that morale is not low, because miners have earned 16 per cent. more in bonus payments this year, because average earnings so far this year have increased at three times the rate of inflation, or because there have been very few days lost his year as a result of industrial disputes. Nor do I think that miners are depressed by the fact that the industry has substantially improved its productivity. I hope that Opposition Members will explain the staggering improvement in productivity.

It was the Labour party which launched "Plan for Coal", involving the agreement of the National Coal Board, the National Union of Mineworkers and the Government. It concerned investment in the industry and how productivity would rise as a result. Opposition Members know that during the first few years of "Plan of Coal" there were productivity decreases. Indeed, in the first 10 years of "Plan for Coal"—fortunately the Tory Government boosted investment, but even then productivity increased only slowly and little—a planned increase of 4 per cent. a year in productivity turned out to be an increase of 4 per cent. over the whole 10 years.

Productivity in every coalfield in the country is now 50 per cent. higher than it was in the last year of the Labour Government. It was 2·24 tonnes per man shift then, whereas in the past seven or eight weeks we have reached 3·5 tonnes. How was it that Labour made so much investment but never got the productivity?

Every coalfield producing a profit is hardly the sign of an industry that is suffering from low morale. We have seen the results of capital investment programmes. As a result of our financial provisions, improvements in management and productivity, and men taking advantage of the bonus payments, the industry is now better able to compete with other forms of energy and therefore better able to get a greater share of the market.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): If there is all this productivity and the right hon. Gentleman is complimenting people who work in the industry, why, instead of British Coal's recent miserly offer of about £3 a week, does the right hon. Gentleman not intervene and say, "Because of the amazing productivity that I spoke about in the House of Commons, everybody will get £15 a week extra."?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman is a good supporter of the NUM. British Coal is anxious to offer considerable incentives to improve productivity, and already does that, but Mr. Scargill hates such incentives and wants flat-rate increases which are not related to productivity. I am delighted to say that earnings have increased by three times the rate of inflation this year as a result of improved productivity.

The most amazing thing about the Opposition's amendment is that it does not mention anything about one half of the Bill—the four clauses concerning the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. I assume that that is the half of the Bill that the Opposition want. I assume that they have received complaints only about the other half. The right hon. Member for Salford, East will soon tell the House, no doubt, that he recognises the absurdity of the NUM refusing to allow a recognised trade union with a substantial membership to have any rights over the institutions and pension funds to which its members

[Mr. Walker]

contribute. I hope that we will hear confirmation that the Labour party has decided not to mention the four other clauses because it agrees with them.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Despite my right hon. Friend's rather optimistic expectation, does he agree that the aim of the amendment is to divert attention from the fact that the Labour party has no intention of endorsing democracy in the trade union movement?

Mr. Walker: I happen slightly to share my hon. Friend's suspicions. The manner in which the Opposition have worded their amendment may be referred to as the "Scargill silence". The Labour party has been silenced on this issue by Arthur Scargill. I had no desire to introduce such legislation. However, the National Coal Board contacted the NUM and said that the UDM has that number of persons and represents thousands of miners who are honourable men and who have decided to form the union. These men contribute to the pension funds and the welfare services. The Coal Board claimed that these men should be recognised, but the NUM refused to do that.

The Government are therefore faced with a dilemma. Either we endorse the position whereby Mr. Scargill can veto the right of thousands of miners to have democratic representation on the institutions to which they contribute, or we can decide to act in the interests of those men. I am convinced that the Government are acting in their interests.

In the debate on the Loyal Address, some Opposition Members referred to the UDM as simply consisting of scabs, and there was much abuse of those miners. The Labour party refused to let the union affiliate, and the TUC took a similar course. Indeed, many Labour councillors have not been reselected or re-adopted. The Labour party's attitude to the UDM is that it consists of a group of people who deserve to be treated with total contempt. I remind the House that those men kept to the normal tradition of the NUM by having a democratic ballot before taking industrial action. There was a ballot in Nottinghamshire and the midlands, and 73 per cent. of the miners voted against industrial action.

If the Labour party refuses to support these clauses, it is virtually suggesting that those who continued the honourable tradition of the NUM by holding a ballot before an industrial dispute should be treated with contempt—yet Mr. Scargill refused miners the right to a ballot before the industrial dispute. In effect, the Labour party will say that miners' rights can be vetoed. In my judgment, that would be appalling.

I ask the right hon. Member for Salford, East to give us direct replies to those points. Does he agree that about a quarter of the miners who are members of one union which is legal and recognised and who contribute to pension funds, charitable funds and social funds must be given the right of representation? We want a clear answer, yes or no, on that point. Does he agree that half the clerical workers who are members of APEX should be granted similar rights? If he does, can he guarantee that a future Labour Government will not repeal the provisions of the Bill? The members of APEX and the UDM want a clear statement from the Labour party on whether a Labour Government would repeal or retain this legislation.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Before the Minister finishes his speech, will he tell us whether he agrees that APEX should be represented in the organisations to which he referred? Does he agree that all recognised trade unions throughout the British coalfields should be represented on those organisations if and when the Bill is passed?

Mr. Walker: The important phraseology that applies to any union, including APEX, is that a substantial proportion of its members should be involved. If that is the case, under the provisions of the Bill the union can go to the Charity Commissioners and put its case. If a substantial proportion of men employed in an industry contribute to organisations, they have a democratic right to representation. I hope that we will have a clear statement on that point from the Opposition.

I want to raise a matter relating to the attitude of the Labour party in that context. Is it true that at a meeting of the parliamentary Labour party last week the sensitivity of the electoral position in north Nottinghamshire was appreciated and that the importance of not alienating the local party members in the UDM was recognised? It would be interesting to know the answer to that. If that is what happened, it reveals the Labour party's bogus attitude on these points.

The Bill provides good financial provisions for the industry. It encourages the continuation of improved productivity, and it encourages the fine action of British Coal Enterprise Ltd. in new job creation to continue over the coming years. It gives the industry good scope to improve performance and prosperity for the future. It also gives a genuine democratic right to a group of men who acted democratically in the best tradition of miners unions.

4.35 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which, whilst paving the way for a further contraction and de-regulation of the industry, fails to provide for a secure and planned future for the coal industry within a viable energy policy, jeopardises the financial needs arising from past redundancies, ignores the effect of low morale in the industry caused by the loss of 55,000 jobs since the end of March 1985, accelerated by the termination of the Redundant Mineworkers Payments Scheme, omits provisions for the reinstatement of sacked miners, and sets the scene for privatisation of the industry, based on a best-seams-first policy."

This debate is about the future of the mining industry, and we move the amendment because we are deeply concerned about the current state of the coal industry and the failure of the Government and the Bill to deal with it. The mining industry is at a crossroads. The Government have no coherent energy policy; they have merely used the energy industries as a political tool, motivated only by the ballot sheet and short-term gain. That approach is inappropriate for dealing with our natural resources. The Bill is inappropriate to the future of the coal industry and the nation's energy supplies.

Miners and the unions believe that the Bill is a pit closure Bill. It is not a Bill for recovery. It will deepen the crisis in the coal industry and weaken Britain's ability to be self-sufficient in energy.

Since 1979 there has been a loss of 100,000 miners from the industry. Second Reading of the Coal Industry Act 1985 I predicted that within the provisions of that Act, the

Government were planning for 50,000 or more redundancies. I predicted then that they were planning for at least another 69 closures over five years, I take no satisfaction from having been proved correct so far. Since April 1985, 55,000 workers in the industry have been made redundant or are under notice and 59 pits have been closed, merged or are under notice of closure or merger. The Bill continues that process. It sets preconditions for further pit closures and redundancies. Little wonder that morale in the industry is at an all-time low——[HON. MEMBERS: "No, it is not."] I urge Conservative Members to go out into the coal industry to see for themselves.

It is little wonder that in the past few months miners have been queuing to take redundancy. How can they believe in the future of their industry under this Government?

The carrot of payments under the redundant mineworkers payment scheme has become a stick with which to beat the industry. Its much heralded termination date at the end of March 1987 has set the scene. Most men over the age of 50 have now left the industry. The average age of the mining work force is now down to the early 30s. As those men leave the industry, their skills, which are badly needed, go with them. There will be a problem of retaining a work force of a sufficient scale to dig the coal that the country will need.

I recently visited Cadley Hill in south Derbyshire, where the deputy manager told me that miners under the age of 30 were applying for redundancy. They are considering reducing the work force from about 950 to 600. At that pit there were more than 600 applications for redundancy. That shows the faith that people have in the industry. That is the answer to the Secretary of State's question about productivity. Yes, productivity has risen. Yes, men are working hard to make up the money that they have lost, but they are also trying to get out of the industry rather than regarding it as their future.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Is it a fact that many members of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers in Nottinghamshire are asking for redundancy, rather more than of the National Union of Mineworkers?

Mr. Orme: I shall say something about Nottinghamshire in a minute.

The Bill is an attempt to predetermine the country's energy choice. It is a deeply political Bill because it is an integral part of the Government's strategy. It sets out the Government's political objectives for the energy industries. Implicit in its financial provisions and its market philosophy is a reduction in deep mine capacity. Inherent within its clauses is the privatisation of the coal industry. Written into the small print is a disastrous expansion of nuclear power which the country neither wants nor needs. Government policy has already decimated the coalfields — [HON. MEMBERS: "Which clause?"] Let me deal with this point. Last week, *The Economist* pointed out:

"Unemployment in mining areas hits hard."

Of the 22 travel-to-work areas that saw the highest increase in unemployment between January 1985 and April 1986, 14 are coalfield communities. That is the size of the problem in the industry.

The Bill spells doom for coalfield communities throughout Britain, not just for the so-called peripheral areas but for the central coalfields. Even in the prosperous Nottinghamshire area, the Coal Board plans to cut jobs by at least 10,000, reducing the work force from 25,000 to 15,000. On the eve of the 40th anniversary of the nationalisation of the industry, the Government have won the backing of the British Coal chairman, Sir Robert Haslam. In this Bill, they are pressing ahead with setting up the industry to sell it off. That means more pit closures. Already the Government have prepared the way through the sale of National Coal Board housing and ancillaries such as Associated Heat Services plc.

The Bill's financial provisions need close examination. The recent agreement between British Coal and the Central Electricity Generating Board transfers to the electricity industry profits which should have been credited to the coal industry. They are then clawed back by the Government.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Orme: No, I shall not give way. The Chancellor's autumn statement increased the amount to be paid through the electricity supply industry's negative external financial limit by another £237 million in 1987-88. I see that the Minister acknowledges that. All that extra revenue will come in 1987.

Clause 3 allocates £300 million with the possibility—that is the point made by the Secretary of State—of the amount being increased to £750 million for the two financial years 1987-88 and 1988-89. That expenditure must be related to the items listed in schedule 2. Those are redundancy and early retirement, transferred workers allowance, existing social welfare activities, concessionary fuel allowance, retraining for those leaving on redundancy or incapacity grounds, and promotion of new employment. Redundancy payments will be made from the new British Coal scheme, but there remain the continuing payments for weekly make-up benefit. During 1985-86, they totalled £169 million.

It is reasonable to assume that those costs—about £3·3 million a week—will increase in the short term as payments for the older age group within the 20,000 redundancies this year are included. With expenditure of that size, it is unlikely that £300 million will cover the payments alone. Indeed, we must ask whether the upper limit of £750 million is adequate or whether the industry must once again pick up the pieces of Government policy?

It has been said that the restructuring of the industry is over. The Secretary of State said that——

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood) *rose*——

Mr. Orme: Let me develop this point and I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

The Secretary of State made that point to the Select Committee on Energy. We are now told that we are in a period of "healthy restructuring". What is healthy about the contraction of the industry down to 70 million tonnes of coal, as advocated by the Wheeler report, or 65 million tonnes as proposed by *The Economist*? What is healthy about plans that envisage a reduction in manpower from 115,000 to 70,000? That was also advocated by the Wheeler report and supported by others in the Coal Board and by Conservative Members.

Mr. Andy Stewart: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. My right hon. Friend asked him four straightforward questions. When will the right hon. Gentleman give us the answers?

Mr. Orme: I shall make my speech in my own way. It is a Government Bill and we shall deal with it in our own way.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Orme: No, I shall not give way.

Safety is very important. We have heard much about increased productivity, but at what cost? The National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers has expressed real fears about the deregulation of the industry. That is not the deregulation of small mines and opencast mines that many Conservative Members would like to see, but the deregulation of health and safety.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): What does this have to do with the Bill?

Mr. Orme: We are debating the mining industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I moved the Second Reading of the Bill. I presume that we are debating the Bill. It contains nothing about deregulation, although the right hon. Member for Salford, East refers to it. It is a piece of propaganda that has nothing to do with the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I have heard nothing so far which is out of order.

Mr. Orme: There is nothing in the Bill about the Labour party, either.

For decades, British miners fought to improve conditions in the pits. As a result, we came to have—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Two debates cannot continue simultaneously. There are too many sedentary interventions.

Mr. Orme: Conservative Members do not wish to listen to the argument. Recently, conditions have deteriorated in the industry which to date has been the safest mining industry in the world. NACODS especially has shown great anxiety about that deterioration. Part of the legacy left to the coal industry by Mr. MacGregor is the present attempt to introduce American-style working practices and health and safety standards. I remind the House that the fatal accident rate in American deep mines is three times that of the National Coal Board.

Mr. McLoughlin *rose*——

Mr. Orme: No, I shall not give way.

New regulations and codes of practice are being drafted, much to the consternation of NACODS. Instead of worsening health and safety being allowed in the industry, instead of more intensive working practices being introduced, safety standards should be tightened and maintained.

Mr. Ashby *rose*——

Mr. Orme: No, I shall not give way.

The Government have linked the increase in productivity with their investment in the coal industry. We must ask where that investment has been concentrated. The answer is that the overwhelming part of it has been put into high technology mining in the central coalfields. The investment is going into automated technology and heavy-duty face equipment. We are in favour, of course, of investment in new technology because we see it as vital for the revival of manufacturing industry, but we want it to be used to create wealth, not to destroy it.

Mr. Ashby *rose*——

Mr. Orme: It would serve the hon. Member better to listen to this central point.

Miners from all the coalfields are telling us that the National Coal Board is tearing the guts out of the best seams in the pits and sacrificing those which do not have superb geological conditions. This "best seams first" approach is destroying vast reserves of the nation's energy resources. By sterilising seams and closing pits, these reserves are being thrown away for ever.

Mr. Ashby: We have heard about the points that are not in the Bill, and we listened with great interest. When are we going to hear about clauses 5 to 8?

Mr. Orme: The hon. Gentleman must wait.

The closure of Bates, Cadeby and Kinsley drift over recent years has thrown literally millions of tonnes of coal reserves into isolation. It is worth remembering the wisdom of Dr. Ernst Schumacher, the economic adviser to the National Coal Board from 1950 to 1970. He reminded us that coal, as an extractive industry, is unlike any other —its economics are different. He said that coal is a non-renewable source of finite size. To close down mines with recoverable reserves creates waste, it does not eliminate it.

The Bill gives the Secretary of State the power to amend the coal industry's welfare organisation and superannuation schemes following representations from British Coal. The Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946 states in section 46:

"It shall be the duty of the Board to enter into consultation with organisations appearing to them to represent substantial proportions of the persons in the employment of the Board".

I understand what the Secretary of State has done in this Bill by giving recognition to what is overall a minority group but which represents a majority within a particular area. If he is giving those rights, why are not the same rights given to the members of the National Union of Mineworkers who are a majority in the industry but a minority in certain areas.

Mr. Peter Walker: Does not the NUM have representation on the charities, the superannuation fund and anything else relating to its members? Will the right hon. Gentleman answer my question?

Mr. Orme: The right hon. Gentleman should answer mine.

Mr. Walker: I just did.

Mr. Orme: In the pits in south Derbyshire and Nottingham, some minorities are given no rights and are not recognised for negotiation. If the Bill provides rights for one minority group, surely the same rights should be given to minorities elsewhere in the industry. I thought that the Government were in favour of minorities.

Mr. Peter Walker: Do the NUM members in Nottinghamshire have representation on the superannuation fund and charity schemes? Those members have that representation, but the majority of miners in that area do not. Will the right hon. Gentleman support them having some representation?

Mr. Orme: I will support the terms — [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I will support the terms within the Bill if the Secretary of State will support the view that the National Union of Mineworkers has negotiating rights. That is my position—I will support it if the Secretary of State will also support it.

We shall obviously further discuss this matter in Committee. One of the issues that has contributed to low morale within the industry has been the reinstatement of miners dismissed during the 1984-85 dispute. The unevenness of the re-engagement of miners in different areas is still a matter of grave concern. I ask the Government to urge the chairman of British Coal to speed up the reassessment that he has promised.

Why has the coal conversion scheme been omitted from the Bill? Why is the Secretary of State winding up that scheme at a time when it needs to be extended to create markets for coal? Many firms in this country are now converting to coal and finding it economical.

The Bill does not deal with the central points that we believe face the industry. By eliminating deep-mine capacity, by destroying the skills of generations of miners and losing them forever, along with millions of tonnes of coal reserves that are being sterilised the Bill runs contrary to a sensible energy policy for Britain. We need a coal industry that will take us into the next century. We want unity in the coal industry. That is why we shall vote against the Bill and that is why the Labour party and a Labour Government will work for the coal industry—something that the Government are not doing.

4.56 pm

Sir John Osborn (Sheffield, Hallam): British industries, especially the steel and engineering industries of Sheffield, and also the heavy energy users such as the chemicals, cement and paper industries, are concerned that their energy costs when using indigenous fuels—British coal, North sea oil or gas—are higher than those charged to their competitors elsewhere in the world and especially within the EEC.

Two years ago, before the drop in oil prices, the electricity generated in this country was 84 per cent. coal-fired. Electric steel and iron-making industries in Britain paid higher electricity charges than their competition had to pay. That was the case not only for the larger users but for the smaller users with a high energy component in the cost of manufacture. This was the subject of a recent National Economic Development Office investigation and report. I have also raised this matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry as well as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

I have raised the problems of the city of Sheffield in the House before and for several years the local engineering employers association, the chamber of commerce and individual steel companies, including British Steel, and especially those dependent on electric steel making have been concerned that their cost of electricity per unit has been higher than that charged to their competitors elsewhere in the world. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy is aware that I have raised this with the OECD and through Eurofer with the Commission in the EEC.

Those who use electricity, much of which is dependent on coal-fired power stations—I do not wish to go into the nuclear debate—hope that Sir Robert Haslam, the new chairman, following Sir Ian MacGregor, will give Sheffield and industries elsewhere electricity at a competitive price.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth) *rose*——

Sir John Osborn: I shall not give way now, but if the hon. Gentleman asks me a question later I will do so.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is aware of the challenge. My impression is that the shadow Minister, the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), and his hon. Friends are oblivious to the consequences of uneconomic energy prices, including the cost of extracting coal, on job opportunities in other industries. It is mainly due to the arrogance of the National Union of Mineworkers and its president, Arthur Scargill — my right hon. Friend has already referred to this — who chose to emulate the achievement of 1974, when Gormley, now Lord Gormley, McGahey and others precipitated a general election, thereby deposing a Conservative Government, under the then Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). It was Arthur Scargill who precipitated the recent strike in 1984-85.

It is not my intention to elaborate on what has happened. In south Yorkshire, Nottingham and Derbyshire—close to my constituency—I found region divided against region and pit against pit. Only too often, within a pit the majority were brought out, in fear, by a militant minority with the aid of rent-a-mob. In the early days of the strike, pits were brought out on strike by the Scargill-inspired flying pickets. It was easy. Whereas the miners of a pit may have elected, through their pit committees, to continue to work—many approached me on this matter—one by one they were attacked by the Scargill flying pickets in the pithead changing rooms before going down to the pit face.

This is the background to the creation of the UDM. Fear made miners, some of whose children were working in the factories with which I am familiar in Sheffield, some of whom were purchasing their cars on credit, and many more of whom were purchasing household equipment on hire purchase and had outstanding mortgages, wish to opt out of the strike. Privately, many of those people who approached Conservative trade unions resented this pressure, a pressure supported by many Labour Members of Parliament, in particular those who represent south Yorkshire constituencies. Scargill, like the Socialists in Sheffield, set out to undermine the stability of the new coal mining villages, particularly those in south Yorkshire. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has been to Yorkshire. In the summer, he spoke boldly about these issues. In Buxton, he stated that he would not stand by and watch a democratic trade union fight for fair representation, and fail in its fight.

The Bill will ensure that members of the UDM have equal rights with the NUM on charities and similar institutions that have been set up for the benefit of all miners. I had hoped that Opposition Members would have said to their Whips, "Certainly, I back those hon. Members who support this issue," but there is no sign of that today.

The second aspect of the Bill is coal industry finance. I welcome the fact that the industry has made a quick recovery from the NUM strike and that the Government have covered the deficit arising from it. I welcome also the fact that rising productivity has been matched by improved profitability and also the fact that—as stated in the latest annual report, which is valuable to hon. Members — the external financing requirement met by the Government was £550 million less than expected. Looking to the future, the coal industry, using new fields

[Sir John Osborn]

such as Belvoir, Warwick and, particularly, Selby, must face the challenge of providing coal at world competitive prices.

Mr. Barron: I welcome what the hon. Gentleman has said about new coalfields in Warwickshire. Will the hon. Gentleman denounce two of his hon. Friends who are publicly campaigning against the expansion into the south Warwickshire coalfield?

Sir John Osborn: Anyone facing something that disturbs their countryside will resent it. Even the citizens of Kent are a little alarmed by the Channel tunnel. Even those in the Belvoir area are alarmed by this measure. The environmental considerations — I shall visit the Kenilworth area in the near future — must be faced. I respect the fact that people in the countryside near these areas obviously resent this change, as people in Fulbeck or anywhere else do when faced with the possibility of nuclear waste disposal in their area. The normal attitude is, "Anyone else can face that problem, but not I."

Mr. Hardy: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir John Osborn: I shall not give way again. I wish to make my own speech and not take too long in doing so.

The announcement in June of a five-year agreement on cheaper coal for power stations will be of great benefit to both industrial and domestic users. Bulk industrial consumers will have been very pleased, for the result of this agreement, in some cases, gave a 7 to 8 per cent. reduction, although the average is less. Some users have said that the agreement is not enough. This applies to the cement industry. The annual report underlines the fact that productivity has increased from 2·24 tonnes per man shift to 3·12 tonnes. I gather—perhaps my right hon. Friend will endorse this—that this has gone up to 3·55 tonnes per man shift. This increase in productivity must be welcomed. It is a sign that the British coal industry is becoming competitive.

Mr. Hardy: I support the hon. Gentleman's point about the strides made in the record productivity achievement. Will he go back to Sheffield and tell the business men there that they should join him in making representations to the Government to try to ensure that we make the most vigorous and robust national protest about the fact that our achievements are being deliberately marred by partner states in the EEC busily subsidising their high steel and energy users' energy costs, and thereby presenting Yorkshire with an enormous disadvantage? It is time that he and his hon. Friends protested.

Sir John Osborn: The hon. Gentleman is trying to make my speech for me. He may make that speech himself. This has been a matter for concern, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy are aware of this. I claim to have done much—as has my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has certainly done — to condemn such hidden subsidies. The EEC Commissioner, Lord Cockfield, has been outspoken in condemning such subsidies. It is up to our representatives in the European Parliament to take up this matter in another place — the European Parliament. I commend the fact that face workers now have an increase of 5·9 per cent. a year. There is a problem of reconciliation between the NUM and the UDM, but I do not wish to prolong my speech.

Is there any significance in the change of name from National Coal Board to British Coal? I have read a number of press articles, and I have discussed this matter with a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends. The writer of a recent article in *The Guardian* referred to the parallel with British Leyland. He also mentioned British Airways, British Airports and British Telecom as moves in the direction of privatisation.

Some Conservative Members hope to see positive steps mentioned in the Conservative manifesto before the next election. I have cited previously — I do so again — the fact that in the early 1970s, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup was Prime Minister, I visited Hobart house, the headquarters of the NCB. Sir Derek Ezra, now Lord Ezra, wanted from the Government about £500 million to invest in North sea oil and gas. I had had a series of meetings with international oil companies keen on taking up the role of utilities, which had already acquired power stations and were mining coal elsewhere in the world and which thought of the possibility of taking over some of our coalfields. The solution that I gave to Hobart house was to sell a few of our coalfields, with adequate regulation by Government, to those companies, raise the money, and then compete against them in the North sea. I did not return to Hobart house for some 10 years, when I was welcomed by Sir Ian MacGregor, but this view was not then accepted.

In considering the market for British coal, one must understand the level of international prices. The export market for British coal is the least acceptable from a commercial point of view for the foreseeable future. I remember the European Parliament's plan 10 years ago when consumption was about 300 million tonnes and 100 million tonnes were to be imported from outside the EEC. About 200 million tonnes were to be produced in this country, of which 100 million tonnes would have gone to EEC countries. If there had been a common energy policy, it might have gone some way down that road, but exports to the EEC have been negligible. Community Energy Ministers have wanted the right to obtain their coal from cheaper sources elsewhere in the world, and this is the position today.

This morning, some hon. Members went to the British nuclear forum. I was interested to hear that the Central Electricity Generating Board had a programme for coal-fired power stations and nuclear-fired power stations—possibly all pressurised water reactors but perhaps including one or two AGRs—in the foreseeable future. I asked whether coal-fired power stations would use imported coal like power stations elsewhere in Europe. The answer was no, provided British coal was competitive. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Labour Members defend the coal mines. I would, too. But our coal industry must be made competitive. I think that that is possible and that the measures in the Bill will bring it about.

Of course, there are difficulties — for example, in burning more coal, there would be an increased threat from acid rain. That risk cannot be eliminated. If desulphurisation equipment is installed, such as that promised by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in Norway, it would add to the cost of electricity produced by coal-fired power stations. Ultimately the impact of the greenhouse effect must be considered and the doubling of

CO_2 in the middle of the next century compared with the level at the beginning of the industrial revolution is another hazard, both of which, but for time, I would have spoken about in more detail.

The Government should go ahead on all fronts, including coal. This is but one step in making our coal industry competitive and more efficient. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will give the assurance that some of our coal will be exported just across the Channel using the Channel tunnel to our competitors in the EEC, especially when there is a railway service to that area. I support the Bill.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. More than 20 right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye. Unless speeches are brief, I am afraid that there will be some disappointments.

5.12 pm

Mr. J. D. Concannon (Mansfield): May I point out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that your list includes, I think the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton). He has informed me that he will not be here this afternoon because, unfortunately, his father has passed away. I do not think that there is anyone in the parliamentary Labour party who understands my hon. Friend's view on parts of the Bill. I shall certainly not speak for him, nor shall I speak for my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), who is ill.

It is with sorrow and regret that I make my first contribution in the House for 16 months after my motor accident, when I was left with some difficulties. It looks as though this will be my last contribution—that is, if I get through it. It saddens me that this contribution will, in part, be against my own Front Bench and my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme). My right hon. Friend knows full well that he is one of the dwindling number of hon. Members with whom I would willingly go into the jungle. In fact, when we were Ministers we shared many a day and night in the political jungle.

It saddens me that my party has a three-line Whip on this eight-clause Bill. Three clauses affect the largest group of organised and bona fide trade unionists in my area. One need only look at the Conservative Benches to note the number of Nottinghamshire Members of Parliament who sit on the Government side of the House. When I first became a Nottinghamshire Member, there was only one Conservative Nottinghamshire Member of Parliament. People should take cognisance of that fact. I shall certainly not bandy figures about, but no one can dispute which union represents the vast majority of mineworkers in the Nottinghamshire area. The mineworkers have been asking only for their legitimate right of fair representation on the bodies that affect them.

The Bill provides for fair representation on the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, the mineworkers pension fund and the miners welfare trust. I understand that the intention is to give rights, in proportion to membership, in the management of those bodies. This has all been tried by negotiation. Unfortunately, the National Union of Mineworkers has consistently refused to recognise the reality of the situation in Nottinghamshire, so the Government have had to act.

For one who lives in and spends his social hours in and around Mansfield, these problems are a continuing running sore, especially in the running and management of local welfare groups and other bodies. These difficulties only continue the strike, bitterness and intimidation that still takes place between the two groups. If the three clauses to which I referred cut that out, the Bill be worth supporting.

I can well understand the reasoned amendment and the arguments for it. In normal circumstances I would have no difficulty in supporting my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East in the Lobby, but he must understand that, in my area, nothing is normal at the moment. The reasoned amendment states

"That this House declines to give a Second Reading"

to the Bill. That is rather strange. With a heavy heart, I shall have to abstain from voting on the amendment.

I note that in my "Weekly Whip" the sensitivity of the electoral position in north Nottinghamshire is appreciated, and that the importance of not alienating local Labour party members who are not in the UDM is recognised. I must add that that recognition does not spread from the parliamentary Labour party down into local Labour parties in Nottinghamshire. In fact, the opposite applies. There is political apartheid in Nottinghamshire. Not only UDM members, but in certain places, even their families, are not allowed to join the Labour party.

We all know what is happening in the reselection process. People are not being reselected, not because they have not done a good job for the past 20 years, but just because they belong to a certain organisation. I wish that someone would pass this information on to Walworth road, because, for two years, some of us have been trying to get that fact recognised and acted upon, but to no avail. In fact, the view in Nottinghamshire is that, because local and national elections are pending, someone at last is taking notice, but, unfortunately, coming to the wrong conclusions.

I was told only three weeks ago by a leading Labour party official that he thought that the Labour party need not do anything because the UDM would go away. The UDM will certainly not go away. As one who lives very close to the miners offices, the pensions office and the CISWO office, may I say to those who seem to think that threatening Nottinghamshire miners—I heard this again today—will bring the result that they desire that they should learn the lessons of the past two years. The Nottinghamshire miners are not to be threatened and bullied and the intimidation that still takes place only make them more determined to succeed.

It is a sad time for me, after a lifetime's work, to find the greatest trade union so fatally split. I wish that it were not so, but I know that neither I nor anyone else can rewrite history. It is sad for me also to find that the battle on this issue is being fought, not industrially, but in the local Labour party in my area, by people who joined the Labour party, not for the good of the party or so that it would win elections, but to wreak vengeance on people who took certain actions a few years ago. I fear that that can only harm the Labour party in that area in future elections.

It is like the good old Army term. Someone, somewhere has decided that we in north Nottinghamshire are expendable. One has only to look at the Conservative Benches. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart)

[Mr. J. D. Concannon]

probably does not know how he got here. Some of us do not understand how he got here. I know that some hon. Members in the Conservative party and others are having a ball over our discomfiture in Nottinghamshire.

During my time in the House I have tackled some dirty, hazardous and onerous jobs for the Labour party. I was hoping that I could retire with my record intact. I have never considered myself to be anything other than a Nottinghamshire miner, and I have done my best to look after the interests of Nottinghamshire miners along with those of my constituents for nearly 21 years. My duties to my constituents are manifestly clear. Clauses 5, 6 and 7 are necessary if we are to start to bring some sort of sense and harmony as well as a sense of fairness, to my area. I wish that we could turn the clock back, but we cannot. The bitterness is still there between families and members of families. It is time somebody started the process of healing those wounds. If the Bill is one way of starting that process, I am all for it.

It saddens me that on this, my last occasion in the House, I have had to speak against my party for the first and only time in 21 years. After a long spell in the Whips Office, as you will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this will be the first time in 21 years that I have had to vote against a three-line Whip. It fills me with a great deal of sorrow and sadness to have to vote against my party on Second Reading tonight.

5.22 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): It is not often that I say that I am honoured to follow in debate an Opposition Member. However, it gives me pleasure today to follow the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon). We all know and recognise that he has been a friend of the coal industry and of the Nottinghamshire miners.

I welcome the opportunity to speak in this important debate about the coal industry. The Bill is clearly drafted to protect the rights of the individual, and to give fair representation to the 30,000 miners who belong to the Union of Democratic Mineworkers.

First, I wish to tell the Labour party that my constituents and the majority of people in Nottinghamshire object fiercely to Opposition Members calling them scabs, and I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) for repudiating the bloody-minded insults of the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), which he made during the debate on the Loyal Address about my honest, hard-working, democratic constituents.

My miners were not taking time out during the coal dispute to drop slabs of concrete, murdering their fellow workers. They were not throwing bricks through the windows of their neighbours' homes.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I can understand the views of the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) on this matter and on the Bill. However, the two boys involved in that matter were charged and convicted of manslaughter and it ill-becomes an hon. Member to say such things about two youngsters who are now undergoing the proper punishment for the crime they committed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. Traditionally, debates on Second Reading range widely. However, I think the hon. Gentleman recognises that perhaps he is going a little too wide.

Mr. Stewart: I shall substitute the word "manslaughter" for "murder", and I apologise if I have caused any distress to the people I have mentioned.

My miners were not terrorising the wives and children of working miners. They were keeping the pensioners' fires burning and the factories running. They were keeping the country afloat. They are the courageous men the hon. Member for Newport, East dares to call scabs. He mouthed it but, with the exception of the right hon. Member for Mansfield, the rest of his colleagues think it.

Now let me give the Labour party a simple truth. We will remember where it stood when our friends were being counted. It stood right behind Scargill and his rent-a-mob. We will remember that the leader of the Labour party never once came to the Dispatch Box to condemn the violence in Nottinghamshire or to support the Nottinghamshire miners.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not having a debate about historical events. Hon. Members should address their remarks to the Bill.

Mr. Stewart: The Bill contains three important elements. The first clause will legalise the coal industry's change of name to the British Coal Corporation. The NCB in the past has regarded itself as an institution, part industry, part social services never quite knowing which was its principal function. Because of that, it failed to recognise the importance of providing the nation with its primary source of energy at a price which would have made our industrial goods more internationally competitive, and our electricity at a price which would not be considered a luxury.

In the past, the National Coal Board and its work force were prisoners of the dictatorial National Union of Mineworkers, which continuously sabotaged its members' prosperity, and failed to grasp the opportunities available to its members in a modern high-tech coal industry.

When trade union democracy was reborn in Nottinghamshire in 1985, it was a signal to the then chairman, Sir Ian Macgregor to give his industry a new enlightened name — British Coal. Nobody could have predicted that the change from the NUM and the NCB to the UDM and British Coal would have such a profound influence on the industry's fortunes. Productivity is up 50 per cent. and wages are up as a result. Our miners, now in a higher wage bracket, must be looking very closely at Labour's plans to increase income tax to 55p in the pound.

With the lower unit cost of coal produced, British Coal was able to meet the demands of its largest buyer, the Central Electricity Generating Board, for a lower price. It, in turn, is giving the benefits to the nation in lower electricity tariffs, with all the advantageous spin-offs for the country.

In my view, British Coal can now proudly stand alongside the other giants — British Petroleum, British Telecom, British Gas, British Airways, British Aerospace and the British people.

The good fortunes of British Coal could well be the misfortunes of the House, as it is widely rumoured that the defeated Arthur Scargill is about to become one of Labour's new moderate parliamentary candidates for the

constituency of Barnsley, Central. I presume that he will be following the path of those other moderate men, Ken Livingstone and Bernie Grant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am beginning to wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is taking part in the same debate as the rest of us. I hope that he will return to the Bill and not discuss the parliamentary candidates of any party anywhere.

Mr. Stewart: This must remind the Leader of the Opposition of the fate of Julius Ceasar. I suppose it is anyone's guess, looking at the Opposition Benches, who will be Brutus.

Restructuring any major industry after years of misdirection cannot be painless, but, to the credit of the Government, substantial public funds have been available for a voluntary redundancy scheme, allowing those who wished to leave the industry to do so, with a commensurate lump sum, and for those over 50 years of age, additional weekly payments. However, it was always recognised that eventually the major restructuring of the industry would be completed, and as a result the present excellent redundant payment scheme would end.

On 31 March 1987, British Coal will introduce its own alternative. Although I realise that British Coal desires to be independent of Government, its new scheme is unattractive and undesirable to my miners. Sir Robert Haslam, the chairman of British Coal, has already indicated that the industry's scheme cannot be as generous as the Government's. Why not, since the chairman of British Coal has said that restructuring is almost complete and so there will only be a few more redundancies, leaving more than sufficient money to go round when the need arises?

Originally, the redundancy scheme was for those aged over 50 to be given the advantage of leaving the industry because of their lifelong commitment to it. As a direct result of the coal dispute, restructuring in Nottinghamshire was postponed until normality resumed. Since then, British Coal has tried to retrieve lost ground. But as 31 March 1987 fast approaches, it is estimated that 1,000 men plus in Nottinghamshire will not be released. Is it fair that men who put their industry and their country's needs first at a time of crisis should have to see those who were on strike, on the pretext of protecting their jobs, being given priority over those who worked?

I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to reconsider my constituents' position, and I invite British Coal to make the same payments as the Government's scheme offers to those men whom it had intended to release but could not release in time as a result of the coal dispute.

The proposed legislation to allow democratically elected representatives to sit on the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation and on the coal industry's trusts is also welcomed in Nottinghamshire. It has been necessary as a result of the NUM representatives believing, like all good Marxists, that, once elected, people are there for life. The refusal of those men to quit has caused untold difficulties. Now the trusts and charities cannot be used for the benefit of those whom they were set up to help.

Nevertheless, even without access to those funds, the UDM has honoured all financial claims submitted by its own members as well as those of the NUM against the benevolent scheme. Miners' welfare clubs are renowned for their leisure and recreational facilities, but in Ollerton the NUM has hijacked the club for its headquarters. It is denying ordinary members the right of free and safe access. Those people have ignored all requests to leave and vacate their places on the management trust to democratically elected members. That clearly shows the hypocrisy of the so-called people's democracy.

During a person's lifetime, he treasures three things dearly: his family, his home, and his pension provision. Over the years, our miners watched their superannuation fund of more than £8,000 million being misdirected, mismanaged and looked upon as a political levy by the NUM trustees until the court ruled otherwise. All pension fund trustees have a legal duty to maximise the financial returns for their members, and no one's political beliefs should obstruct that aim.

The NUM trustees have abused their position. They have denied their members, after 50 years of hard work, the maximum benefit from their superannuation contributions.

Mr. Barron: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stewart: Incompetence by the NUM trustees may be acceptable to its own members, but it is totally unacceptable to allow them to act on behalf of the 30,000 members of the UDM.

Mr. Barron: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stewart: It is for that reason that the Bill makes provision for other employee organisations of British Coal to be represented on the superannuation fund. When the proposals are implemented, I urge the new trustees to look at the present policies of their superannuation fund, particularly with a view to making realistic provision for early retirement.

This democratic country has always recognised the banner cry of fair representation. The UDM's demand to British Coal is still the same: fair representation for the men who have brought British Coal to the high level of success that it enjoys today. Hon. Members should remember that when times are good people reward their friends, because when times are bad—and, if we ever have another Labour Government, they will be—they will need their friends, and our miners have very long memories.

I commend the Bill and reject the amendment.

5.35 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The context in which the Bill has been introduced demonstrates the consequences of the Government's failure to have an energy policy. One reason for the increase in the requirement to allocate funds to the coal industry is the fall in the price of oil. If anything could have been done to stablise energy prices, it would not have left the coal industry, in its struggle towards viability, requiring this amount of increase in funds.

Having been on the touchline for the past three years, I can testify to the fact that in this House the coal industry has been fought over by the two main political parties as though it were a carcase, to the great detriment of the industry and of the wider economy. I and my party, and no doubt the people of this country, look forward to the day when we shall not need to have frequent debates in the House on the coal industry, because there will be an

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

agreement about how it is run and how the workers should be treated. Regrettably, the flavour of today's debate shows that that day is still far away.

I realise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my next remarks will touch on the past, but the Bill is set in the context of the recent past. The coal strike was provoked and prolonged by the activities of both sides. There can be no doubt that its cost was horrendous. The cost to the industry was well over £2 billion, and the cost to the economy as a whole was substantially more than that. We have come a long way since then, but I should make it clear that I believe that Scargillism and the sort of industrial action that went with it had to be resisted and defeated. The country is the better because that sort of evil has now been defeated.

The second half of the Bill deals with one result of that dispute—the division in union representation inside the industry. I for one regard that division as regrettable and hope that it will eventually be ended, but I realise that at present that division is inevitable, and there is no clear sign of it being healed. As a result, legislation is required.

The UDM is concentrated within one main geographical area, and is strong within it, but relatively weak outside it, yet even in its areas of strength the union does not have rights that are comparable to the support that it clearly has among the work force. There are some less publicised difficulties facing the union within the area in which it operates, and I hope that the Government will bear them in mind. First, the UDM has no ability to negotiate grade rates. Its role has not been recognised within the colliery salaried supervisory staff organisation. Indeed, although the NUM, when it is in the minority, can obtain the benefit of UDM negotiated salaries, the reverse is not true.

Both unions should be treated equally and should be recognised to be representative of their members. I hope that the Minister will bear that in mind. All that can freely and honestly be asked is that they should both be recognised, and treated equally and fairly. It follows from that that the right to be represented on charitable trusts, social welfare bodies and, of course, the superannuation scheme must be recognised. It is a regrettable symptom of the division within trade union representation that legislation is required. It should have been possible to achieve that right without legislation, but regrettably it was not.

This debate is taking place with the long shadow of Scargill and Scargillism still falling not only across Mansfield—the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon) has left the Chamber — but across democratic trade unionism, which had to be defended and the tactics of Scargillism defeated. However, in a sense, from beyond the grave the extremists are still trying to claw back and prevent the democratic right of people to join and belong to the union of their choice, and to prevent that union being given equal rights.

The Labour party will live to regret this day, because Labour Members are showing many working people that they are not fair minded, honest or democratic and that they do not really believe in the full and democratic right of individual people to belong to the union of their choice. The country will take note of that.

In the interests of brevity, I conclude by saying that for two fairly simple, straightforward and obvious reasons, I find it extraordinary that Labour Members will vote not only for their amendment, but, more fundamentally, against the Bill.

Although the coal industry is no longer sustaining the massive losses that it did during the strike, it is still not free from public funding. If Labour Members defeat the Bill tonight, one wonders how the National Coal Board, or rather British Coal will continue to operate and to function as an economic organisation. Labour Members will have perpetuated retrospective divisions within the industry which will look back, when the industry and the people in it clearly want to look forward.

As I said in my opening remarks, I wish that the Government had a more coherent approach to the planning of their energy policy and recognise that they are not even consistent. While claiming to operate within a free market, they have been found to be manipulating and interfering with that market on more than one occasion. That is why, earlier in this Parliament, there was a Bill to abolish the British National Oil Corporation after the Government had been found trying to settle the price and lost public money.

The Government found massive amounts of money to sustain the strike, and although I believe that the elements that promoted it had to be defeated, it could have been settled much more cheaply in the national interest. One would have hoped that a Government who had the saving of public money as their main priority would do that, rather than conclude as one Minister said, "Whatever the cost, it was worth it."

In that context my hon. Friends and I will vote against the Labour amendment and in favour of the Second Reading of the Bill.

5.43 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): First, I should like to pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon) as did my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), and recognise the brave speech that he made. Those of us on both sides of the House who have known him ever since he came here recognise his sincerity and the value of his contribution to the national effort in the many jobs that he has held in government. he is a brave, honourable and sincere man and, if his speech was the last that he will make in the House, I should like my comments to be put on the record on behalf of Opposition Members as well.

The right hon. Member for Mansfield expressed sincerely the fundamental truth that nobody can deny men's participation, either in whatever body they choose to form, or as individuals, attack their probity and loyalty to their industry and party—in many cases, that is not my party—and imagine that they will accept it. The truth that the right hon. Member put forward is very real in this place, and it will stand long after the Bill, and many others, have gone through the House.

I listened carefully to the speech of the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) and agree with him on one point—we are debating the future of the coal industry. However, there was not much else with which I could agree. If one considers the importance of coal, the ability to sell it and the markets that it can command, one finds that in the electricity industry in 1985-86 the market for coal was the highest since 1979, when the actual purchase was 87·4 million tonnes.

We should be concerned about the alternative markets. My hon. Friends and I debated those alternative markets with Opposition Members when we were the Opposition party and they were Ministers. We are discussing where the future of the coal industry lies in terms of alternative markets, industrial conversion and especially export markets. Those markets require the industry not only to be competitive but to be stable and consistent. Those are the markets which we have lost in the past two years and which are declining. Those who consider the future of the industry and of the men enployed in it should turn their attention to those markets.

I welcome the Bill, and especially the change of name. Forty-nine Acts will need to be amended, which graphically illustrates the importance of the coal industry to this country. It also shows that the coal industry is part of many aspects of our national life, well beyond those Acts which are directly connected to it. After the traumas of recent years, we should look forward rather than backwards and the new name will, I hope, reflect an industry which is now starting to look forwards, without the rigidities of over-subsidy and excessive state involvement.

The change of name reflects also the current position within the industry, which has already been commented on by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and others of my hon. Friends who have said how well the industry has responded. There has been an increase from 2·24 tonnes per man shift in 1978-79 to an average of 3·12 tonnes this year. Indeed, in the past week a record output of 3·55 tonnes per man shift has been achieved, and that speaks volumes for what is happening in the industry. People are working extremely hard and are producing coal at ever more competitive prices.

At this point I should like to express a caveat, especially in relation to the suggestion of the right hon. Member for Salford, East. None of us who represent mining areas and who were born and have spent lives in mining counties —this applies to many hon. Members present—would contemplate that that increase in output has been achieved by any relaxation of the stringent and necessary safety regulations. The idea that the men down the pit would accept such a proposal, even if any pit management was foolish enough to try it, reveals how little people know about the interdependence of the mining community, and of the fact that men and management work together day by day in the pits.

It is wrong to suggest—we have heard this expressed in the past—that somehow it is possible to produce more coal by short-cutting on safety. Safety is paramount in the mining industry and the men would not dream of accepting any change in the regulations governing it. I should certainly not support that if it were suggested in any way.

We know only too well that mining is a difficult and dangerous job. Even with the safety regulations and with a lifetime of training in safety techniques it is significantly more dangerous than, for instance, working in the nuclear industry. I am surprised how many people complain about the nuclear industry, although it does not have a bad safety record when compared with the natural dangers of the mining industry and the number of people who have been killed or injured over the centuries by working in it.

The increase in production is more the result of better equipment, higher investment and unbroken shift patterns in terms of continuous production. That should be welcomed by anybody who has the real interests of the industry at heart.

For that reason, I also welcome that part of the Bill that deals with grants. It is a recognition that the process of change, though significant, still requires grants if we are to maintain a strategically important source of energy for many years ahead. The dramatic fall in oil prices that has been referred to had a sudden effect on what is an unrealistic market. Few would accept that it is a genuine market in which one needs to make an immediate response.

I remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you do, the 1960s, the 1970s and the 1980s. We have seen oil prices so low that the Labour Government decided that they did not want a coal industry and closed about 300 pits. We have seen oil prices so high that they have damaged Britain's economy and the world economy and we have been glad of every tonne of coal that we could mine. Therefore, I have always believed—I think that the Government still believe, and I am sure that when my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary replies to the debate he will reiterate—that the strategic energy policy that has to be pursued in Britain, because of our good fortune, can be likened to the four legs of a stool. We want a coal industry, an electricity industry and an oil industry and we want to encourage investment in saving energy and in new sources of energy at the same time. We need them all. None of them is mutually exclusive. One should make no apologies for the subvention. It is money well spent and before many years are out we shall be debating energy issues in the House again and recognising that situation.

It is important that the grants should be on a tight rein, because one should, as near as possible, aim for commercial viability. As I have already suggested, there is nothing commercial about oil prices. As Sheik Yamani has been given the sack we shall have to wait to see what the new man does to manage oil prices before we know how to respond in the coal industry. It should be no policy of the Government to encourage short-term commercial decisions which reduce our ability to mine coal beyond a safe level, whatever winds may blow in the future.

The time scale of the retraining and redundancy grant, with an overall limit to 1992, is a realistic time in which to try to get things right within the strategy for coal, which has been mentioned at energy Question Time, with an overall production of 90 million tonnes.

Mr. Alec Woodall (Hemsworth): Privatisation.

Mr. Lester: One might talk about privatisation but the industry is not remotely ready for privatisation. It may be in the future, but certainly not in my lifetime in the House.

In the interests of brevity, my last point concerns the most important people of all—the men in the industry and their relationship in the future. High investment and productivity still require and depend on skilled men, properly rewarded. They require skilled men who do not see the inevitable closure of worked-out pits as a threat. We now see that on the western side of Nottinghamshire pits are closing legitimately and with the support of the men. They do not see that as a threat and they see longer term pay deals and freedom from disputes as a sensible position from 1987 onwards and the pattern for many years to come.

The coal industry has had that pattern in the past. Disputes are a relatively new occurrence in the mining

[Mr. Lester]

industry. It has had a long period of industrial stability. We want to return to that position and to encourage all men of good will, whether in the UDM or the NUM, to approach the industry in that way.

In view of what I said earlier, I shall not labour the point, but it is right to encourage the UDM to have fair and equal rights of representation. We from Nottinghamshire know that the union was born in our area from a commitment to democratic values, which have been sincerely upheld by the right hon. Member for Mansfield. It is strange that the Labour party now accepts the principle of balloting. Balloting is now part of its trade union policy, which it will not withdraw. However, it is in the great difficulty of being hoist by its own petard in not carrying that principle through in relation to the UDM. It is utterly unacceptable that it should seek to discriminate against what is now a legitimate trade union with a membership in Nottinghamshire of some 21,700 out of a total of 24,700 working in the industry.

The right hon. Member for Salford, East asked about the minority rights of the NUM in Nottinghamshire. I hope that the minority rights of the NUM in Nottinghamshire are every bit as good as the minority rights of the UDM in Durham. With that parity there should be no argument. However, the Bill deals with rights in terms of funds, to which miners have already contributed, and organisations of which they are a natural part. I say with great respect to the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) that a great cloud still hangs over the superannuation funds of the NUM, of which he is a trustee and which I am sure he is dealing with in an honourable way. It is perfectly fair that the UDM should have representation on any body which is dealing with superannuation funds, particularly in view of that position. We in Nottinghamshire know the historical link between the Labour party and the NUM.

Mr. Woodall: "Lynk" is the word.

Mr. Lester: I regard him as a courageous man as well.

I recognise that that is history, but, as the right hon. Member for Mansfield said, we are now moving into a new era and we cannot turn back and we cannot rewrite history.

The right hon. Gentleman pointed to Conservative Members who ably represent Nottinghamshire today, saying that in the short term it might be in my interests to stir things up so that we shall win Mansfield and Sherwood and continue to make progress. However, as I said at the beginning, the principle for which the right hon. Gentleman spoke is far more important than our short-term party gains. We should give, and are giving, fair representation and proper safeguards to the united democratic miners. I shall watch with great interest and some concern as the arguments wax and wane between the vested interests already in the industry and the real interests of the men and their contribution to our national welfare as well as to their own good.

5.57 pm

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): I am pleased that the Labour party will reject the Bill, just as the Tory party rejected the Secretary of State as the heir apparent of the Prime Minister. Every miner in the land will want to reject the Bill, and I feel sure that the nation will also want the House to reject it.

The Bill is a continuation of the Tory policies and dogma that one has come to expect. The Government seek to run down, to divide and to exploit the industry. That is not in the national interest. One has come to expect more sanity from Rampton than from the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary. I wonder whether the Secretary of State is a fit and proper person to hold office. Everything that he has done since he has been Secretary of State has been contrary to the interests of the nation.

The need for an energy policy is paramount and the Tory philosophy that leads the Government to seek to reduce the coal industry to nothing is one that I cannot understand. Will they be content to import coal to make up the deficit that will surely result if they get their way and run down the industry? Do they seek to continue to import coal from South Africa and thereby support the South African Government's exploitation of black mineworkers?

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South) *rose*——

Mr. Redmond: If the Tories get their way, the long-term effect on the balance of payments will be dramatic. If the Secretary of State spent more time trying to resolve the problems in the industry instead of counting the money that he receives from the common agricultural policy, he being a gentleman farmer, perhaps we would make more progress.

There is no doubt that a further loss of jobs in the coal industry will be attributable to Tory party politics. During the miners' strike—I am sorry that it is necessary to refer to it—the Secretary of State categorically denied the existence of any hit list, as did the Prime Minister. The right hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Lady said on many occasions that there was no hit list and that Mr. Scargill and Opposition Members were not telling the truth. Events since the strike have proved beyond a shadow of doubt that there was a hit list of the sort that was discussed during the strike. That suggests that Ministers and others were not telling the House the whole truth.

There is talk about conciliation and consultation within the coal industry and the need to get away from the past and to march forward together. Unfortunately, we have heard from Ministers and Conservative Back Benchers that they seek to continue the exploitation of the industry and the divisions within it. Industrial relations within the industry used to be the shining example of what could be achieved within the rest of British industry, but the National Coal Board has sought since the strike to turn industrial relations inside out. I assume that this has been done with the compliance of the Minister. When the Secretary of State talks about the high productivity that now prevails, he should understand that it will be an Indian summer unless some lessons are learnt. Unfortunately, if the Government continue with their policy the industry is due for another rapid rundown.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo *rose*——

Mr. Redmond: We were told that the Yorkshire Main pit at Edlington had a 10-year life, but with a change of director the pit closed. That brought great deprivation to the area. Cadeby pit was closed by the board in spite of

a recommendation by the independent review body and Mr. Diamond. The Secretary of State gave assurances that the independent review body would be everything that everyone wanted, but, unfortunately, it has not been. It is the same old system, but on many occasions the Minister has misled the House about the teeth of the review body. It is disgusting that the Minister saw fit not to reply directly to a letter that I sent him about Cadeby. I asked him to give the review body some teeth and to ensure that a directive was issued to the board, but he did not reply to that. Instead, he said that the review body's recommendations would not be binding on the board but that it would take them into consideration.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will tell me in what circumstances the board will take note of what the independent arbitrator is saying. If the financial and social aspects are not to be accepted, there is nothing left. It is kidding the public to say that the review body exists to see fair play. The Government are daft if they are asking people to believe that, and our people would be daft if they believed the Government.

Mr. David Hunt: The hon. Gentleman has referred to Cadeby and has said that the financial aspects of Mr. Diamond's recommendation were not observed by the National Coal Board. He should know that Mr. Diamond agreed that substantial continuing losses would be inevitable if the colliery remained open. Mr. Diamond's conclusions on all the mining, marketing and financial matters accorded entirely with the evidence given by the board. It was the agreement of the trade unions and of the board at the time that the recommendations of the review body would not be binding.

Mr. Redmond: The Minister must listen to what I am saying. When the Minister replies, I ask him to tell me in what circumstances the board will take account of the arbitrator's recommendations. The review body accepts the board's financial arguments, but it draws attention to the social consequences and says that the board should accept the recommendation to keep the pit open pending Government action on employment. Unfortunately, Conservatives seem to want to starve our people of employment. I ask the Minister not to try to mislead the House.

Mr. David Hunt: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman did not intend to suggest that I misled the House. I think that we are in agreement, basically, but we are not in agreement on whether the review body's report should be binding on the board. It was the original decision that the report would be given detailed and careful consideration by the board, and that has happened. The hon. Gentleman does not have a case for saying that due weight was not given to the report, because it was.

Mr. Redmond: Will the Minister tell us in what circumstances the board will accept the independent review body's recommendations? If it is not prepared to accept the financial and social aspects of the report, will it be prepared to accept the recommendations generally?

Mr. David Hunt: I do not want to enter into a dialogue with the hon. Gentleman, but I would say to him that the board has always made it clear that it would give due weight to the conclusions of the review body. There has not been a review body yet that has decided and established that on financial grounds a pit should be kept open. The day may come, but it has not yet arrived.

Mr. Redmond: I suggest that the Minister reflects on what I am asking. I suggest that he is trying to mislead our people.

Clause 3 refers to welfare schemes. The welfare club at the Yorkshire Main pit used to be a source of revenue for the social facilities that were provided in the area. The men employed at the Yorkshire Main pit used to contribute to the colliery band, changing room facilities, and improvements generally. Yorkshire Main no longer exists, and the National Coal Board and the Government have a duty to provide money that will enable the welfare schemes to become self-sufficient. They should take that into consideration when they splash the money around. No doubt the Minister will tell us when he replies how many millions they will give to the various colliery closures.

Clause 3 relates to concessionary coal. Does that include smokeless fuel? If the Minister will nod, I can carry on with my point. *[Interruption.]* The clause talks about providing money for concessionary coal. Can we take it that smokeless fuel is the same thing? If that is the case, perhaps the Minister could instruct the National Coal Board that it must not penalise those whose contracts included concessionary fuel prior to nationalisation. It is seeking to renege on its obligations. About six pits—my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) may mention them in his speech—had agreements that when miners retired they would receive nine tonnes of coal. Now that the village of Maltby has gone smokeless, the smokeless fuel agreement is being used and, obviously, that involves a big reduction in quantity. The board and the Government have an obligation to those old age pensioners to ensure that they have adequate fuel with which to keep warm this winter. I feel sure that the Minister would not want to wage war on them.

Clauses 5 and 8 mention the word "substantial". What does that mean? I hope that the Minister does not intend to hide behind the Charities Commission when he defines "substantial" when the Bill is enacted. He must insert a figure of 1 per cent., 10 per cent., 20 per cent., 30 per cent. or 40 per cent. Otherwise, he will leave a grey area which will give rise to arguments about the meaning of those clauses.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo *rose*——

Mr. Redmond: I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will reject the Bill.

6.12 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): I, like many of my colleagues, would first like to pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon) who today made a typically courageous speech, which he said was his final speech in the House. When we were both members of the Energy Select Committee I had the pleasure of accompanying him on a trip to Northern Ireland, where his courage had been tested in a different dimension. I can say without fear of contradiction that through his activities he has enjoyed wide respect in the House. It is a tragedy for him, when he makes a speech that is a model of common sense and reconciliation, and when he speaks for a community in which he has lived and worked all his life, that in the modern Labour party his is a voice in the wilderness.

I have the privilege of representing a diverse constituency in which the energy industry plays an

[Mr. Spencer Batiste]

important role. In Allerton Bywater is the North Yorkshire area headquarters of the NCB, shortly to be renamed the British Coal Corporation. Surrounding it is a long-life pit which has won a recent order to supply the new ICI coal-fired plant in Huddersfield—the largest in Europe—with 44,000 tonnes of coal a year and many mining communities. Just to the east in the Selby constituency is the new coalfield in which increasing numbers of my constituents will work as this impressive and massive development proceeds.

Immediately to the south and east of my constituency are the great coal-fired power stations of Ferrybridge, Drax and Eggborough which will consume 4 to 5 million tonnes of coal a year to generate 2,000 MW of electricity. Others of my constituents are employed there. In the heart of my constituency at Scarcroft is the headquarters of the Yorkshire electricity board which employs more than 7,500 people to service nearly 2 million customers in diverse industries and communities, and in hospitals and old people's homes, each of which in its own way and in varying degrees depends on energy.

While many of my constituents work in the energy industry, be it in the production of coal, its conversion to electricity or the supply of electricity, all of them have in common with all other hon. Members' constituents that they are also consumers of energy and, as such, are entitled to expect an adequate supply of energy in a suitable form at a price that does not disadvantage them. It is a prime responsibility of government to develop policies that will do just that. We must protect our people against the vagaries of middle eastern wars, the rapacity of OPEC and the still unextinguished militancy of the NUM leadership. In doing so we must use our natural resources wisely, while facing up to the challenges that new energy sources pose for us, for the nation that gets its energy policy wrong will be unable to get many other policies right.

We are fortunate in the United Kingdom in having diverse options. Any sensible policy will build on that diversity and must have the development of our coal industry as a major component, but not at any price. The cost of energy must be internationally competitive or all who depend on it will go to the wall. An excessive price for coal may in the short term save some jobs in the coal industry, but it will cost jobs in steel, refractories and engineering.

For those reasons I welcome the Government's determined efforts to put the coal industry on a healthy and profitable footing. I applaud our massive £4·8 billion of capital investment in the industry. Since 1983 alone we have invested over £1·5 million per day in the industry and under this Bill, which the Opposition will oppose, that figure will rise to £2 million a day. Selby with its current productivity of over 12·3 tonnes per man shift is a good example of how that investment translates into a modern industry, offering excellent prospects to those who work in it and realistic prices to those who depend on it. The 23 per cent. increase in productivity announced today by the NCB for the past 12 months is another hopeful signpost for the future for those who work in the industry, for those who depend on it for their earnings and for the future well-being of our energy policy, provided all concerned in the coal industry play their part.

Since 1983, an additional £5 billion has been spent on subsidising the industry. While the bulk of that has gone on financing the major restructuring which has taken place and which was necessary, a significant part has been inflicted on the nation unnecessarily by Scargill's strike. The industry could not survive another strike like that, nor could it survive serious disruption in future which would destroy the confidence of customers, such as ICI and the CEGB, which have other options.

We must move on now to the industrial relations of the 21st century and not remain locked into past battles, as the Labour Front Bench has demonstrated that it is this afternoon through its inability to rise above the instructions issued to it by the NUM leadership. It is with sadness that I note those parts of the Bill which make provision for fair representation for all miners on the institutions of the industry. I am sad that that should be necessary, but I recognise that it is.

The UDM split from the NUM because the NUM leadership would not follow its own constitution. That split was widened when the NUM adopted what for many miners was an unacceptable alternative constitution which concentrates even more power in the hands of its leadership. Surely that leadership should by now realise that the UDM will not be intimidated in the future any more than it has been in the past, and that the Government will not allow it to be excluded by NUM intransigence from the representation to which its 30,000 members are entitled.

It is also sad to observe the craven performance of the Opposition in this matter. The right hon. Member for Mansfield spoke of the political apartheid in north Nottinghamshire. The Labour Front Bench is rightly vociferous in condemning apartheid in South Africa, yet, when it comes to coal's traditional homelands, how they cringe before the forces of militancy. This phoney and contrived Opposition amendment is an unworthy and blatant manoeuvre to avoid facing up to the important issues of democracy that are raised in the Bill. That unworthy manoeuvre is exposed all the more, because by voting against the Bill Labour Members will be voting against the funds that are needed for the future of the coal industry, against the new jobs that will be created in the years to come by British Coal Enterprise Ltd. and against democracy. One thing that I can promise is that—be it in this debate, in Committee or on Report—Labour Members may think that they can duck the issue of democracy, but we shall bring them back to it time and time again.

It is sad, but not surprising, that a party whose leader lacked the guts to stand up to Arthur Scargill until others had defeated him now lacks the guts to support basic human rights in the trade union movement. That is why so many rank and file trade unionists throughout the country—not just in Nottinghamshire—recognise ever more clearly that when the chips are down it is only to the Conservative party that they can turn to protect their interests. Labour is the party that will deny them the protection of our laws from the militant trade union bosses who have abused them in the past.

This Bill gives us an opportunity to look forward to the coal industry as it can be and as it should be. The major restructuring is now over. Notwithstanding the collapse of oil prices, the board plans to break even in 1988-89 and to reach full commercial viability in the following year. We have all heard that story before, but the rapid increase in productivity of 23 per cent. in the last year alone gives us at last realistic cause for optimism. We must give the

industry the funds that it needs to see it through, just as we must reinforce the basic democratic rights of those miners who reject Scargillism in all its unpleasant manifestations. I commend the Bill to the House.

6.23 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): As has already been said, this is a Bill about the future of the mining industry, although from some of the speeches that have been made one would think that the debate was an inquest into what has taken place during the last few years.

Clause 1 proposes that the National Coal Board should instead be known as the British Coal Corporation. However, that new name has been in use for quite a few months and I am not sure what would happen if the Bill failed to get a Second Reading tonight. I do know that the change of name has fuelled the suspicion of many in the industry about the future and privatisation. For the life of me, I do not understand why the NCB should be so arrogant as to change its name — which it has no statutory authority to do—before this House has taken the decision. Of course, that is typical of the arrogance displayed by the leadership of the NCB over the past few years.

Clause 2 relates to the deficit grant, and, as I understand it, puts back the break-even point by a year, to 1988-89. The NCB is projecting a loss of £300 million in 1986-87, and the loss this year is entirely due to the new agreement between the NCB and the electricity industry, which decreases the price of coal to that industry. As a result, the NCB will suffer a revenue loss of £4 million in 1986-87. I understand that that is equivalent to £3·80 per tonne. Given the amount that the electricity supply industry must pay the Government via the external financing limit for 1986-87 — at present set at £1,416 million, over and above interest payments—it represents a straightforward revenue-raising operation.

Indeed, the Chancellor's autumn statement on 6 November increased the amount to be paid via the negative EFL for 1987-88 by £237 million more than the amount established in the CEGB's medium-term development plan. It will now have to pay £1,305 million instead of £1,068 million. That is extra revenue for the Government in an election year, and will account for 79 per cent. of the £300 million transferred to the electricity supply industry from the NCB. In other words, 79 per cent. of the revenue reduction experienced by the NCB is being ploughed back through the Treasury's coffers.

We have recently heard much about British Coal's new strategy. It was first mentioned in October 1985. The objective is to move to a point at which the industry can operate profitably, and it is argued that competition means that that cannot be done by price increases. One understands that—we must compete in the markets, and it would be foolish to say otherwise. It is also said that there should be a significant reduction in production costs, and that is where one of the major problems arises.

It is argued that the new strategy means that maximum output should come from low-cost collieries. At present, it is said that such collieries whose operating capacity is more than £1·65 per gigajoule are likely to be uneconomic. We are told that the aim for long-life collieries is £1·50 per gigajoule and that the aim in respect of new investment will be as low as £1 per gigajoule. Any colliery that does not reach that target is under threat of closure.

According to the board's figures for July this year, 49 mines are making a profit and 77 are making a loss. Incidentally, the figures do not include social costs. Of the 49 pits in profit, some have limited reserves, and that fact is recognised. One must therefore ask what the size of the industry will be if it is to operate purely and simply under the financial guidelines laid down by the NCB's new strategy.

How will the NCB achieve the targets that it believes are necessary to put the industry on a profitable footing by the target date of 1988? Recently, the director of the Nottinghamshire area, Albert Wheeler, in a paper that he gave to the mining engineers annual conference, put forward a plan which, if my memory serves me right, the new chairman of British Coal, in his evidence to the Select Committee on Energy, recently said that he would support. If Mr. Wheeler's plan is fully accepted by British Coal and the Government, the work force will be down to 70,000 men for 90 million tonnes of coal. If the Wheeler plan does not envisage this, I would welcome a correction from the Minister.

The Wheeler plan would also mean the continuation of the policy that is beginning to operate in the mining industry of raping the best seams and taking out everything that is easy to get at, leaving behind what in years gone by we would never have dreamt of leaving. This means that the projected 300 years of coal reserves about which we have been talking for many years would go, and our natural fossil reserves would last for only 50 years.

Mr. Orme: Is my hon. Friend aware that at the Sizewell inquiry British Coal said that there were 300 years' worth of reserves, but during the miners' strike Sir Ian MacGregor told me that the way that he wanted to extract the coal would mean that it would go within 50 years?

Mr. Lofthouse: I take my right hon. Friend's point, and that would be the effect of the Wheeler plan. The new chairman of British Coal, in his evidence to the Select Committee, made it clear that he supported the Wheeler plan. It seems likely that the Wheeler plan is tied up with the time scale of the Bill, because it coincides with the new strategy.

The Bill encourages the further deregulation of the industry. I am not talking just about the desire of many Conservative Members to deregulate the small mines in opencast production, but about a matter of life or death importance to all who work in the industry. I am talking about the deregulation of health and safety in the industry. These may be strong words, but this is the position facing the mining industry if coal is produced by raping the mines along the Wheeler plan.

For decades, miners fought to improve conditions in the pits and to establish low accident rates. As a result, we came to have the safest mining industry in the world, but since the start of MacGregorism, conditions have deteriorated and the serious injury and accident rates in particular have climbed steeply. Nobody can refute that. Part of the MacGregor legacy is the attempt to introduce American-style work practices and health and safety standards. I remind the House that the fatal accident rate in American deep mines is three times that in British coal mines.

Recently, I went to America and visited some mines. After 39 years down the coal mines here, I can categorically state that I have never been down mines as

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unsafe as those I saw there. They are not fit for men to work in. Now, as a result of MacGregor, similar workings may be adopted in our mines.

If the Government accept the Wheeler plan on behalf of the industry, they will be accepting several new practices. There will be coal production six days a week, with longer shifts underground. Winding shafts will be made available 23 hours a day at full capacity. The role of craftsmen will be changed and some crucial maintenance tasks will be given to machine operators. The role of deputies and other officials will be changed. A variety of new incentive schemes will be introduced. The use of roof bolts, trackless vehicles and highly flexible production techniques used in American mines will be increased.

Mr. McLoughlin: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that to introduce a number of the practices that he has set out would require changes in both the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 and the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974? Where in the Bill are those changes made?

Mr. Lofthouse: The hon. Gentleman is a little premature, because I am coming to that point.

The Wheeler plan would also mean increasing the use of private contractors and revising the health and safety regulations applying to mines to permit these new working practices. When I went to America, I saw the system of controlling road ways by roof bolts, as Wheeler is suggesting. This system cannot work in the geology of our coal mines. There will be rapid increases in the injury rate, and I am talking now not as a Bevin boy—if the hon. Gentleman knows what that means—but as someone with 40 years' experience down a hole in the ground. The American system cannot work safely. A system of taking control of the statutory obligations of deputies and overmen and passing them down the line is another suggestion in the Wheeler plan.

When questioned by the Select Committee on Energy two weeks ago, Sir Robert Haslam said that he agreed with the broad thrust of the strategy, and denied that that required the relaxation of safety standards. Mr. Ken Moses, the British Coal technical director, told the Select Committee that the only legislative change would be to the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1908, which limits hours of work underground. However, at a meeting of the mines qualification board only a week later, Mr. Moses said that if the meeting did not agree to amend the rules covering the qualifications for shotfirers and deputies British Coal would get the regulations changed another way. In one week, he had told two different stories. There is no way that the Wheeler plan can go through without altering the regulaions. British Coal fully expects to be able to alter those regulations, and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that they will cease to operate.

New regulations and codes of practice are being drafted. The first one to be prepared—on access and egress—raises the limit on the number of men working in a heading from nine to 18. To those who are not familiar with the mining industry, that means that where there is a heading with only one way in no more than nine men can work there. That is a wise precaution. However, the suggestion is that the code of practice should be altered to increase that number to 18. The deputies union, The National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers, whose representative is my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) has real fears regarding the use of this redrafted regulation, especially in single entry faces. Anyone with mining knowledge will readily understand those fears. NACODS is concerned that the increased use of roof bolts in these and other situations would also put lives at risk.

Safety regulations in the mining industry are interconnected, yet the regulations are being changed one by one. How can changes to one be agreed before seeing the changes that are being proposed for the others? It is perfectly obvious to the mining unions that the new working practices presuppose drastic changes to safety regulations across the board. I hope that the Minister will assure us that this talk of changes is moonshine and that the regulations will not be altered, for that would permit British Coal to rape the coal industry, as is happening in America.

The hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) said that if we do not get the price of energy right the whole exercise will be futile. Constantly we hear about the price of generating electricity by coal compared with the price of generating it by nuclear power. The Minister informed me today that the cost of decommissioning nuclear power stations is included in the cost of generating elctricity by nuclear power. It was a clever answer. I asked for the true costs, but in his answer the Minister referred just to the costs. The true costs have not been included because they are unknown. The colossal cost of producing electricity by nuclear power has not, therefore, been included in the overall production costs.

If we fail to include the true cost of producing electricity by nuclear power, we shall deceive the House and the public. If its overall production cost is not greater than the cost of generating electricity by coal, the Government will be committing a criminal act. The hon. Member for Elmet referred to the Selby coalfield. That coalfield has been welcomed in Yorkshire. However, only 49 m of coal will be extracted from each unit; 50 m will be left there. We shall be leaving more coal in each unit than we shall be taking out. That is rape of the industry. Such a policy for the future energy needs of this country would not be wise. Further sums ought to be done regarding the decommissioning of nuclear power stations.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Has my hon. Friend taken note of the fact that research and development costs for nuclear energy amount to £150 million a year and that that figure has to be compared with about £45 million for research and development into non-nuclear energy? Does my hon. Friend think that that is relevant to his point about the decommissioning of nuclear power stations?

Mr. Lofthouse: Yes. The amount of money that is spent on nuclear power research and development is far in excess of the amount that is spent on coal research and development, or research into any other form of energy. The Department and the Minister should look carefully at that point.

I am not knocking the enterprise scheme. An honest endeavour is being made to find jobs for people. However, five or six pits have been closed in my area since the strike, and 42 per cent. of all those aged 24 are unemployed. So far, I have been able to identify only two jobs for them. The Bill will create massive job losses. The Government are therefore obliged to provide jobs in the mining

communities to replace the jobs into which those kids would normally have gone. The redundancy payments scheme has been attractive. That is why men have left the industry. However, it is not attractive to kids leaving school who would normally have gone into those jobs. There is nothing for them to do. We cannot even get intermediate area status from the Government.

Mr. Batiste: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lofthouse: No, not for the moment. Intermediate area status would help us to attract industry to the area. The Government ought to take note of the further rapid rundown of the mining industry.

Mr. Batiste *rose*——

Mr. Lofthouse: I do not intend to give way to the hon. Gentleman. The Government might just as well wipe out the review body if they do not intend to give it any teeth and allow it to take note of the social consequences of the Bill.

6.48 pm

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): No hon. Member could have heard the speech of the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon) without realising his great sincerity, because of his experiences in his constituency.

A number of hon. Members have referred to the safety aspects of the present policies. The Bill deals in no way with the drastic changes that will be needed to certain parts of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 to take care of the deputies and the overmen who have to work underground. Those changes would have to be considered by the House before they were put into effect.

Nobody can deny that the British coal industry has gone through a very rough time in the last few years, particularly between November 1983 and the end of the coal dispute. The industrial action that was taken in 1984 by some members of the National Union of Mineworkers resulted in great damage to the industry. I hope that the Bill will be the start of a new era and of a fresh attitude in the industry, in which I will always have an interest. I worked in the industry for seven years, for six of which I was a member of the NUM. My father before me was for about 30 years a member of the NUM. I never really got to know him because he died when I was so young.

The amendment that stands in the name of the Leader of the Opposition is yet another example of the backward-looking attitude of the Labour party today. It is still living in the past and does not acknowledge what has happened in the industry in the past few years. That is not necessarily what everybody would have wanted to happen in the industry.

No doubt everybody shares the regret at the way in which the industry and the union have been torn apart. Nevertheless, that has happened and there is no point in trying to say that everything is all right and that we will forget and blot out those two years. We cannot blot out those years or the fact of bricks being thrown through people's windows. We cannot blot out abusive phone calls in the early hours of the morning.

I can assure hon. Members who have been lucky enough never to receive abusive phone calls that there is nothing more horrifying or more frightening to a person or to a family than that at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. Unfortunately, those things cannot be blotted out and reconciliation between the mining unions will not come easily. Such reconciliation will be made all the harder by the attitude of the Opposition who continue, it would seem, to take the Scargill line. They have not told us their justification for opposing this Bill.

The Opposition amendment talks about low morale in the industry. If one were to look for evidence of such low morale one could not find it in the current production figures. To have a future, the industry must provide coal at an economic cost, and at a saleable price. Some hon. Members have said that the coal grant conversion scheme is about to end. I have not heard that, but if it were to end, I should regret it. I should regret to see that scheme coming to an end, because coal is an efficient fuel for industry and it is a shame that British industry burns premium fuels to the extent that it occasionally does. There is great capital cost involved in installing coal-fired plant in industry.

Mr. O'Brien: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we ought to make representations that the conversion scheme should be extended to local government and to area and district health authorities?

Mr. McLoughlin: A strong case could be made for such extension. The Opposition talk about low morale in the industry. Low morale is more apparent in the Opposition than in the coal industry. High productivity will benefit the industry. The right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) talked about men over the age of 50 who have now left the industry and accepted redundancy. Some of the people over 50 that I knew when I worked for the National Coal Board, as it then was, deserved redundancy. Miners who work under ground from an early age up to the age of 50 deserve redundancy. I say good luck to them. I am glad that such people have been able to leave the industry with a relatively good settlement. I do not share the anxiety of the hon. Member for Salford, East about people over the age of 50 using the generous redundancy scheme.

The Opposition amendment does not refer to pit closures. How could it? If it did, it would be double talk by the Opposition, because between 1964 and 1970, when they were in Government, they were good at pit closures and closed far more pits than the present Government have been able to close. In the area in which I lived on the Cannock Chase coalfield there were about 27 pits. Now there is just one, Littleton colliery. All the others have been closed.

The amendment refers to the reinstatement of sacked miners. This is a matter for British Coal and must be looked at on the basis of some of the crimes committed by the people who were dismissed. One cannot look at the Bill without considering what happened during the miners' industrial action when some members of the NUM, following the quite appalling leadership of that union, brought about the horrifying events of 1985. It was a tragic 12 months for the whole industry, and the only people who gained from it were those who were trying to make an industrial dispute a political dispute. Certainly, the miners did not gain from it.

There is no doubt where the blame lay for the miner's dispute. It lay with the leaders of the NUM who failed to hold a ballot. No matter how one talks around that, one cannot get away from it. In places where ballots were held, a majority of people wished to continue working. In the ballot in which I took part, 72 per cent. voted to continue

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working and 28 per cent. voted to go on strike. My line of action was obvious, and I continued to go to work during some difficult periods.

The failure of the NUM to hold a ballot and the subsequent changes in its rules led to the formation of the Union of Democratic Miners. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has on several occasions supported the right of the UDM to exist in the coal industry. The intransigence of the NUM in refusing to face the situation that exists means it is trying to override the right of the UDM to exist. I regret that the Opposition do not support this Bill, because it will give proper rights to people who work in our coal industry.

I should like to see the return of total normality in the industry and I hope that that feeling is shared by every hon. Member. The Opposition refuse to acknowledge the true situation in the industry and continue to look back to what it was. They should accept the situation that exists and if they do not do that, the progress that we all want will not occur. The change of name to British Coal will make coal easier to sell. In the past, the marketing department has had problems and the way in which a product can be marketed makes a great deal of difference.

Undoubtedly, great opportunities lie ahead for the coal industry and they exist in spite of the National Union of Mineworkers, not because of it, because that union has damaged the opportunities for British Coal. It caused damage to the philosophy of marketing the product. It is important that coal is sold to the big customer, the CEGB, but it must be sold also to other industries, because by doing that sales of coal can be increased.

It is vital that a supplier should be able to promise continuity of supplies. It was a great tribute to British Coal that throughout the dispute it managed to ensure that all its industrial customers were serviced. That is the greatest marketing point that the marketing department can put over. It was important that those industries which used coal were able to get supplies. If supplies had failed, those customers which we all accept are so important, would have gone elsewhere. They would have done that if coal had proved an unreliable energy source. Continuity is important to industry.

I hope that, although it is late in the day, the Opposition will reconsider their opposition to the Bill and see the error of their ways. If they truly want a coal industry with some continuity, they will support the Bill.

6.59 pm

Mr. Michael McGuire (Makerfield): The hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), among others, has spoken of the militancy of the miners. He also made out a good case for a co-ordinated energy policy, which we would welcome.

Many years ago, when, like me, my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) was on the Back Benches, the militancy of the miners was always raised. In 1919, we had what was known as the Sankey commission because the whole industry was in one hell of a mess. Sankey recommended that, if we wanted a prosperous coal industry in the longer term, there would have to be public ownership. He offered miners a charter.

The charge about miners' militancy is answered by the fact that even when they had total power in their hands, they did not achieve the miners' charter which was suggested in 1919. Many of the pioneers of public ownership were miners. We are a declining body in the House and will decline further. It can be seen in the annals of the Labour party, a party that the miners did as much as anybody else to found, that whereas we once had 56 Members of Parliament, we are now down to 15. They had complete power in their hands, but when the militants said, "Eh, lads, why are we not trying to get what was laid down by an independent commission in 1919?", they replied, "To achieve that will probably be at the nation's expense and we should put the welfare of the people first. We can pull down the temples of nationalisation but we have more to gain from them than anyone else."

The weakness of the Bill is that it does not address the nation's energy requirements as part of a well thought out policy. I thought that the hon. Member for Elmet said that, too. If we consider the Government's tactics, it is clear that what they are really saying through the Bill is that coal is expendable. One could be forgiven for thinking that coal is regarded as the cornerstone of Government energy policy, to judge from their words, but I do not believe that the Government are planning that way. The Bill is a knee-jerk reaction. Events have overtaken the Government and they have had to introduce legislation to match the situation.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said, if the Government really had the welfare of the coal industry at heart, as they pretend, there would have been more attention to the coal conversion scheme. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) said that he hopes that the scheme will continue because it has been successful. Every other press release issued by the Under-Secretary of State tells us about all of the successes and that huge industrial concerns are finding it cheaper to convert to coal. I hope that the Minister will tell us that that scheme will continue and that its absence from the Bill should not be taken as an indication that the Government will abandon it.

I am sorry that I missed the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse). We feel that the attempt to achieve a leaner, fitter and smaller industry is really an attempt to make it more attractive to potential private owners. The industry has not been in public ownership for long. Vesting day was 1 January 1947, so we are about to celebrate its 40th birthday. Before nationalisation, it was, in every sense of the word, a bloody industry. Like clockwork, 1,000 men were killed each year because it was run privately and profit was the king. Safety came a poor second.

Conservative Members will have a job persuading the country. We have heard a lot of election speeches today. Those lads are a bit quick out of the traps chasing that hare. The lady who is referred to as Maggie might have Conservative Members hanging on, and I am not certain that they will all come back. They have all been polishing their election speeches today and having a bit of fun.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): The hon. Gentleman will not be back either.

Mr. McGuire: No. I am one of the casualties of life. Politics is full of ups and downs and mine is down at present. I am an optimist by nature, though.

Conservative Members have sharpened many of their election speeches on the Union of Democratic Mineworkers/National Union of Mineworkers conflict. It seems silly that Conservative Members cannot wait to

offer the industry to the public. One of the most enduring Conservative principles is that any big industry should be privately rather than publicly owned. I hope that they translate that enthusiasm to an industry which tends to undermine the case for the coal industry—the nuclear power industry.

I prophesy that there is no way in which the nuclear power industry could be sold to private capital. Although it is an important source of electricity in America, not one nuclear power station has been ordered since the Three Mile Island affair. It did not take Chernobyl to bring about that attitude. They would not touch nuclear power with a barge pole because of the costs and dangers.

Research by the coal industry and the Central Electricity Generating Board on fluidised beds is jointly funded. I do not know whether we would argue for total Government funding, but we definitely want at least parity with the nuclear power industry on hidden costs. The idea of removing from the public the threat of miners' militancy, and the desirability of having an energy source which cannot be prejudiced by such action, comes through in Ministers' speeches. I want people to say why we should privatise the CEGB and its nuclear power element. There would be not one taker.

We all want a profitable coal industry. Nobody has said so far how well our mining machine manufacturers do out of a steady base, but if that base is eroded, their chances of competing successfully, as they do now, will be severely weakened. Mining machinery is one of the jewels in our export crown. I am bound to have a last fling at nuclear power. I should love to know how many nuclear power stations we have exported. When we debated that matter many years ago, one of the prizes offered was the prospect of exporting nuclear power stations all over the world. In fact, we had to give away one of those nuclear power stations and no one would touch the other one that we offered. If the bush telegraph is correct, it appears that we are going for the American system and the go-ahead will be given for Sizewell.

Mr. Lester: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McGuire: I did not intervene earlier, although I was tempted. I would like to press on. I do not refuse to give way out of any discourtesy to the hon. Gentleman; he knows that I have a high opinion of him as one of the more rational of the Nottinghamshire Members. I would not say that he is the only rational Nottingham Member, but he is one of the few.

We must remember that a profitable and bigger coal industry will be the necessary base for the mining machinery manufacturers. I declare an interest as I am associated with a plant on the fringes of my constituency. That plant is doing wonders. We should pay more attention to the mining machinery manufacturers and realise that it is a necessary ancillary of a profitable coal industry.

I wish now to discuss the burning issue of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers and the National Union of Mineworkers. I differ from a number of my colleagues in that I believe that the strike should have been confirmed by a ballot. The bedrock of the NUM was its steadfast allegiance to the ultimate test in democracy. That allegiance commanded the attention, almost the admiration, of the country, even though the public sometimes suffered from that will as expressed at the ballot box.

There have been only two strikes in the coal industry in all the years that I have been a Member of this House. I was born on the day that the general strike began—3 May 1926. From then on the union was shackled with too high a proportion required for a successful ballot. The figure was 66⅔ per cent. — an absurd requirement. I believe that 55 per cent. is more in keeping because a bare majority creates difficult arguments on the margins. A proportion of 55 per cent. leaves a gap of 10 per cent. to 45 per cent. However, there have been only two strikes —in 1972 and 1974 respectively. I regret very much that we did not heed the common sense that was emerging then.

When Conservative Members rile and ridicule the connection between the mining industry and the Labour party, they do a disservice to their own intelligence. There is an umbilical cord in that connection. Conservative Members will know from other debates that sometimes parties are tied in a way that makes them less free than they would like to express themselves on a specific issue because of historical or other connections. There is no doubt that we were inhibited in the British Labour and trade union movement.

There was an essence of solidarity in the Labour and trade union movement, and the unflinching solidarity of the striking miners caused people to suffer dreadfully for 12 months. There were doubts among Labour Members as to whether the exercise had been entered into in the best possible way.

After the next general election I will take from this House the memory of the generosity of my colleagues in the mining group, the trade union movement and the parliamentary Labour party. There was no ostracism, although they disagreed with me when I stated my views clearly in the PLP. I expressed my views in my constituency PLP, which was a more difficult task as striking miners were present who thought that my speech was the most dreadful that they had ever heard — especially from a Member of Parliament sponsored by mineworkers.

The consequences of the conflict between the NUM and the UDM are with us today. I told Sir Robert Haslam —and if I meet him again I will repeat this point—that the conflict is not one that he can solve. He has to react to the events as they are now. Miners such as I, who came from the coalface, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and my other hon. Friends, who became branch secretaries, did not have to read about these matters in books, to solve the conflict. We enjoyed the confidence of our fellow men and became pit secretaries and standard bearers — not for the miners, but for the Labour party representing that particular section of the trade union movement. It is our duty to hold out the hand of friendship.

There is one swift way in which the UDM will almost wither on the vine, and that will be a good withering. The NUM must say that there will never again be a strike without the test of a ballot. That was the raison d'etre for the emergence of the UDM. It is not in the interests of the NUM or the UDM that the conflict should continue to worsen like a festering sore.

There are those who argue that the conflict is diminishing. There must be severe tugging at people's heartstrings: many miners are members of mining communities and their fathers' fathers and their relatives were members of the NUM and often occupied high positions. Anyone who has a mining connection—even

[Mr. McGuire]

if that can be traced back to a grandfather or beyond—must realise that there is a great pull of loyalty. There is a comradeship in the communities that extends beyond the ordinary boundaries of most other associations.

This is a deep conflict for the UDM because, in a sense, its members are betraying something that they once held dear. They have done that for a good reason and I would not castigate them for that. I was attacked by many people in my constituency when I refused to join the condemnation of the UDM and claim that its members were scabs or blacklegs. There are technical meanings for both those words and they did not apply to the Nottinghamshire miners or to any other group of miners who, following a ballot, followed the direction of that vote.

I do not believe that there is any profit to the Labour party or to the mining unions in the conflict, which is a festering sore. Together we should hold out the hand of friendship. We should say that we have more in common than divides us. The conflict is in the interests of those who do not have our welfare at heart and who want to see us divided. The sooner we can bring about the reconciliation the better.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon) made a wonderful speech—and wonderful speeches are not always those with which people agree. I like to see the man who goes into a hostile audience, says what he really believes and commands attention and admiration. My right hon. Friend's record speaks for itself. He was in a difficult position. My position was less difficult, but we must battle on.

This will probably be my last speech in a coal debate and it may even be my last speech in this place. Although I anticipate that the Prime Minister will say that she will hang on for some time, for obvious reasons I feel that political considerations will dictate the date of the election. I think that the election will be sometime between June and October 1987, so this will probably be my last chance to address my colleagues on both sides of the House.

I want a reconciliation and my aim is not to say or do anything that will make that less likely. I ask my friends in the NUM to consider how to achieve that reconciliation. Although I have no influence, those with influence with the leadership of the UDM must explain that the best interest lies in reconciliation because the UDM will have proved its point. If that influence is exerted, the united opposition of the NUM, the UDM and the Labour party will prove that this is a flawed and short-term Bill. The Bill is not in the long-term interests of the coal industry.

We may argue for tactical reasons whether to vote only for the reasoned amendment, but whatever happens I believe that the Bill will be put to a searching test.

7.19 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I support the Bill as the only realistic way forward for the coal industry in Britain today. Fundamental changes are taking place in the industry which are making coal less of a burden to other industries and less of a burden to the domestic consumer. The changes are long overdue, and many of them are reflected in the Bill. In the past, fear of the unions has prevented such changes. To explain the current opposition to the changes that are enshrined in the Bill I shall delve briefly into the history of the industry. I make no apologies for doing that because the coal industry, more than almost any other, is a prisoner of its history.

Conservative Members must recognise that we are seeing—in many ways represented by the opposition to the Bill from Opposition Members—the legacy of the many years of severe exploitation which occurred in the coal industry in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the 20th century, that exploitation created in Britain mining communities which were almost self-contained, self-centered tribes which were alienated and apart from the rest of society. Miners were opposed to the management because of the suffering and the tribulations of their forefathers. Those mining communities were proud of their achievements. Despite fighting underground against the elements, and on the surface against appalling conditions, they banded together and built their communities into something to live for. That was the basis of the wagon circle mentality of many mining communities—a mentality that was so cynically and tragically exploited by Scargill and the NUM and represented by Labour's refusal to support the Bill.

Those backward-looking attitudes were mirrored and fostered by many generations of appalling management in the industry. In the 1920s there was still no formal training for British rank-and-file miners compared with the position in Germany, where miners had two years compulsory part-time training. By 1941 only 63 per cent. of coal in Britain was cut mechanically, compared with 97 per cent. in the Ruhr in Germany. In 1938 Polish mines were 59 per cent. more efficient than British mines.

That appalling degeneration in the coal mining industry was reflected in an abhorrent strike record. Between 1929 and 1938, 2 million days a year were lost as a result of strikes. Of the insured working population, the 6 per cent. in the coal mining industry accounted for a massive 64 per cent. of the strikes. Even during the last war, in 1944, 1·64 million man days and 22 million tonnes of coal were lost while we were battling against Hitler on the continent.

Such is the appalling legacy that we have inherited that, in 1945, a politician was moved to write:

> "What statistics cannot record, however, is the persistent guerilla warfare which continues in the majority of pits between management and men . . . Taking the country as a whole, probably half the pits are kept in existence by the other half . . . In fact, by 1944, economic laws had ceased to apply in the industry."

That politician was Harold Wilson, writing in "New Deal for Coal". That appalling legacy explains why, since the Coal Mines Act 1931, social and political considerations have outweighed economic ones, to the long-term disservice not only of other British industries or the country as a whole but of the coal industry.

Such has been the failure since the war that of 750,000 jobs which existed in the mining industry at the end of the war, fewer than 200,000 were still in existence by 1979. It is perhaps ironic that a majority of the closures took place in the years of the Wilson Government. Indeed, in my constituency, 12 mines were closed and 15,000 jobs were lost during the period of the Wilson Government. Those jobs were lost with appalling redundancy terms being offered. My constituents did not forget that recently. The Labour party's twistings and turnings, and its contortions in refusing to condemn violent picketing and refusing to support the democratic aspirations of the UDM, may have

lost any last vestige of moral authority and political respect that the Labour party of old retained in many parts of the midlands.

The 1984-85 strike was, in many ways, the last atavistic thrashings of the old way of doing things. It is sad that such energies as were expended during that strike were turned in upon ourselves and against our countrymen rather than against our overseas competitors. Most people now realise that the old attitudes which may have been justified in the past only lead us backwards and that only high productivity and a high efficiency industry can guarantee jobs.

It is unfair to burden other industries with high energy costs. Recently I visited a dye works and a hosiery manufacturer in my constituency. I was surprised when the trade union leader in that works told me that, during the previous 20 years, he had been appalled at the high energy costs which his company had to pay and which had definitely resulted in a loss of competitiveness and a loss of jobs in his industry. Jobs were being lost in one industry to pay for the jobs in the coal industry.

The NUM has no right to expect the rest of industry to bail it out indefinitely. Labour Members sitting comfortably here have no right to expect men to dig holes in the ground in difficult conditions at the taxpayers' expense just to satisfy their 1930s ideals of industrial machismo. Most people realise that. UDM members realise that. Only Scargill and the Labour party still refuse to accept those facts and the right of the UDM to exist and to be represented.

That is why the Labour party's views are becoming increasingly marginalised, not just ideologically, but by the facts. The facts are that, in the past, the industry slipped inexorably downhill, achieving the not inconsiderable double of losing jobs and costing taxpayers' money at the same time. In contrast, the industry is now investing record amounts, paying record wages, achieving record productivity and, above all, producing energy for consumers and industry at a lower cost than before.

Those inescapable facts explain the backward-looking views of the Labour party and the NUM and their contortions and blind refusal to accept the logic of progress. Nothing demonstrates the Labour party's head-in-the-sand mentality and its undemocratic, authoritarian views more than its refusal to accept the UDM and its refusal to admit the tremendous progress which has been achieved in the industry since the end of the strike.

7.28 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) will forgive me if I do not follow his argument. I wish to refer to the speeches of my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon).

We all wish to see the back of this appalling and disreputable Administration, but if the Prime Minister stays in office a little longer, we may at least be allowed to hear my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend make further speeches. They seemed to think that their speeches this evening were their valedictory ones. At least after the next election my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) will be with us, unlike some of the Conservative Members who are here tonight. I shall be grateful to see him and others who hold the same views, because the argument that he advanced this evening is important.

I do not propose to make a long speech and repeat some of the points that have already been raised. They require a serious response from Ministers, not least those referring to the financial position of the National Coal Board. None of us object to the financial provision. The reason for the Opposition's criticism of the Bill is clearly stated—it will pave the way for further contraction. I shall say a word or two about that in a moment.

There is little serious argument about the provision of funds to maintain the National Coal Board's viability. Indeed, when the last measure was before the House, I suggested that it was a trifle optimistic. It was more designed to reflect Sir Ian MacGregor's stewardship as being successful than to provide for the long term. We expressed serious concern about that at the time. Perhaps Ministers did not pay close enough attention. Perhaps Ministers are a trifle schizophrenic in their approach to the coal industry. The Minister will understand why I say that. We heard today from the Secretary of State and some Conservative Members about how well the coal industry is doing. They are seeking to bask in the industry's achievements. The fact remains that, at the same time as basking in the record achievement, the Government are remarkably inactive, inert, in ensuring that commercial success is achieved.

How much energy have the Government put into going to Europe and demanding a fair share of the European coal market? How much energy have the Government put into their arguments that Europe should not develop a dependency on dumped coal from eastern Europe, which is sent to Europe at any price? Eastern Europe will always undercut our price, so desperate is its search for foreign currency. How much energy have Ministers put into resisting the importation of South African coal? That coal is mined in conditions that would not be regarded as tolerable in this country, not even by some Conservative Members who might like to be coal owners again.

On the question of South Africa, I ask the Minister to pay particular attention to information that I have received during the past two days. Indeed, I mentioned this point yesterday during questions. That information shows that South African coal is being brought into Britain in a rather furtive manner, taken to a private coal mine in the north of England, and then, again furtively, taken to the National Coal Board's establishments in the midlands where it is mixed with opencast and deep mine production —again furtively—so that, at the end of the day, no one knows that the NCB has imported South African coal.

If greengrocers have to label their oranges as coming from South Africa, if Barclays bank—not an institution which has always been admired on this side of the House —has pulled out of South Africa, we are entitled to be rather firm in our requirement that the Minister examines South African involvement with the NCB. The Minister has heard me on this subject before, because the board's structural involvement appeared to be rather doubtful, dubious and suspect a couple of years ago.

No doubt the Minister will talk about British Coal Enterprise. I, like my hon. Friends, will not criticise it. I am pleased that in Bolton road in Wath-on-Dearne in my constituency workshops have been established by British Coal Enterprise. It is a highly desirable development and the people involved in it have done an excellent job.

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

Nevertheless, the Minister must understand that the scale of job slaughter in my constituency and in those of my hon. Friends means that, welcome though the development is, it can be dwarfed by a single decision of the National Coal Board.

I was grateful for the fact that the Labour Government established a similar scheme for the steel industry in the late 1970s. Such bodies can make a contribution, but they cannot be used as an excuse for further slaughter of our economic prospects. The Minister and Conservative Members should understand that this is only a small country, and if we inflict desperate and severe wounds on some of our communities, it means that the whole body politic is not sound. The damage could have lasting consequences, and it sometimes is not especially economic.

The Government must recognise the logic of the achievement of which they boast. They must ensure that British Coal is able to secure markets. We believe that the industry has moved dramatically towards competitiveness, but the Government need to demonstrate that they cannot and will not require British Coal's competitiveness to be set against coal produced by abused or slave labour, or coal available from countries in need of currency. I trust that the Minister will make it clear that British Coal will not be expected to be competitive with both hands tied behind its back.

On 22 October 1979 — almost eight years ago — I tabled a parliamentary question on the future of coal technology. In reply, the then Under-Secretary of State said:

"Advanced coal technology developments are taking place in the fields of fluidised bed combustion, gasification to yield substitute natural gas and fuel gas, and in the production of oil from coal. In fluidised bed combustion, the NCB and private industry are pressing forward with the development of industrial boilers and furnaces." — [*Official Report*, 29 October 1979; Vol. 972, c. *381*.]

The Minister nods, but the fact remains that reference has already been made to the proposal that there should be two coal-fired power stations. Yet the development of fluidised bed combustion, which has taken place in Yorkshire under the auspices of the IEA, is being developed commercially in other countries, not here. That is once again a sad demonstration of Britain's inventiveness, with the failure of British political institutions to capitalise on that intellectual achievement.

It is not good enough for the Minister to allow the Central Electricity Generating Board, which was involved in the research, not to be prepared to embody that research in new coal-fired stations. I trust that the Minister will have the backing of his hon. Friends.

We also need to demonstrate that British Coal will remain a compassionate organisation. Unlike many industries, it has to recognise community responsibilities. I am sure that the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) appreciates that. Unfortunately, in the last year or two some very hard decisions have been taken. I know of one man—a workmate of my father—who, at the age of 78, had to give up his bungalow and move into an old people's home. There, at Winterwell house in my constituency, he was properly cared for. After a little time, at the age of 79, he became robust and healthy again, returned to normality and married.

On that man's marriage, the local authority said that he could not stay in the old people's home and gave him a flat. Before he entered Winterwell house he had received a concessionary coal allowance, and when he went into the flat he hoped to receive it again, but the NCB said no. I said to the NCB, "But surely you rejoice at the reactivation of this once long and faithful servant?" The NCB still said.

It appears that if the man had moved to a house that burned coal he could have been provided with coal, but as the council could only offer him a flat with gas heating he could not have an allowance. What the NCB was basically saying was that had he had a couple of tonnes of coal dumped on his doorstep first, he could have converted to a cash allowance. For the NCB to take that attitude to a faithful and long-serving employee—a man of 79, who was returned to the land of living; who, one might say, cocked a snook at the concept of mortality—was very insensitive.

That sort of inflexibility developed with Mr. MacGregor—this might offend one or two Conservative Members — when the principle of deception became almost acceptable. It developed with the strike — the result of a contrived connivance. Conservative Members cannot deny that, when Cortonwood was proposed for closure five weeks after a promise that it would have five years' more life. It was at that point that some of us became convinced that when the strike was over the NCB's first task would have to be to try to restore morale and establish co-operation. There are still grounds for deep suspicion. I do not criticise the present chairman, but some of the gentlemen with whom Mr. MacGregor surrounded himself have to learn that the MacGregor fashion will not persist.

I am deeply worried about safety. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford referred to the anxieties concerning my association. Although the Minister may claim that it is not a direct part of the Bill, it is a relevant aspect of the matter. I trust that the Minister, in his reply, will offer comments that satisfy those serious anxieties. I hope also that he will not be as partisan as the Secretary of State was, but will recognise that we should seek to take real steps to re-establish a happier atmosphere within the mining industry.

We must have reconciliation. The petty, partisan approach adopted by hon. Gentlemen opposite is not at all helpful. I know that they cannot resist the temptation to try to cling to their seats, but the wiser, more mature approach adopted by the hon. Member for Broxtowe will serve as a better model than that adopted by the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart). It is a model that should transcend narrow, short-term party political considerations. The Opposition do not criticise the Bill because of such considerations. The Opposition adopt this attitude because our areas have suffered quite enough. We cannot afford to support a Bill which would make matters even worse.

7.40 pm

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): I support the Bill. I welcome the giving of rights to the second largest mineworkers, union. It is wrong that the National Union of Mineworkers has had a monopoly in democratic rights.

I wish to speak particularly about opencast mining. Over the last few years, whereas opencast mining produced about 14 million tonnes or so per year, as a percentage of the total output it rose from 12 per cent. in 1978-79, to 13 per cent. in 1982-83, to 15 per cent. in 1983-84, and in

1984-85, the year of the strike, to 36 per cent. During 1985-86, opencast output has been 16 per cent. of total output.

We have heard a lot of talk about the activities of deep mining, yet we are in danger of forgetting opencast mining production. I should like to complain about the omission from the Bill of any movement towards privatisation and deregulation. The Opposition's amendment states that the Bill

"sets the scene for privatisation of the industry".

I only wish that it did. We should go further.

I am the parliamentary consultant for two opencast mining contractors. We should allow them more scope to make their expertise and techniques available to the overall interests of the consumer in the country. For example, mainly a civil engineering operation takes place. Coal is extracted from seams as thin as a few inches—perhaps up to a few feet. This procedure is carried out in strong competition with deep mining methods. These firms have expertise in exploration and in bidding for areas of mining deposits around the country that could make the operation more efficient.

I do not condemn or criticise the activities of the opencast mining executive within British Coal. It has some first-class officers, particularly George Lindley, who is in charge of the operation. We should allow private firms to have more scope to extract coal. We tend to treat private mines—drift mines—as the poor relation, as a small production unit, yet coal is to be gained, particularly where old deep mining activities have ceased. Through privatisation and profit motivation, which have been criticised by Labour Members, a lot more coal would be won in the interests of the consumer and at cheap prices.

Therefore, the Bill is deficient. I hope that, in the next few years, we shall see more steps taken by the Conservative Government—perhaps in their next phase of office—towards privatisation and deregulation. At the moment, the monopolies held by British Coal and the largely unionised work force are too great. Opencast mines and private mines, which have a large union membership, have something to show.

I hope that the Minister will remember the interests of opencast mining and will recognise that we could do something in future to make it more effective and more cost efficient in terms of production and the interests of consumers. It will also stop the increasing importation of coal. That will be in the interests of the country.

7.46 pm

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): I do not support the Bill. The financial aspects of it have not been thought out properly. The Bill does not contain the detail that one should have thought the Government would desire. We do not dispute the fact that there is no substitute for efficiency. I accept that. There is a danger that, if we cut the industry too much, we will be in financial difficulty. The Bill may aim to do that. The result would be a contradiction, as has been said by Conservative Members. It is a possibility.

Clause 2 of the Bill provides £200 million for deficit grants. That sounds like a lot of money. In 1984-85, the amount was £2·25 billion. When we examine the figures in that light, we will see that the amount provided is low.

Mr. David Hunt: Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that, in 1985-86, the loss was £50 million?

Mr. Welsh: I accept that. It was a mistake to drop it to £50 million. The money was needed to make the industry efficient and enable it to stand on its own two feet, as the Minister desires.

Clause 3 mentions an amount of £750 million. Basically, that money is provided to close pits and to cause miners to be unemployed. The aim is not only to close pits but to reduce production. That will be one of the difficulties for the Government.

One or two of my hon. Friends have said that, if the result of the Bill were to reduce production to about 90 million tonnes, the price of coal would increase. The Government will not reduce the price of coal unless they write off all the debts of the pits that they close. That is the only way in which it can be done. If the Government do not do that, unit costs will increase, and that will mean an increase in the cost of coal. An increase in productivity and a decrease in production will lead to a loss. Fewer units will have to carry a larger industrial debt. This is now a capital intensive industry. The wage bill does not represent a great deal, but the level of capital investment represents a terrific amount.

Demand for coal might be for 90 million tonnes. If supply is brought down to that level and the authorities say that they will supply only that amount, the coal industry and the country will be in a difficult position. If there is no surplus capacity, supply cannot be increased. There is really only one shaft—all the shafts in the country put together. If that shaft is closed, the capacity to produce is lost, and the supplies needed will not be available. That is the great difficulty into which we will run.

One cannot just open a pit. It is not like opening a factory. It takes between 10 and 15 years to get a pit into production. Even in the 1930s, when rotten coal owners were running the industry and the industry was much rougher than it is now, the mine owners always kept excess capacity. In my village of Bullcroft the people once worked only three days a week. There was surplus capacity then. I started work in 1939. We were glad, when the war came, that we had the surplus capacity to use to win the war. It was important that we should satisfy the demand.

If supply is reduced to the level at which it just satisfies present demand, we shall not be able to increase supply later. It is important always to ensure that we can increase demand at a given time, and that means carrying surplus capacity. In the meantime, we must fight for overseas trade and get more people to buy our coal. It is better to do that than to be caught short.

Clause 3 will close pits, destroy communities and increase unemployment in mining areas. My pit, Bullcroft, has closed. The workshop at which my brother was secretary has closed also—perhaps because he was involved! Four hundred jobs have been lost. We have nothing to work on. We now have British Coal Enterprise. To be fair, about nine people work in its office.

This legislation will force job losses on other businesses. It is doing something else that is frightening. If the demand for coal increases and we cannot meet that demand, we shall have to import coal, thereby exporting miners' jobs. That is terribly depressing. The Government have thought about the industry in the short term rather than the long term.

I think that enough has been said about the review procedure, so I shall be brief. The Secretary of State said that the National Coal Board would give full weight to the

[Mr. Welsh]

findings of the review bodies. When the review bodies decided that pits should be closed, the NCB gave "full weight" to that decision, but when they decided that pits should be kept open, the NCB closed them. The NCB has treated with contempt the chairmen of the review bodies. The NCB set up the review bodies, asked them to make recommendations and then completely ignored them. The Bill will make matters worse. Not only will "full weight" not be given, but the findings will be weightless.

Under this legislation, the Government are saying, "Here is £750 million, but you must close pits and sack men." In effect, the Bill instructs the National Coal Board to sack men. The Government are saying that the board can have the money only if it cuts down on the number of workers. In other words, it can have the money only if unemployment is created in mining areas.

There are some omissions from the Bill. The Government might say, "This is the National Coal Board's doing. It is not to do with us." But they say nothing about the miners who were sacked. I should have thought that a compassionate Government would include a provision whereby the board would consider individual cases and, if the board found that everything was all right, miners would get their jobs.

It is embarrassing that the Bill is carrying on the strike. We are trying to smooth everything to make the industry efficient and have forgotten about the strike, yet the Government are carrying it on.

Mr. Ottoway: If the hon. Gentleman wants to extend this hand of harmony across the divide between the two unions, is he saying that he supports the proposal in the Bill to allow the Union of Democratic Mineworkers participation rights?

Mr. Welsh: I am not saying that. I am being fair. I am talking about other clauses. I do not think that Acts of Parliament help. If I fell out with my wife and an Act of Parliament said that she had to come back to me, she would just throw it away. People must become involved and talk about the issues. That is not done with Acts of Parliament. The only good thing is that, within the next 12 months, we shall be in government. We shall introduce a coal Bill which is good for the industry, the miners and the nation. The nation deserves a better coal Bill.

7.57 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I associate myself with the tributes paid to the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon). His brand of integrity will be sorely missed in this place.

I believe that the public at large will be surprised that the present law does not give all employee organisations fair participation in the management of trusts, welfare organisations and superannuation schemes. Therefore, the Government are right to correct an omission that is unacceptable in a democratic society.

It must have come as a surprise to the present leadership of the main union to find that democracy is not the overbearing power of a majority to do just as it wishes; nor does it allow a minority to exercise unreasoned restraint on the legitimate aims of a majority. Democracy is a difficult and delicate balance. It must provide for the rights of minority views and, in this case, a substantial minority. Clearly, the present NUM leadership does not subscribe to the sense of balance or democracy as we understand it. Therefore, I believe that the Government are morally bound to ensure the protection of a reasoned and reasonable minority in the provisions of this Bill. Of course, it is convenient if an employer does not have to negotiate with a multiplicity of unions. The problems of leapfrogging in wage negotiations or blocking tactics in the area of welfare and pensions are well documented. If the circumstances do not exist for a single union—they no longer exist in the mining industry—there must be a provision to deal fairly and justly with the new situation.

In the debate on the Gracious Speech, the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) expressed pride in his family heritage in the coal industry. I do not believe that he did any service to the industry now or for the future to describe decent, law-abiding citizens as scabs. A total of 30,000 decent families in Nottinghamshire who exercised their democratic right to vote and who were denied the proper fruits of that vote were not acting as scabs. That label is an affront to the basic dignity of all those families. Nothing could underline more the Labour party's rejection of the rule of law and the rights of people within a democracy. Its values are those of a totalitarian, state unionised society which would be rejected by the overwhelming majority of our people.

I welcome most warmly clauses 5 to 8 dealing with representative participation. That the Charity Commissioners can respond to the just submission from employee groups otherwise excluded is patently fair. Equally, the power granted to the Secretary of State to enable full participation in a relevant social welfare body surprises only by its absence from the industry now. Perhaps most important is the right under clause 7 to allow the provision for participation in the superannuation scheme.

The Labour party's general attitude to pension funds needs a higher profile than hitherto. One would expect that funds should be managed with the prime objective of providing the pension and other benefits to which the contributing employee rightly feels entitled. That entitlement may not be carved in the proverbial tablets of stone, but it should not be hostage to the amateur chicanery of the exponents of social engineering and so-called good works.

Those may well be right and proper subjects for political debate and decision in the House. However, they are not matters that should deter fund managers from acting in the best and absolute interest of the beneficiaries, be they employees or their surviving spouses.

It is appropriate to comment on the years ahead. It seems plain and simple common sense to have attainable targets for this industry, just as for any other. To aim to break even and reach commercial viability by 1990 is neither pie in the sky nor an objective that should be viewed in fear. The absence of targets that are hard to achieve, but genuinely achievable none the less, is a recipe for sloppy management and sloppy working practices that ultimately draw on national resources that are better used and in great demand elsewhere in our economy. There surely must be greater pride in working for a corporation that makes a margin of profit, that can invest without a begging bowl and avoids the constant conflict of interest when in this place we have to decide between competing claims on the national purse.

Yesterday, I asked a question of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. I was content with his

answer and accept that money is not a brake on the work of the enterprise company. However, I want to underline a public concern. During the terrible strike there was little sympathy for the anti-democratic and totally alien behaviour of the bully boys directed and encouraged by the NUM leadership. I believe that there was considerable sympathy for the communities which were clearly threatened by the changes which most, in their heart of hearts, knew were inevitable and necessary.

The question what the Government would do for those people was a commonly expressed concern by those outside the mining areas and was a nagging pull on those who were in good long-life areas facing charges, in my view unfairly made, of "You're all right, Jack." I hope that British Coal Enterprise maintains a high and positive profile. I believe that the Secretary of State was absolutely right to pour scorn on a Labour party that did very little in that area when it had charge of the process of change. That process of change will always exist in an extractive industry.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State in June of this year made it clear that we would not let down a democratic trade union in a fight for fair representation. The treatment of Nottinghamshire miners and others of like views has been nothing short of shameful—by the NUM, the TUC and especially the Labour party. The Labour party is in no way deserving of the support many of those lifelong members still wish to give. The party affiliations of those Nottinghamshire men is not our concern. Our concern is that they receive the justice from this place to which they are rightly entitled. I use the words of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary in June that it would be outrageous and an affront to natural justice if we did not deliver this legislation on their behalf.

8.7 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): We are coming to the end of a long debate. As usual in mining debates, it has been interesting and many important points have been raised. Coal legislation is normally given a three-hour debate late at night. When we have a full day in prime time it shows the importance attached to this Bill by the Government and the Opposition.

The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) gave us a text book talk on the mining industry and the problems it has faced. In three quarters of his speech he justified why we should vote against the Bill. Whether he knew it or not, he clearly showed what goes through the minds of the people in the mining communities when they see this Bill.

I am a member of the British Association of Colliery Management. I can tell the Minister that most members of that organisation will be voting Labour next time. They realise that this Bill puts their jobs and their industry on the block along with everything for which they have worked. That is not hearsay but something that has been fed to me and I have no reason to disbelieve it.

The hon. Member for Amber Valley also criticised the situation as he finds it. He, above any hon. Member, should realise what happens to an industry when one encourages foreign imports.

The hon. Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover) spoke about the privatisation of opencast mining. There is no doubt that if privatisaton comes about, opencasting will be the first on the scene. I can say to the Minister and the hon. Member for Chorley that if they want opencasting, by all means let them go ahead. However, let it be on their patch. We do not want it on ours and we shall certainly not have it. Opencasting by its very nature is found in mining areas. We have had the problem of colliery closures for many years. In order to attract industry to those areas —believe me, we welcome British Coal Enterprise and wish more would happen—we shall have to create a fresh environment. We certainly do not want to see the opencast mining industry coming to an area in which we are trying to build a new environment that will attract industry.

The Secretary of State spoke about productivity. We agree that productivity has increased, but the right hon. Gentleman spoke not about bulk productivity but about output per man shift. There are two ways in which that increase in productivity can be achieved: by increasing the rate of output or by reducing manpower while maintaining the same level of output. Of course, there has been a decrease in manpower as well as in the number of collieries, so there has been an increase in output per man shift.

Investment did not just start in 1979, when the Conservative party came to power. Before I became a Member of Parliament I worked with the NCB, planning investment. Thus, in the Barnsley and south Yorkshire area, we were planning the investment that can now be seen. All credit to the Government for carrying on with the plans laid then, but hon. Members should not go away with the idea that only the Conservative Government invest in industry. The Labour Government invested heavily in the coal industry. After the next election, a Labour Government will continue the investment that this Government have made. However, a Labour Government will not run the industry down but will build it up.

It is true that the Labour Government had a closure policy, but after nationalisation we had a legacy of small, unproductive collieries that should have been closed years earlier. On nationalisation, the mineworkers immediately accepted that collieries should close, because they wanted to get rid of the problem. The industry has always had to face the problem of colliery closures, being an extractive industry. I can remember, however, when coal was at a premium, and could not be got at any price. It was wanted worldwide. Consequently, it annoys me when Conservative Members say that industry does not owe the NCB anything. In those days, industry owed the NCB and the miners everything, because it lived on the backs of miners.

During the era of Sir Alf Robens, people came round and patted us on the head, saying "Be good lads. I know you could earn a lot more, but we've got to look after this country's industry, so you can only have sixpence." That sixpence was accepted because the interests of the country and of industry lay at the heart of the miners' policy.

I entered the industry in 1945, and in my very first week I had a run in with the under-manager. At the time, I did not know that he was the under-manager, and I only found out when I went home for my dinner. My father and I sat down for dinner, and he said, "I understand you've had a run in with Mr. Naylor." I said, "Sorry, Dad, I don't know him." He said, "Well, you remember a man with one eye, a limp and a flat cap?" I said, "Yes. He hit me." My father said, "That's the under-manager. You'll eat your dinner and walk down to the pit and apologise."

My father told me to do that for two reasons: first, he thought it right and proper that I should apologise;

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secondly and more importantly, he was frightened of losing his job if I did not do so. The Bill will take us back to those policies. I first went down the pit in 1945. I admit that it was a good pit. It belonged to Earl FitzWilliam, and he looked after it. He looked after the men who worked in it, but he looked after his pit ponies much better. Do the Government want to return to that era?

It was a proud day for all who worked in the colliery in 1947 when the blue flag was unfurled at the top of the winding tower and a plaque was unveiled that read, "For the people by the people." We got the oldest man in the pit, who was 78 years old, to go up the tower and unfurl the flag, and he then rode down the yard on a pit pony. That is what the industry was like then. He had to work until that age, because there was nothing for him once he stopped working. Provision for retired miners, and so on, has come only since nationalisation.

The Secretary of State now wants the NCB to change the proud name that it has born since 1947 to the British Coal Corporation, but that will not alter the product. For the right hon. Gentleman to say at the Despatch Box that that is how to sell coal is ridiculous. If coal does not sell, the marketing manager has to be sacked. That is how coal is sold, and not by altering the name. Consequently, we have good reason to be suspicious. The only conclusion to be drawn is that we are seeing the beginning of the privatisation of the NCB and the coal industry.

The Secretary of State and the Government want to haul down the blue flag and to cover up the plaque. They want to prepare for the Tory dream—the privatisation of the coal industry and the demise of the NUM. That is what they are really after. But the NCB came about because the private owners were incapable of running the industry on a national basis that could provide the material and fuel needed. They were unable to provide the necessary investment that would put the industry into its present condition. It is only because of nationalisation that we have a coal industry today.

Do the Secretary of State and the Government want to take us back to the pre-nationalisation era, to give the industry back to the private sector on a plate after all that investment and work? It would seem so. The huge capital investment needed to modernise a clapped out industry into one that can take on any coal industry in the world is apparently to be passed over to the private sector, but the NCB is a producer not only of coal but of mining machinery and ideas. It has passed over to industry all its information on research and development. For example, the NCB's research and development on hydraulic supports has been used by the aircraft industry. Mining machinery, along with the expertise of our mining engineers has been exported. Is all that to be thrown away? Apparently so.

The industry has lost 100,000 men since 1979 as it has been run down. We estimate that the Bill will involve closing about 20 collieries, which will lead to the loss of 20,000 or 30,000 men, or more. I accept that the redundancy scheme is one of the most generous devised, and that many of my constituents will live 20 years longer than if they had worked until they were 65. My father died very largely as a result of pneumoconiosis. If that redundancy scheme had existed then, he might have lived for many more years. However that was not to be. Now, however, the carrot is finished. It was dangled only to get the industry back on its feet and to draw volunteers. As a result, we are looking at compulsory redundancies, with the NCB offering the very minimum.

The alternative to coal is nuclear power. Today I went to the nuclear symposium, which was very good. A map showed the power stations that the electricity generating industry wishes to introduce as the new generation of power stations. That is quite right, because if we do not start soon, the position will be serious. However, they want to site all the coal-fired power stations on the coast. They are there not for the sake of the environment, or so that people can look over the railings to watch the sea coming in, but to make the importation of coal more efficient.

Let us consider what has happened over the several years during which coal has been imported. I shall use the Minister's figures. In 1979, we imported 4 million tonnes of coal. In 1986, that figure is 12·3 million tonnes. Coal is coming to this country from every coal-producing country in the world, including South Africa. That is what is happening to the coal industry and those are the contingency measures that the Government are considering.

I have asked the Minister to consider the problem of concessionary coal and I hope that he has not forgotton it. It involves not only his Department, but the Department of the Environment. I refer to the pensioners, widows and retired miners who, because they are disabled and unable to deal with solid fuel, receive cash in lieu. However, somebody has decided that because they receive cash in lieu, their housing benefit rebate must be reduced by between £3 and £4 a week. We had a debate the other day about keeping people warm in the winter. What sort of person can take £4 a week from those people because they receive cash in lieu? I should like the Minister to look into that.

In conclusion, it is time that we had an energy policy, and it is time that we looked at the power station problem, because it is serious. It is time that we put down plans or gave permission to build two coal-fired power stations immediately, not next year. Let us look forward to the next 100 years, not the next 20 or 30. We should look forward so that industry knows exactly what is planned and so that we know exactly what we shall generate, what we are likely to need and where it will come from. In that way, we can satisy all requirements of an energy policy.

8.22 pm

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I have listened to the debate and wonder why the Opposition oppose the Bill to the extent that they do.

The first clause changes the name of the National Coal Board to British Coal. The industry has been through a natural evolution and is now successful and paying its way. It has received massive investment and now has high productivity. I believe that it is the highest ever. High productivity is not achieved with low morale. High productivity shows the high morale of the industry. When one considers all those aspects it is clear that change is needed.

There will be pride in the new name of British Coal because it presents a new public face for a modern industry. I have not heard any substantial speech from Opposition Members that opposes that change of name. Therefore, it cannot be the change of name to which the Opposition object.

The next three clauses deal with the financial aspects of the Coal Board. We had hoped that the Coal Board would be financially independent, but that is not the case. Further deficit grants of about £300 million will be required. When I entered the House three years ago we had a debate on the deficit grants — we have had such debates subsequently — and I remember that £900 million was required to make up the deficit. I supported that grant then—as I support it now—because I could see that the Government believed in the future of the coal industry and wanted to put money into it to secure its future. We wanted the investment. I proudly support the Bill, parts of which require and provide for further grants, because I still support the coal industry.

I should like to know whether the Labour party opposes the Bill because it does not support the coal industry. Does it not want grants to provide for the deficit? That cannot be the case. What is the Labour party's real reason for its opposition? The reason is, of course, to be found in clauses 5 to 8 about which there has been a deafening silence.

The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) mentioned the umbilical cord that connects the Labour party with the NUM—about which we dare not speak. That provides a great hint as to the parliamentary Labour party's attitude and opposition to the Bill.

I come from an area where many pits have run out of reserves. The Labour party's amendment makes no mention of British Coal Enterprise, from which body north-west Leicestershire has received valuable help with injections of finance and the advice. Many former miners now have their own businesses and many miners who were made redundant, or who took redundancy, have jobs in businesses in north-west Leicestershire which owe their foundation to British Coal Enterprise. Those jobs that were created with the help of British Coal Enterprise are still founded on coal board funding.

When it came to doing something about areas where the mines were closing, my party did something substantial. We never whinged or wrung our hands over it; we went in positively with proposals of financial support. The Opposition's amendment does not even mention that.

The real basis of their opposition is, as I have said, to be found in clauses 5 to 8. I attempted to ask the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) when he opened the debate for the Opposition, whether he was "frit" to deal with clauses 5 to 8. The right hon. Gentleman said that he dealt with them. He devoted 30 seconds out of a 20-minute speech to those four clauses. What an outstanding slap in the face for the miners of Leicestershire and south Derbyshire who are members of the UDM.

It is clear that the Labour party does not care about the many miners who are members of the UDM. It is clear from the amount of time that the right hon. Gentleman gave to that in his speech that the Labour party is ignoring those miners and does not care about their democratic rights. The Labour party does not want members of the UDM to be represented on bodies to which they have subscribed.

The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) spoke briefly about the support that he had from the parliamentary Labour party, but he was speaking alone. The parliamentary Labour party might have been giving him support in the House, but the Labour party outside is giving no support to anyone who supports the UDM. The Labour party in the constituencies is determined that any Member who supports the UDM should be dealt with in the same way as the hon. Gentleman and should lose his seat. The real reason why the parliamentary Labour party is opposing the Bill is that it is afraid. Its members are frightened for their jobs. */Laughter./* There can be no other substantial reason why they should do so.

Hon. Members may laugh, but when the miners of north-west Leicestershire realise that this vital Bill, which deals with their well-being and their future, with the money that they have invested and with their welfare, was dealt with in 30 seconds of pure opposition by the right hon. Member for Salford, East, they will not like the Labour party. I shall have the right hon. Gentleman's speech printed and delivered to every working miner in my constituency. I want them to read the way in which they are being treated by the Labour party. I want them to understand that they have no future with the Labour party which is determined that the UDM should not succeed.

Why should not the UDM succeed? After all, surely the Labour party believes that people should be free to form and participate in unions. Members of the UDM have done nothing more than that. They have freely come together to form their own union. Why should they be so opposed? It is because of the close relationship between the Labour party and the NUM—the umbilical cord, as it has been referred to. That is why the Labour party hates the UDM. Come election time, I want its members to know that.

There is no reference in the amendment to clauses 5 to 8 or to the representation on the various bodies by the NUM. For the Labour party, the UDM is officially dead. All that we have heard from Labour Members are speeches which look backwards to the days of inefficiency. They can ask only for a reinstatement of the miners who lost their jobs because they abused and intimidated the working miners who defied Mr. Scargill's illegal strike.

I am sure that Labour Members cannot disagree that the strike was illegal. It had no official backing. There was no ballot. Those people who refused to participate in its illegality were abused and intimidated and now the Labour party can only table an amendment asking for the reinstatement of those people. In the face of the Bill, that is a hollow and superficial approach.

The right hon. Member for Salford, East has acted as Mr. Scargill's lapdog. The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) is to reply to the debate and will no doubt lick Mr. Scargill's boots. The Leader of the Opposition lets Mr. Arthur Scargill sleep on his lap. Only the right hon. Member for Mansfield had the courage to refuse to allow Mr. Scargill to piddle on him. Every Opposition Member is letting Mr. Scargill water upon them. They have allowed themselves to be Mr. Scargill's lapdogs and that is the reason for the opposition to the Bill.

I support the Bill. Anyone who opposes it is opposing the mining industry — nothing less than that. I shall make sure that the miners of the north-west Leicestershire know that the Labour party opposes the mining industry.

8.36 pm

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): I oppose the Bill this evening. First, I must declare an interest in that that I am president of the miners' parliamentary group and a member of the national executive of the NUM, and from time to time I am the Labour party's Whip on energy matters. I can say, without fear of contradiction, that

[Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe]

many of those who have participated in the debate this evening have done so because they have an expert knowledge of the organisations that are represented within Britain's mining industry. Many of them have good, loyal, efficient, long years of service based on sincerity and a determination for that great industry to succeed.

First, I am opposed to the financial provisions of the Bill even though the Labour party will not vote against the money resolution. As an old Lancastrian would say, "If they offer you a job or two instead of a quid, take it and come back again."

Today the Secretary of State boasted that the provisions of the Bill were so generous that in return miners would want to show their loyalty and commitment to the industry. But there is a conflict in that. Let me remind the House of some of the things that he said. As a Whip on energy matters, I have known six Secretaries of State for Energy and seven shadow spokesmen and I have never known such political opportunism or such a despicable or disreputable speech by a Secretary of State as we heard today.

The Bill allegedly contains new financial provisions for the industry. The Secretary of State said that those financial provisions are the most positive to have been put before the House for many years. I remind him that in July 1968 a Labour Government introduced the redundancy payments scheme for miners. That Administration was the architect of the Bill. That Labour Government understood that the industry was contracting and that market demand was diminishing rapidly. At that stage Belgian, German and French pits were closing and there was contraction generally in western Europe.

We then heard that there should be unity in the industry, but the Secretary of State demeaned the standard of debate despicably by making every comment that he could to re-open the wounds which were inflicted in the trauma of the strike that many of us endured or witnessed not so long ago. The right hon. Gentleman boasts that the coal industry is now more viable than previously and that there is higher morale within it. In any event, those were the sort of words used by the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby). But at the same time the Secretary of State is asking miners to accept a 30 per cent. reduction in redundancy payments from March, which will be 12 weeks from Christmas, when the notices will be given. Another 28,000 miners will be wondering about their future in the industry.

The chairman of the National Coal Board is now saying, basically, that he is trimming off the fat for the privatisation of the mining industry within four years. We have witnessed the exodus of 50,000 miners from the industry, and they will probably be followed by another 30,000. They have left the industry basically because of depression, dejection and demoralisation. They see not a degree of security in their future within it.

This is happening under a Government who rule by confrontation. The Government have never intended at any stage to intervene in their role as a conciliator. That was not their intention during the strike and it has not been their intention since. They see fit, however, to accuse the Trades Union Congress and the Labour party of non-intervention, the very policy that the Government advocated throughout the strike. There has been no mention today of the boasting and bragging of MacGregor, who claimed that he and the Prime Minister, in collusion, set up the strike against Scargill. No evidence has been forthcoming about that.

Can a miner see security in an industry which is contracting and in which financial incentives are being reduced? As I have said, redundancy payments are to be reduced by one third. Miners are being told that in future only higher investment pits will have a stake in the industry. The Government say that there is no planned energy policy and that market forces will rule the roost. That is their philosophy and that is well known. It is well known also that the Bill paves the way for a further 40,000 miners to leave the industry. We see Kent, Scotland, Lancashire, Durham and Northumberland going to the wall. Only two thirds of the Yorkshire pits remain open, with two thirds in Nottinghamshire and some in the east midlands. What is the planning for our great mining industry?

Against that background, the Government talk about morale in the industry, ask why the men have left and speak about the productivity targets that are being achieved. I accept that there is a need for reconciliation. Indeed, there must be reconciliation for the sake of the future of every British miner. The leadership of one union or another is irrelevant now, and my colleagues and I are interested in the future of the British miner and the British mining industry.

I know many members of the national executive of the National Union of Mineworkers and I know that there is no demand for capitulation prior to reconciliation. That is not the way forwards. If there are two wrongs, the result will not be a right; there must be a meeting of the parties. There are those who say that the NUM's national executive is not prepared to take any initiative, and that that attitude is shared by the TUC and the Labour party, but I propose to read a resolution calling for unity that was moved by the Scottish area of the NUM.

Mick McGahey is not of my political disposition and I do not look towards the regime or system that he would support, but I pay tribute to him. He is the vice-president of the NUM and he has displayed great statesmanship since the strike in seeking reconciliation. There has been no intimidation and no threats. Let us further the initiative that he has taken, which is demonstrated by the Scottish area's resolution.

The resolution instructed the national executive

"to ensure that national unity is achieved with the highest priority at the earliest possible moment by calling on the TUC and the Labour Party to make themselves available in assisting"—

this does not mean intervention—

"in the re-unification of British Mining Unionism".

That flies in the face of the accusations and allegations that have been made this evening. I reiterate that leadership of the miners is irrelevant now.

Many miners are still suffering from the problems and trauma that accumulated during a period of strife. Debts piled up and mortgages and homes became at risk. The tragic scene that ensued is now a period in our history and it would be well to forget it and place it behind us. That is a view that is taken by many of my colleagues. If the people and the organisations can get together, I am sure that we can bring unity back into the coalfields and offer stability to the industry.

That leads me to political objectives. Every miner needs a job, and to have a job he needs a mining area. If a miner

is to have a mining area as we knew it, he needs a planned energy policy. If he is to have a planned energy policy, he needs a Labour Government. No miner, regardless of where he stands, has a right to betray his forefathers, who pledged themselves to oppose everything that this reactionary Tory Government have done over the past seven years. Regardless of inter-union disputes, no miner has any right to turn his back on the Labour party, the only party that can deliver for him security for the future, a viable industry with democracy within it and consultation before decision. It can do that by ensuring that a Labour Government are returned at the next general election who will bring that about and help the poor, the dejected, the disabled and the sick. That will be the task of the next Labour Government, and I ask every miner to ensure, regardless of the circumstances, that a Labour Government have the opportunity to do that which I have outlined.

8.48 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I did not agree with the conclusion of the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe), but I appreciated the spirit of reconciliation to which the rest of his speech was directed and the spirited way in which he spoke. As someone whose family has been involved in mining for many years and who grew up in coal mining communities in south Wales, I appreciate the strength of feeling of Labour Members when they speak about an industry in which they and their families have also spent lifetimes. I am pleased to hear expressed the spirit of reconciliation which seems to pervade the Labour party, but I wish that Labour Members would not be so reactionary and backward-looking in their speeches.

As always in debates of this sort, we have heard a great deal of what is ancient history about the coal industry. Since being a Member of this place I have spoken in virtually every coal debate, and on each occasion I have heard about the Sankey Commission in 1919, the circumstances that prevailed in the 1930s and the position before nationalisation. All that is getting on for 50 years ago, or more.

Whatever the faults that characterised the industry in the past, we cannot base our prophecies on events which took place before the lifetime of many hon. Members. I prefer to look forward to the future of the coal industry because I believe that it is secure. It can expand again, if we build on the Government's efforts of recent years to make it a profitable, commercial industry which can sustain itself, instead of having to depend on the generosity of taxpayers and the annual proffering of the begging bowl.

The productivity figures announced yesterday by my hon. Friend the Minister show that man-shift output has increased to 3·5 tonnes. That is a 50 per cent. increase on the figures before the strike and gives us great confidence in the future of the coal industry. We can reverse the decline that has affected the industry during the past 40 years.

In terms of world coal consumption, in 1964 40 per cent. of energy was produced through coal; in 1974 the figure had fallen to 28 per cent.; but in 1984 it had risen to 30 per cent. That has not been the history of energy consumption in the United Kingdom. In 1973, 38 per cent. of our energy was produced by coal, but by 1983 that had fallen to 35 per cent. Therefore, we are running against the trends in world energy consumption.

The reason is that, despite the most favourable competitive climate for coal seen for generations as a result of the Arab oil shocks in the early 1970s, we have completely failed to capitalise on the opportunities which were there to be grasped. Despite governmental diktats to the CEGB that it had to buy a larger proportion of fuel from the National Coal Board than it would have liked; despite the limits on imports, a tax on fuel oil and all the money that we rightly spend on conversion grants; and despite the investment coupled with deficit grants which are now over £10,000 million for each decade, the coal industry is still in decline. That is a shame, but it can be reversed.

We have arrived at the most extraordinary position whereby not only are consumers and taxpayers not satisfied because they have to buy coal at too high a price, which in turn means that the costs of production of other industries are artificially high, but producers, whom we all represent, are not satisfied. Like the common agricultural policy, the ills of the coal industry arise from political interference with the market, restrictions on competition, and the inherent failures of monopoly.

I wish that I could accept the pessimism of Opposition Members, which would be transmuted into optimism for me, and think that the Bill presaged the privatisation or liberalisation of the coal industry. Regrettably, that is not the Government's intention. I wish it were. *[Interruption.]* Privatisation would secure the future of the coal industry. The private sector of the coal industry is well constructed. I declare an interest as a consultant to the National Association of Licensed Opencast Operators. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members have made great play of the situation that existed in the coal industry before nationalisation. I would be the first to admit that at that date the coal industry was a shambles and that many companies and coal owners were a disgrace to the human race. No one wants to return to that.

Although the private sector is only small, the illusions about it that Opposition Members always peddle will be destroyed. There is plenty of scope to extend it, even without touching the assets of the NCB, soon to be transmuted into British Coal. I am surprised that there is no mention of what the Monopolies and Mergers Commission proposed in its report on the NCB in 1983. Paragraph 11.95 states that the private sector of the coal industry

"provides a small but valuable element of competition to and comparison with the operations of the Opencast Executive and should be encouraged as a means of increasing the efficiency of the NCB operation. Moreover, the techniques used in opencast operations have developed considerably since the present statutory limit on the operations of the licensed operators was fixed in 1958. We recommend therefore that this should be increased"—

from the 25,000 tonnes at which it was statutorily fixed in 1958—

"to a new limit of 100,000 tonnes, and that there should be provision for appeal by the operator to the Secretary of State if the Executive refused to grant a licence for a site containing a quantity of coal within the statutory limit."

There is a desire within the private sector to expand production and employment opportunities and to provide the coal, which would replace imports, for the CEGB. That would prove a net benefit for all the coalfield communities in which small opencast sites are situated. Therefore, I am disappointed that there is no move in that direction in the Bill. It could only be to the benefit of the industry, and certainly to the benefit of the NCB, to have

[Mr. Neil Hamilton]

that competition and comparison and to expand over the years. That would make but a small inroad into the monopoly of the National Coal Board, to the benefit of consumers and taxpayers.

One further point concerns the agreement recently reached on the supply of coal from the board to the CEGB. As my hon. Friend the Minister will be aware, the new supply agreement is split into three tranches. The first 50 million tonnes of coal will be sold at £47 a tonne, the next 10 million tonnes will be sold at £34 a tonne and the next 12 million tonnes will be sold at £30 a tonne. Nobody can object to the price of the marginal units being sold at a lower price than the earlier ones, because that is a sensible commercial arrangement. However, it is not sensible for the private sector to have to sell all its coal, not at an average cost as the coal board does, but on the basis of the third tranche of £30 a tonne.

The average price per gigajoule of NCB coal is 171p, whereas the average price of private sector coal will be 133p. That will ruin the private sector and runs contrary to the direction in which the Government should be moving and contrary to the interests of more than merely the private sector. The private sector is not being given any monopoly privilege. It makes its profits after it has paid a £16 a tonne royalty to the NCB. That is much higher than the average profit that the opencast executive makes on its contracted-out mining. Therefore, we are not giving anything other than opportunity to the private sector. We are certainly not giving it monopoly profits and rights as we do to the board, if we expand that sector. That is in the interests of the whole country, and I wish that the Bill went some way towards it.

I trust that the Minister, who I am sure has been listening carefully to what I have said, will be able to give me some hope that either in Committee or on the next occasion when a similar Bill is introduced the Government will introduce the necessary amendments. I look forward to the future of the coal industry with a confidence that I wish Opposition Members could share, because I believe that the Government are committed to an expanding coal industry that produces cheap energy for the country and cheap energy for British industry so that it can provide the jobs that we sorely need.

8.59 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) accused Oppostion Members of indulging in ancient history. For the first time since I have been a Member of Parliament, most Opposition Members will be voting against a Bill such as this, not because of ancient history, but because of the history of the last three years, during which time all this money has been poured into the coalfields by the Government.

In the last three years deficit grants have been written off and money has been poured into redundancy payments, yet from listening to Conservative Members one would think that in the coalfield areas of Britain the Government had lined the streets with gold. In effect, they have made unemployment worse than perhaps at any other time in our history. More important, they have caused youth unemployment to become critical. They have stopped recruitment into coal mining, as a result of which young people are no longer taken on for training. In my opinion, this has sounded the death knell for the British coal mining industry as we have known it over the past few decades.

I do not want to live in the past, and neither does any other Opposition Member, but we must recognise the realities of what the Government have persistently done over the last three years by the introduction of coal Bills that have given all this money to the industry. Until tonight we have never voted against the Second Reading of such a Bill because of the implications of it.

Clause 3 is one of the main provisions for financing the industry. One of its main proposals is for the redeployment and reduction of the work force in the industry, but if skilled and experienced people continue to leave the industry, especially at the same rate as over the last four years, the industry will be unable to respond to any upswing in the event of an urgent demand for coal, and that is the direct result of the way in which the Government have financed the industry.

If the nation needs more coal and it cannot be obtained by improved profitability at existing collieries, the only alternatives will be to employ more miners — which clause 3 does not propose—or to buy more imports. I have a feeling that clause 3 will prevent British Coal from taking up the opportunity to expand, certainly in the short term.

I nearly took my handkerchief from my pocket when I heard Conservative Members saying how they were concerned about the welfare of the coal mining industry, although I notice that not many of them have stayed for the conclusion of the debate. The hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) nearly had me crying when he referred to the social welfare provisions of clause 3, and I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is not now present to hear my remarks. I would have believed the hon. Gentleman more had he talked about the urgent need for a social welfare organisation in the new Selby coalfield. The Yorkshire NUM has been asking for such an organisation for years, and it is still waiting to obtain it, even though it is vital for our coalfield communities. I do not oppose the provisions of clause 3 relating to British Coal Enterprise, but I only wish that those provisions could create the jobs that some hon. Members have led people to believe.

The clause provides for grants towards the retraining of redundant mine workers. I understand that at present the retraining scheme has received a funding from the Government of £10 million. That scheme lasts for eight weeks, and anyone who attends loses his unemployment benefit. It cannot be compared with similar in-house training that has been undertaken by the British Steel Corporation in south Yorkshire, which does not impose any disincentive on people, and at least trains them in a proper manner. I am not talking about the one funded by the European Steel and Coal Community, which is an even better retraining scheme.

British Coal Enterprise and the retraining schemes have been abysmal, knee-jerk reactions introduced by the Government because of the problems of which they did not take account when they introduced Bills on the coal industry in the past four years. If the Minister could prove me wrong, I would be prepared to listen to him.

The Bill does two things. First, the Government and British Coal have failed in the promises made in previous Bills. March 1987 was supposed to see the end of further financial provisions for British Coal. The Government have failed because the money and the capital resources

going into the coal industry have financed massive redundancies and not restructured the coal industry to increase its efficiency and enhance its chances of profitability and maintaining employment in coalfield areas.

I am fed up with junior Ministers coming to the Rother Valley and talking about the terrible situation in the coalfields, or making tours of the south Yorkshire coalfield, or the Derbyshire coalfield, and saying how awful the regional economy is because of the rundown of basic industry. I would not mind their visits or their comments if they would do something about the problem, either by arresting the decline in the industries or by putting something into the local economy that will replace them.

Secondly, the Bill is a device to clear the decks for privatisation. Conservative Members have said that that is not true, but it is. The Bill looks to potential buyers in the way that it delivers short-term profits in the next three or four years. I am pleased to say that the Government will be thwarted because they will lose the next general election. The industry will be saved and made efficient, but not for short-term profits by those who tell Sid about the lucrative deals that can be made by buying the remaining British coalfields. It will be saved so that the nation will not have a gun at its head to force it to import energy. It will be saved by a Labour Government.

There has been much talk about the absence of speeches on the three clauses that deal with the social and welfare organisation and the mineworkers pension scheme. Nobody would wish to deny that right. Some of the speeches from Conservative Members have been far wide of the mark about what the NUM and the vast majority of miners want and for which they are pressing. No matter what happens in the short term when the Bill is passed, in the long term there is the need for the mining unions to get back together. There is a need for people to set up again the organisation that was born in 1946 and which saved and bought sanity not only into the coalfields but into the energy needs of the country. I hope that that will be brought about again by the vast majority of hon. Members on both sides of the House. Today, the coal mining industry has been used for short-term gains and to save necks at the next general election. I hope that all miners will realise why people are making those speeches.

9.8 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): There are two reasons for the Bill. The first is the fall in oil prices, and the second the aftermath of the coal strike in 1984-85. The first part of the Bill deals with the change in the name to British Coal Corporation. I hope that this is not the first inkling of privatisation of British Coal. The industry is not yet ready for privatisation, and will not be for a long time. To embark on that road will be political, economic and financial folly.

The second part of the Bill deals with financial support for what will be the British Coal Corporation. It is worth noting that the primary reason for the introduction of deficit grants is that if it were not for the fall in the price of oil the National Coal Board would have made a profit this year of about £100 million. However, forces outside the Government's control have led to the introduction of deficit grants.

The most important part of the Bill for my constituents in Nottingham, North will be the participation of the UDM in the various coal industry organisations and trusts —in particular, participation in the welfare funds, the social welfare bodies and the superannuation funds.

One does not need to guess why it has been necessary to introduce the Bill. It is because the NUM would not concede rights on the various bodies concerned with those trusts. That is unbelievable, and it will come as a great surprise to the average man in Nottingham high street or Bulwell market that that is not already the case. Even more unbelievable, however, is the Labour party's opposition to the proposals, but it will probably come as no surprise to those who have followed the relationship of the Labour party with the UDM during the last two years.

There was mob rule in my constituency during the coal strike. The flying pickets of the NUM tried to prevent my constituents from getting into Babbington colliery. Civil liberties were denied to the people of Nottingham. Despite that, they made it to work.

One would think that the Opposition would have supported the efforts of the people of Nottingham to go to work, bearing in mind that their only crime was compliance with the NUM rule book. Since then, the Labour party's policy has been to show hostility towards the UDM. Members of the UDM have been called "scabs" in this House, and Opposition Front Bench spokesmen have said that the right not to strike is not a fundamental right. The Opposition have now decided to oppose the Bill. That tops it all. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) that parity of rights between NUM and UDM members is desirable and necessary if we are to achieve the reconciliation to which so many Opposition Members have referred. Members of the UDM do not enjoy the rights for which the Opposition are calling. For Opposition Front Bench spokesmen to offer to trade rights and liberties with the Secretary of State —*[Interruption.]* The Opposition said that they would support these proposals if certain rights were given. That shows a lack of integrity. I have yet to hear any Opposition Member give a good reason for opposing the Bill.

Not to support the Bill is an attack on democracy. Since 1985 the NUM has embarked upon a war of attrition with the UDM. The NUM wants to kid the world that it represents the UDM on the various coal industry trusts. That is cloud cuckoo land. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt) said in a speech to the NUM, it is a breach of natural justice which will not be forgotten in Nottingham.

The Labour party can do something to remedy the position and ingratiate itself with the people of Nottingham. There is a rumour that Mr. Arthur Scargill is being considered as the parliamentary candidate for Barnsley. The Labour party would be barmy to take him on, but just in case it decides to do so, it would have two particular advantages. First, he would have to stand down as president of the NUM. That would allow at last proper dialogue between the UDM and the NUM. Secondly, the Labour party would never again form a Government. For both reasons, I urge the Opposition Front Bench to take on Mr. Arthur Scargill as the parliamentary candidate for Barnsley. I urge the House to support the Bill.

9.13 pm

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): Having listened to the debate, one might be led to believe that the coal industry had never been discussed since the miners' strike. We have to ask ourselves the reason. If ever a Bill had the

[Mr. Alexander Eadie]

stamp on it of preparing for a general election, the Coal Industry Bill has it. It was rushed before Parliament with almost indecent haste. No sooner had the Sovereign uttered the words of the Gracious Speech than it was top of the agenda of legislative measures. Why is that? It can only be because of a cynical calculation that it will assist in returning Tory candidates in Nottingham and the surrounding area at a general election. That tells us what some hon. Members already suspect—that the general election will be sooner rather than later. I hope that it is soon because, if it is not, some of the general election speeches will have been made too early.

This debate has shown that very few of our fellow miners in Nottinghamshire—I deliberately say fellow miners—will be deceived. Giving bargaining rights to a weak, breakaway union in the mining industry begins to look more and more like a velvet hand in an iron fist because Government policy will reduce the membership of that union by half. That is because it is the policy of the Government to contract the mining industry in Nottinghamshire

My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) has given the figures about contraction and I shall give some figures later in my speech. He made an interesting point about bargaining rights, which perhaps I should clear up right away. We are told that there is something wrong with equal rights. We said that we would not oppose the Bill if the Government were prepared to give equal negotiating rights to people in the mining industry. The Government can think about that in Committee.

Mr. Peter Walker: We will have a lovely Committee stage.

Mr. Eadie: We will, and the right hon. Gentleman will probably never be there.

I want to deal with something which shows that this is a pit closure Bill and an election Bill. The Government's policy on the coal industry is to be condemned. I should like first to speak about the best-seams-first policy mentioned in our amendment. Since the Government were elected in 1979 they have conspired with British Coal to pursue what I would describe as a black site policy. There is nothing wrong with that if it is in tandem with a green fields site policy of planning and developing new pits.

The coal industry is extractive and the Government are planning the eventual contraction and demise of the industry. It is to the Government's shame that not a single new pit has been sunk during their term of office. The existing pits are worked under a black site policy. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East said, the Government are even accelerating the demise of most of them. The best seams are being developed and planning the reserves of coal in the totality of a pit is being ignored. The policy being pursued was described in yesteryear as grabbing the berries and to hell with the rest. That policy will inevitably lead to pit closures because when the berries in the pits have gone millions of tonnes of coal will be lost for ever.

H. G. Wells described coal as bottled sunshine. The Government are closing pits and shedding manpower. I got from the Department of Trade and Industry the figures for the nine months to September. In that time we imported nearly 5·5 million tonnes of coal. One could add the equivalent of the coal consumed by a large power station because we are importing subsidised electricity from France. To judge from the way in which the French react to imported agricultural produce from Britain, the entire nation would be up in arms if Britain exported such quantities of cheap subsidised electricity.

It cannot be emphasised strongly enough that the Bill is deeply political. It is an integral part of the Government's electoral strategy. It is full of blandishments to the breakaway union, the name of which is not even mentioned in the Bill, in that it provides for its representation on the coal industry's trusts, the welfare organisation and the superannuation fund. The Government are thus hoping to curry favour with the electorate in Tory marginal seats. All of this is transparent. Mining communities have already been alerted about the Bill, which means nothing short of devastation for mining communities and the slaughter of pits and jobs.

In the Nottingham coalfield, for example, British Coal is planning to cut jobs by at least 10,000 from 25,000 during the next few years. I raised that matter with the Minister at Question Time yesterday, but he was so busy running away on his pushbike that he forgot to answer my question about investment in Nottingham and elsewhere.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo *rose*—

Mr. Eadie: I propose to raise that issue again now. When considering investment, we must bear in mind the fact that British Coal had made two changes in its accountancy practices. The first concerns deferred interest, which counted as capital expenditure in 1983-84.

Mr. David Hunt: As he was the Minister responsible, the hon. Gentleman should know that the change was made in 1976-77.

Mr. Eadie: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman could easily make a mistake. I have a letter saying what happened to capital expenditure in 1983-84. There was an £86 million capital expenditure increase in 1983-84, whereas there was a £63 million capital expenditure increase in 1982-83. The second change concerns leased assets being included for the first time in 1985-86. I got this information from the Library. If I am wrong, I apologise, but I hope that the Minister will apologise as I am sure that my letter is much more current than his.

Mr. Stephen Dorrell (Loughborough): It's the facts.

Mr. Eadie: Yes.

When we speak of investment in the coal industry, we do not take account of investment in 1979. There was investment in the industry before 1979. We have had three Ministers with responsibility for coal since 1979, but the present Minister is the only one who has disowned "Plan for Coal". He has been scathing about it, but previous Ministers have defended it. Let us hear what he will say now.

Mr. David Hunt: I have now found that section in the board's accounts in 1976-77 which acknowledges that the policy of deferred interest was adopted under the stewardship of the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie). I must defend him. It was entirely appropriate for an industry with assets with a high capital cost and a long construction period to move in that direction. The hon. Gentleman also got the investment figures wrong. Perhaps he is coming to them.

Mr. Eadie: I was about to consider the investment figures. I will give the Minister copies of my correspondence.

I was trying to explain that the investment did not start then. For example, I have the figures for investment in Nottinghamshire. The investment in north Nottinghamshire in 1979-80 was £87 million, and in south Nottinghamshire £62 million. That makes a total investment in 1979-80 for Nottinghamshire of £149 million. However, the current investment as projected for this year is £97 million.

Part of the argument that we have advanced is that the Government are pursuing a policy of contraction in the mining industry.

Mr. David Hunt *rose*——

Mr. Eadie: The Minister must allow me to make my speech and then he can make his. He is trying to be too clever by half.

Mr. David Hunt: The hon. Gentleman's facts are wrong.

Mr. Eadie: If they are wrong, I can only say that they are authenticated by the House of Commons Library figures. I should like to make my speech in my own way.

The figure for Scottish investment in 1979 was £55 million. It will be £23 million in 1985-86. The figure for investment in Yorkshire and Barnsley in 1983 was £259 million and in 1985-86 it is £195 million. The figure for South Wales was £57 million and it will be £45 million in 1985-86. The corresponding figures for the south midlands are £86 million and £53 million.

These figures illustrate the Opposition's point. The Government are pursuing a policy of contraction in the mining industry. No new pits are being opened. As a consequence, and when the black site policy is exhausted, the industry must inevitably contract.

Mr. Ashby: What about Selby?

Mr. Eadie: The Labour Government sunk the pit at Selby.

We know the answer that the Minister gives about privatisation in the industry. He says that there are no plans for that and the Secretary of State referred to that again. That is like what we hear in the United States of America. An American points to the highest skyscraper but always adds that it is the highest skyscraper this year.

Yesterday, at Question Time, the Secretary of State went further in reply to a question from one of my hon. Friends. He said that he could not give any guarantee that privatisation would never take place. The Government's policy on privatisation is well known. They will sell any public asset if they think that the price is right to prop up their financial bankrupt policies.

It is interesting to consider the last City study on the feasibility of the privatisation of British Coal which was carried out two years ago by the stockbrokers Laurie Millbank. The report concluded that to offer prospective shareholders a commercially viable business about 60 of the 180 pits operating would have to close. The report said that they would need to be closed. The figure has now been cut to 119 pits.

The chairman of British Coal has said that the number will be further reduced to 110 by the end of the current financial year, with four more closures and four more mergers on the cards. On those figures it is evident that the industry is being prepared as a fatted calf to attract the Government's friends in the City. The chairman of British Coal will offer no resistance to that process. The reasoned amendment mentions the 55,000 jobs that have been lost to the industry since the end of March 1985. That can be put in starker terms: 20,000 jobs have gone since April.

It is appropriate to comment on an aspect of the high-risk strategy being pursued by British Coal in relation to the one-face pit. Very few qualified mining engineers would consider that that made sense. It is established that mother nature does not give up her treasures lightly. Areas differ geologically — some are more uncertain than others. The policy of the one-face pit is regarded in some areas as a pit closures policy. If something happened at that one face, the pit would be an immediate candidate for closure. There is praise one week for the miners' higher productivity and prospects of pit closures the next week. No wonder that there is a crisis of morale in the mining industry.

During this general election debate, some Conservative Members have been staking their credentials. I shall state my credentials. I shall talk about the present position of the victimised miners in the industry in relation to industrial relations as contained in the Bill and in relation to the crisis of morale.

For more than 50 years I have been a member of the NUM. Before I came to the House I worked in the mining industry for more than 30 years. I am the grandson and the son of miners. In 1956, my father was killed in a pit. I am the son of a victimised miner. In 1926, my father became a victim and did not return to the pit until 1935. Therefore, I am not unprejudiced. Indeed, I am very prejudiced. It is rather rich of the Government to amend the 1946 Act when to date they have only paid lip service to it. Put bluntly, they ignored its provisions on conciliation and consultation.

Had those provisions been implemented, victimised miners would not have been dragged through industrial courts, whose findings in so many cases have been ignored. Their cases would have been dealt with within the industry. Justice would not only have been done but would have been seen to be done. That would have prevented edicts coming from Hobart house saying:

"The price of insubordination must be paid."

I say bluntly that all who had a part to play, whether in the Government or in British Coal, in meting out the scandalous treatment to the victimised miners will carry it to their everlasting shame. There is a condemnatory line in Dante's "Inferno" which states:

"Heaven will have none of them. Even hell itself spews them forth."

The total number of men dismissed by the National Coal Board for offences or alleged offences arising from the 1984-85 strike was 962. Only a few of that number were dismissed for offences against persons or for damage to property. If the board's criteria for re-employment, as explained to the Select Committee on Employment, had been instituted, almost 90 per cent. of miners sacked for activities connected with the strike would have been re-employed. Therefore, I think that the Government have a cheek when they talk about amending the 1946 Act.

One aspect of our amendment concerns our industries being deprived of new technology. I believe that a central policy of the Government in this pit closure Bill is to contract the coal industry. In our reasoned amendment we say that the Government will cut off from our industries

[Mr. Eadie]

the new technologies that will become available by the use of coal. Coal use will not be confined to burning it in power stations; two other uses may become available. It is little known that we have already developed synthetic North sea gas from coal. I took an all-party delegation to Westfield in Fife where the process is already well developed.

When I was a Minister, that process of development had been running for only a matter of weeks and the consumer never noticed any difference. Today at Westfield that process of manufacturing synthetic North sea gas is so advanced that there is a wish to run it as a pilot plant for two years continuously to prove its commercial value. Those at Westfield—the scientists and technologists—are worried that the privatisation of British Gas could scupper that plant. What should worry us is that, if we contract the coal industry still further, we will not have our own coal to aid technological development.

The other advance is that of deriving oil from coal, but the history of this process is depressing. In 1978, as a result of British brains and inventiveness, we had developed two technologies which could do that. It was decided by the then Government to operate two pilot schemes on a three-year run and the Government earmarked £20 million for the project. Indeed, an agreement was signed with the National Coal Board to implement that process.

Today one of those technologies has been scrapped—perhaps it is being developed in Japan. After seven years we have not got the pilot plant to process coal to oil off the ground. The best we have got is a plant in north Wales which uses 2·5 tonnes of coal a day. I would describe it as a laboratory effort. We are still not sure when it will be working. Oil from coal is not a Walter Mitty idea. For years it has been developed in South Africa by the Sasol project. Our process was superior in this use of coal. The Government seem to be an anti-manufacturing and anti-industry Government.

The Government state that the service industries will provide the jobs in the mining communities. Apparently, tourism, hotels, visits to our stately homes will provide increased jobs in the future. If only we all wore kilts and showed our bare knees, that would attract more jobs.

This nation was a great industrial nation and it can be one again. I have little patience with people who denigrate the inventiveness and genius of our scientists and engineers. We have some of the best mining engineers in the world. The case for developing the coal industry is overwhelming. We should not be pursuing a policy of contraction. Coal is wealth that we have at our disposal —far greater than that derived from North sea oil. We will go into the Lobby to vote against this Bill because we believe in expanding the coal industry, not in contracting it.

9.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): I have listened with great interest to the debate. This is a vital Bill for the future of the coal industry. The surprise throughout the debate has been the Opposition's attempt to avoid debating the Bill.

The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) described the Bill as an election measure. Indeed, at one stage he referred to this as a general election debate. The hon. Gentleman should ask himself why he terms it so. It is undoubtedly a Bill that is good for the industry and good for the work force, yet the Opposition are opposing it, and we have a right to ask why.

Hon. Members have asked a number of pertinent questions. I shall do my best to respond in the time available to me, and I shall write to hon. Members on the points with which I do not have time to deal. I shall make a few general remarks which I believe are important in understanding the Government's intentions in introducing the Bill.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy, in opening the debate, said that the Bill heralded a new period in the life of the British coal industry. I join him in paying tribute to the industry's management and work force. At all levels and in all areas they have worked increasingly hard over the past 18 months to bring the British coal industry back from the brink to which it had been brought by that tragic and unnecessary strike.

Mr. Woodall: A colliery not three miles from my front door, which was opened only in 1979 and has 12 million tonnes of reserves, was closed in August this year as an economic measure because the NCB saddled it with capital charges. As the Minister is talking about the Government's great attempt to bring the coal industry up to date, will he explain why that happened?

Mr. Hunt: I gave way to the hon. Gentleman because it is likely that he has sat through this debate and listened to every word. He knows that decisions on individual collieries are a matter for British Coal. The Labour Government brought in the Coal Industry Act 1977, section 6(1) of which concludes by stating that the objective of the Act and the grants is

"the elimination of uneconomic colliery capacity."

That Act was passed by the last Labour Government.

In paying tribute to the men and management in the industry, I must say that I am proud to be associated with a Bill that strengthens the industry's ability to withstand the competitive pressures of energy markets and enables this great industry to look forward to the future with more confidence and in a much healthier state. As my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) rightly said in an outstanding speech, only high productivity can secure the future of the industry.

I shall nail one point immediately. The right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) and others mentioned safety. The right hon. Member mentioned this in the context of increasing productivity jeopardising safety standards. It was pointed out to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) that that is not the case. I plead with the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), who raised the same point yesterday, not to let safety become a party political issue. I would be sorry if anyone tried to score party political points by referring to fatalities in the coal industry. For me, and I believe for almost all hon. Members, even one fatality is one too many. Everyone in the industry is striving to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries.

I am pleased to be able to tell the House that the rate of fatalities is steadily declining. Over the past 10 years, the worst year in the coal industry was 1978-79, when 72 men died. That was an appalling year. In 1985-86 that figure fell to 27, and I am pleased to say that so far this year only 10 deaths have occurred, but that is still 10 too many.

British Coal's first priority is the health and safety of employees. The industry's accident and fatality record is improving steadily in line with the introduction of better equipment, increased training and improved work practices. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley said that, in south Wales, there had been four fatalities this financial year. That is not the case. Altogether, in south Wales, there have been two fatalities this financial year, but that is two too many. I hope everybody will accept that men and management alike will not countenance any effort to improve productivity which does not treat safety as paramount.

Mr. Allan Rogers: I should like to make a point about the industry's remarkable safety record and the way in which fatalities have been reduced over the years. This has involved an enormous joint effort by the men employed in the industry, by the management and by successive Governments. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that most mining accidents have occurred because of the great rush for profit and short cuts taken in fulfilling the strict requirements which have been laid down? That has happened, not just in the accidents in this country, but in the great tragedies in South Africa.

Mr Hunt: I am, of course, talking about this Government's stewardship of the coal industry. There is no evidence that productivity has any association with a diminution in safety. The most productive pits are the ones with the best safety record, and the Opposition should acknowledge that.

Mr. Hardy: The House will have noted the hon. Gentleman's commitment, which he offered the House yesterday and repeated today, that safety is of paramount importance. Does he accept the anxieties expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), which I sought to echo, about the uncertainty in my association, which has a remarkably important involvement in safety in mines? That uncertainty must be cleared up as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that a review of regulations is taking place. It was initiated not by the Government but by the mines and quarries inspectorate. I understand that it is proceeding with full consultation with all the unions concerned.

The first part of the Bill deals with the change of name to British Coal Corporation. That is an important recognition of the fact that there has been a significant change to a modern, self-supporting and fully viable member of the energy industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Sir J. Osborn) stressed the importance of exports. Shortly before that tragic and unnecessary Scargill strike, this country was a net exporter of coal. The strike swept us from that position, and the subsequent fall in world coal prices has meant that it is now much more difficult to gain a foothold in world markets.

Nothing would please me and my right hon. and hon. Friends more than to see British coal filling this country's needs and being exported all over the world. I stress that I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hallam in that laudable objective. It is no use urging companies to use British coal if they can buy a similar grade from abroad at a lower price. That is now the key issue.

Great strides have been made in the industry since the strike towards making British coal competitive. The chairman of British Coal, Sir Robert Haslam, has made clear his confidence that the industry is heading for calmer waters. The Government share that view and very much welcome the prospect of a more stable period for the industry. I would prefer Labour Members not to continue the attacks on British Coal Enterprise. It is a vital part of any social strategy that this Government operate that there should be an enterprise company breathing new life into coal mining areas. It could do with a little more assistance from the Labour party.

I am at a loss to understand the comments of the right hon. Member for Salford, East on the Bill's financial provisions. Some Labour Members fail to realise how much British Coal's future depends on these financial provisions. It took the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) to say to the House and to his right hon. Friend the member for Salford, East, "I do not think that any of us object to the financial provisions." He said that after his right hon. Friend had spent some time attacking the financial provisions. I agree with the hon. Member for Wentworth.

Mr. Hardy *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: I should like to explain why I agree with the hon. Gentleman. British Coal is technically bankrupt. It has no financial reserves to offset its losses, and the current power to pay deficit grant ends at the end of next March. The Bill does not, as hon. Members have claimed, take away British Coal's future. On the contrary, if it were not for the Bill, British Coal would have no future at all.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister accept that what I was doing was endorsing the principle of providing financial support to British Coal? I said that on the previous Bill some of us argued that the optimistic assumption taken then was one which we questioned. The Government then were far more concerned to try to make Mr. MacGregor's tenure of the chairmanship of the NCB look a great deal more successful than it really was.

Mr. Hunt: I rely on the record, which everybody will read tomorrow, as to exactly what the hon. Gentleman said.

The third part of the Bill concerns the UDM. The debate has been astonishing. It is almost as if the Opposition are unaware that half the Bill exists—I refer to clauses 5, 6, 7 and 8. I must pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Hallam, for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), for Broxtowe, for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), for Amber Valley, for Chorley (Mr. Dover), for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby), for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) and for Nottingham, North (Mr. Ottaway) all of whom stressed important issues, but none more so than an hon. Member whom we are delighted to have in the House, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin). Only last year he was working underground at Littleton colliery. He rightly pointed out that the Bill strives to restore the democratic tradition of the industry. It is a tradition of which the Opposition and the NUM have in the past been justly proud.

We were privileged to listen to what I thought was an extremely brave speech from the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon). He has never lacked courage in what he has done. Speaking as a former Whip myself, I know that it took courage to stand up and say that, after

[Mr. Hunt]

21 years of never voting against a three-line Whip, tonight he would have to do so. He gave his reasons loud and clear, and they were echoed to some extent by the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire). He was talking about the need to recognise a democratic trade union. A democratic union is a strong union, and a democratic industry is a strong industry. As the right hon. Gentleman, my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood and others have pointed out, there were men throughout the country, chiefly in the midlands, who endured violence, threats and ridicule in order to protect their democratic rights under the law. They were the real victimised miners. Let us hear no more nonsense about that. Since the strike finished, they have seen those democratic rights usurped by a union to which they do not belong.

I can appreciate that back in 1946 and in the early 1950s there was no reason to believe that other unions would need to be introduced into the industry's various organisations. There was only one proud union. Today, that is no longer the case. Today we have the remnants of that union, and we have tens of thousands of mineworkers who no longer feel that it represents their interests. The Bill is designed to ensure that those men who stood by this country during the strike do not suffer as a result.

Opposition Members talk about democracy. There has been a shadow over this debate. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State identified it as the shadow of Scargill. For fear of upsetting one man, the Opposition continue to deny basic democratic rights and, indeed, human rights, to tens of thousands of workers in an industry dear to their hearts.

In the debate on the Loyal Address it was regrettable that the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), who has been mentioned several times, criticised the Bill and said:

"The encouragement of a breakaway scab union is highly provocative." —[*Official Report*, 12 November 1986; Vol. 105, c. 32.]

"Scab union" indeed. I hope that the hon. Gentleman regrets those remarks.

Why has the language changed? We heard none of that in this debate. I think that we have a right to ask why. We read in the Sunday newspapers that the Leader of the Opposition is sending

"a high-powered envoy to the Nottinghamshire coalfield this week to head off a potential electoral disaster for the party.

His mission will be to persuade the breakaway Union of Democratic Mineworkers not to put up a rival to Labour's . . . candidate."

Could that be why there has been such a lack of strong language tonight? The answer has been discovered, as so often happens in the House, on a photocopying machine. I have with me a document that is headed:

"Proceedings of the Party Meeting on Thursday 20 November 1986 at 6 pm in Committee Room 10."

It says:

"The party would be voting against the Coal Bill on a three line whip and a reasoned amendment was being tabled . . . The sensitivity of the electoral position in North Nottinghamshire was appreciated and the importance of not alienating local party members who were in the UDM recognised."

Now we have the truth. It is the sensitivity of the electoral position that is paramount. The Opposition are crumbling. They have tabled a reasoned amendment that may enable them not to damage their electoral position. We have heard high and mighty language about the importance of our great coal industry, but now we know the truth—it is the electoral position in Nottinghamshire that has so silenced Opposition Members tonight.

The reasoned amendment claims several things, but misunderstands and misrepresents the purpose of the Bill. It claims that there is a contraction in the industry. The hon. Member for Midlothian should not start quoting statistics for investment. After all, under this Government, £5 billion has been spent on investment in the coal industry. Moreover, we are now in the first year of a three-year programme involving another £2 billion. That is more money than in the whole of the Labour Government's period of office.

The amendment also seeks to establish that there has been a lack of investment in the industry. The average real rate of investment under the Labour Government was 35 per cent. lower than under this Administration. I am proud of our achievements. It is incredible that the Labour party should speak of low morale in the coal industry. We continually hear of productivity records being broken at pit, area and national levels. Indeed, I am delighted to have received information tonight—I know that people in the NCB worked hard so that the House could hear these figures tonight—showing that last week productivity in the British coalfield reached a new United Kingdom record of 3·59 tonnes per man shift. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear hear."] Let *Hansard* record that the cheer from the benches behind me, which was led by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, was not accompanied by anything other than silence on the part of Labour Members.

It is extraordinary that Labour Members do not recognise the industry's great achievements. The House by now sees, I hope, the amendment's abysmal failure to recognise any of the realities of the coal industry today. What saddens me most is that, by tabling it, Labour Members have shown their desire to go against what we used to think of as their democratic principles and have omitted all mention of the provisions on fair representation. It makes no difference to us if they wish to deny rights to such a fine body of men affiliated to the Labour party, but it shocks me to see that the Leader of the Opposition has signed his name to a denial of the rights for which working men have fought so long. Labour Members are indeed parliamentary puppets on a Scargill string. Surely the men have a right to expect that we will not fail them. Conservative members certainly will not do so.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 177, Noes 268.

Division No. 7] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo	Boyes, Roland
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Anderson, Donald	Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Barnett, Guy	Campbell, Ian
Barron, Kevin	Campbell-Savours, Dale
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Canavan, Dennis
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Carter-Jones, Lewis
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Clarke, Thomas
Bidwell, Sydney	Clay, Robert
Blair, Anthony	Cleiland, David Gordon
Boothroyd, Miss Betty	Clwyd, Mrs Ann

Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
Gc•nan, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Chris Smith and
Mr. Derek Fatchett.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hancock, Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard

Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Penhaligon, David
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading):—

The House divided: Ayes 263, Noes 173.

Division No. 8] **[10.14 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hancock, Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Penhaligon, David
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion

Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Michael Portillo.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Chris Smith and
Mr. Derek Fatchett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

COAL INDUSTRY BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Coal Industry Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment to the British Coal Corporation out of moneys provided by Parliament of—

(1) grants (not exceeding in aggregate £100 million or such greater sum not exceeding £200 million as may be specified in a relevant order) with a view to reducing or eliminating any deficit shown in a statutory consolidated profit and loss account of the Corporation and its subsidiaries for the financial years of the Corporation ending in March 1988 and 1989;

(2) grants (not exceeding in aggregate £300 million or such greater sum not exceeding £750 million as may be specified in a relevant order) towards any expenditure of the Corporation or their subsidiaries which—

(a) relates to costs falling to be charged to such a profit and loss account for a financial year of the Corporation ending not earlier than March 1988 or later than March 1992 in which the Corporation are redeploying and

reducing the number of their employees with a view to adjusting the future supply of coal or reducing production costs;

(*b*) is a kind specified in relation to such a year in a relevant order; and

(*c*) does not exceed the costs falling to be so charged or such larger amounts as the Secretary of State and the Corporation may with the approval of the Treasury agree;

being grants which comply with any restrictions on the amount which may be paid in respect of any such year imposed by a relevant order made in respect of that year;

(3) grants towards any relavant expenditure of the Corporation (within the meaning of section 6 of the Coal Industry Act 1977) in a financial year of the Corporation ending after March 1987 which—

(*a*) relates to costs falling to be charged to such a profit and loss account in respect of any period specified in section 6(3) of that Act or to obligations undertaken by the Corporation in any such period; and

(*b*) does not exceed the amount of the costs to which it relates or such larger amount as the Secretary of State and the Corporation may with the approval of the Treasury agree;

being grants limited to one half of the expenditure in that year which would be eligible for such grants apart from that limitation;

and in this Resolution—

'a statutory consolidated profit and loss account' means a consolidated profit and loss account prepared in accordance with a direction given under section 8(1) of the Coal Industry Act 1971: and

'a relevant order' means an order made by the Secretary of State with the approval of the Treasury and approved by a resolution of the House of Commons.

—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

Parliamentary Constituencies (Wales)

10.26 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move,

That the draft Parliamentary Constituencies (Wales) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 16th July, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

This is the draft of an Order-in-Council to give effect to the final recommendations of the report of the Boundary Commission for Wales on its 1985 interim review. The commission reviewed nine parliamentary constituencies in north and mid-Wales, and submitted its report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department on 2 July 1986.

The report was laid before Parliament on 16 July, together with a draft order to implement the commission's proposals in full. If the draft order is approved by both Houses, it will be submitted to Her Majesty in Council for the necessary order to be made. The form of the order follows the same pattern as the two previous orders made in 1985 and earlier this year which implemented the proposals arising from interim reviews carried out by the Boundary Commission for England.

The form of the order is as follows: Article 2 substitutes the constituencies in the schedule for the existing constituencies previously created by the Parliamentary Constituencies (Wales) Order 1983. Article 1(2) provides for the order to take effect 14 days after it is made, though it will not affect the present constituencies until the next general election. As a consequence, any by-elections held in the meantime will be held on the basis of the present boundaries.

Let me give a word of explanation as to interim reviews. As hon. Members may know, the parliamentary boundary commissions have the discretionary power to hold interim reviews between their general reviews, which take place every 10 to 15 years. The last general review was completed in 1983 and resulted in new parliamentary constituency boundaries for the general election held that year. Those boundaries were based on the local government boundaries which existed during the review. However, since then, reviews by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales have divided district and county boundaries from the constituency boundaries. The Welsh Boundary Commission decided that it was necessary to reconcile these divided boundaries by holding interim reviews, of which this is the first since the last general review.

The commission published its provisional recommendations in the summer of 1985. There were five representations about those proposals. A local inquiry was held in October 1985 into whether the community ward of Eglwysbach, at present divided between the constituencies of Conwy and Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, should be placed wholly within the latter constituency, as the commission had recommended. The assistant commissioner upheld the commission's recommendation, and the commission decided to confirm its original proposals as its final proposals. These are given effect in the order.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has not received any representations objecting to the proposals since they were submitted to him. For the most part, the changes involved are the minimum necessary to align

the constituency boundaries with local government boundaries, the one exception being the change which was the subject of the local inquiry.

I commend the draft order to the House.

10.30 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I have for the Minister a few brief questions about the review of the boundaries of nine parliamentary constituencies. Have any public meetings been held about the proposals? Has the hon. Gentleman met the boundary commissioners from time to time to discuss the boundaries? I do not think he said exactly how many electors overall will be directly affected. Have the county councils of Gwynedd, Clwyd and Powys played any part or made any representations to the commissioners? I ask the same question about the district authorities and the political parties involved. Was he able to decide upon the points that they raised?

10.31 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): I shall not detain the House for more than a moment or two, but I cannot let this occasion pass, any more than I let it pass in 1982, without taking the opportunity to call down imprecations on the graves of the boundary commissioners. On this occasion they have not mucked up all the constituencies in the county of Clwyd as they did in 1982 and the sins—if there are any sins this time—are only those of the housemaid whose baby was a very small one.

I cannot let this occasion pass without once again drawing attention to the insensitivity of public servants who simply removed from the electoral map of Britain the ancient names of Flint and Denbigh which first sent representatives to this House in 1547 to the last Parliament in which the hon. Member for Calais took his seat. How can a lot of jumped-up boundary commissioners abolish with one stroke of the pen 400 years of history? I am a merciful man and I have always voted against capital punishment, but I will vote for any amendment which makes an exception for boundary commissioners.

10.33 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I shall be brief. There is a reference in the report of the Boundary Commission for Wales, on which the order is based, to my representation that the name of my constituency of Delyn should be changed to Delyn and Prestatyn. As I believe the last boundary review showed, not sufficient thought and care is given to the naming of constituencies. My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) agrees with me on that. This is not just a matter of local sensitivity, although that is important enough; it is also a matter of accuracy.

My constituency consists of the whole of the borough of Delyn plus part of the borough of Rhuddlan, namely Prestatyn and Meliden. Those two communities make up nearly 20 per cent. of my electorate. Many electors in Prestatyn and Meliden are understandably confused about which borough they belong to. They are in the parliamentary constituency of Delyn, but they are not in the borough of Delyn, and correspondence from these electors frequently goes to the local government officers of the wrong authority. The representation that I made that Delyn be renamed was not accepted because, in the words of the report, the constituency

"was approved by Parliament only three years ago."

Surely it is not a valid reason for perpetuating a mistake to say that it was made only three years ago.

I hope that the Boundary Commission will take the opportunity to change the name of my constituency to a more accurate name when it next has the chance to do so. The new name that I propose is not too long. In Wales, already have Ceredigion and Pembroke, North; Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, and Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney. In Scotland, the names are even longer. Indeed, my native land is replete and with triple-barrelled constituencies such as Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley; Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber; Ross, Cromarty and Skye, and Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale, which are much more of a mouthful than Delyn and Prestatyn. If those constituencies can be so clearly and accurately defined, I do not see why my constituency cannot receive the same fair treatment.

Apart from that one consideration, I fully agree with the boundary commissioners' recommendations and warmly welcome the 367 electors of the village of Northop Hall, who are now released from Socialist bondage into my tender, loving care.

10.35 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I have a feeling that the Order will go through quite rapidly and I do not want to delay it. I support my hon. Friends from north Wales with the usual trepidation that any south Walian has when interfering in matters that affect north Wales.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Does the hon. Gentleman understand that there are no Walians, only Welsh persons, so he should have no trepidation?

Mr. Jones: I appreciate the distinction that the hon. Gentleman is making. We all have our own way in which to refer to geographical or traditional differences between one end of the Principality and another.

I support my hon. Friend the Member for what is at present called Delyn (Mr. Raffan). I am sure that he has proposed an admirable alternative, which I hope will be properly considered. These minor changes to half a dozen constituencies should not be treated lightly. At least three are among the most marginal constituencies in the Principality. Alyn and Deeside is held temporarily by Labour with a majority of about 1,100. Wrexham is held temporarily by Labour with a majority of about 400 and Montgomery is held temporarily by the Liberal party with a similar majority. I am sure that the House will be interested to hear that a movement of a little over 2,000 votes would bring those seats into the Conservative fold and complete the process, by the next general election, of the Conservative party being the majority party in Wales.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) spoke of the disappearance of the illustrious names of Flint and Denbigh although they were even easier to pronounce. I should like also to congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on his efforts to pronounce Welsh names correctly.

10.37 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) for his support for the Order. Like him, I look forward to the day when the Conservative party dominates the Principality. I fancy that that will not be all that long postponed.

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

I have very great sympathy for what my hon. Friend the member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) said. A double-barrelled name is in no way a disqualification for naming a constituency or for naming an hon. Member.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Hear, hear.

Mr. Hogg: All that I can sensibly say is that the Commission decided that this was not a sensible time to make a change. I hope that the House does not feel that it wants to dissociate itself from such a view.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) is right. The constituency names of Flint and Denbigh are distinguished and historic. I am pleased to say that they are represented by an hon. Member who is at least as distinguished, if not as historic.

The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) raised a variety of points and the answer to most—although not all—of these can be found on page 9 of the commissioners' report. I shall summarise these very briefly. The total numbers involved are 1,018 and the constitution of that figure is conveniently set out in tabular form on page 9. Perhaps I could recommend that the hon. Member for Newport, East study the table. There were five representations, and again these are conveniently summarised on the same page of the report. There was one public meeting held in October 1985 which was presided over by one of the deputy commissioners. Details of that can be found in the report. I think that I have answered the three points that the hon. Gentleman was kind enough to put to me. In these circumstances, I commend the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved.

That the draft parliamentary Constituencies (Wales) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 16th July, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

Scottish Highlands and Islands

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

10.40 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I am grateful for the opportunity this evening to raise some of the dramatic and important concerns, not just in my constituency and in the Highlands and Islands but of the Scottish economy as a whole which have been caused by the decline in the price of oil and the attendant collapse in much of the oil-related activities in those communities heavily dependent on such activity.

The back-drop to the debate is obviously the quite unimaginable effects of the unexpected collapse that has taken place in oil prices during 1986. The Minister, as he has responsibility for industry at the Scottish Office, will be the first to appreciate the importance of the oil industry to the whole of the Scottish economy. It is especially important in those parts of the country where entire communities are dependent on the well-being of one particular industrial concern which, in its turn, is almost entirely dependent on the well-being of the oil and oil-related industries.

In my constituency we have already witnessed some of the catastrophic effects engendered by the present position. The Howard Doris yard at Kishorn has recently gone into receivership and the potential achieved by that yard in days gone by for employing thousands of people and the potential which, until recently, it still hoped to realise, of employing hundreds of people—which the Minister would accept is a significant number for the west coast of the Highlands and for the Skye and Lochalsh district—has disappeared, at least for the foreseeable future. The difficulties of that company and of that yard in particular, are clearly directly attributable to the difficulties of the industry in which they are operating.

Equally, it must be said that the other oil yards on the mainland of the Highlands — both Highlands Fabricators at Nigg in my constituency and McDermott's at Ardersier in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) must face an extremely uncertain and therefore dispiriting time over the months and years ahead for the simple reason that, with the decline in prices, there is a great deal of uncertainty, a lack of forward planning and a dearth of orders for which yards of that magnitude can bid. That in turn is further reflected in the case of the Lewis Offshore yard at Arnish which at present, thankfully boasts a healthy order book but which clearly cannot, without an upturn in the industry, expect further security of contracts and employment in future.

Those big fabrication yards, which have become crucial to the economy of the Highlands and Islands, to varying extents from receivership to a reasonable order book—although with a question mark above it — and the gradations in between all face uncertainty. More crucially, the communities and the jobs that are so dependent on their well-being also face uncertainty.

Obviously, that spills over to the onshore related sectors of the oil industry in supply, servicing and support. I know that that is of concern to my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), who is present tonight——

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): My hon. Friend has mentioned the problems that face the construction yards, not least in his constituency. Does he accept that oil supply bases in my constituency have been threatened and redundancies announced because of the recession? In addition, the inspection, repair and maintenance base at Lerwick that was opened in the summer by the Prince and Princess of Wales has not had work since. I do not want to anticipate what my hon. Friend wishes to say about what should be done, but it must be in the area of action that will stimulate further exploration and activity offshore.

Mr. Kennedy: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I know that he has been active both in his constituency and in this House with me in pursuing the claims and concerns of his constituents and the industries located in Orkney and Shetland. He mentioned some examples in his brief intervention. I agree with him that that is one aspect of the industry that is especially hard hit, not least in his constituency. Some of the measures that I wish briefly to outline tonight would advantage and benefit his area and mine.

As a result of the quite drastic downturn in activity, in a fragile economic area at the best of times—such as Skye and Lochalsh, Wester Ross and the Highlands and Islands as a whole—there has been a severe contraction of the economic base. Hard on the heels of the hammer blows of the closure of the pulp mill at Corpach and the closure of the aluminium smelter at Invergordon, the further decline in oil-related activity has placed quite intolerable strains on an economy which, at the best of times, is liable to be even poorer or slightly weaker because of its geographical location than other parts of Scotland.

The working assumptions for the levels of unemployment—as opposed to the travel-to-work assumptions—by the Manpower Services Commission and others in the towns of Invergordon and Alness are about 40 per cent., which underlines how drastic and severe are the economic problems associated with the decline.

Throughout the year several hon. Members, including myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland, have pressed the case for tax changes to stimulate North sea oil exploration and development work. We were pleased to welcome the change that the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced in his autumn statement two weeks ago. It will be of assistance to that hard-pressed sector. However, we want to go further and say that any further fiscal stimulae, any further tax incentive that is given to the oil companies, must be very carefully tied to a commitment by them that such extra revenue that comes in through cash flow will be geared towards further development and exploration work. The only safe way to ensure that the extra money that the Treasury is willing to forgo to help the industry will see its way to the front line of the industry, with further contracts open to bidding by the fabrication yards and the support, supply and servicing sectors.

I hope that the industry Minister at the Scottish Office and his opposite number in the Department of Energy will confirm that they will be making the case to Treasury Ministers to introduce the necessary changes to encourage further development.

I am especially interested in a report that appeared just over two weeks ago in the *Sunday Telegraph* which suggested that, in addition to, or even in place of, tax incentives, the Government were considering the possibility of equity arrangements for the oil companies as an alternative means of encouraging further development. I appreciate that that is perhaps more the responsibility of the Treasury or the Department of Energy, but I hope the Minister will confirm that he will pass on our interest in these arrangements, which suggest that they may have the right blend of public and private sector capital to make them worth while.

What further steps can be taken for the sake of the Highlands economy and the communities in it in the wake of the fall in oil prices? First, I would make a plea on behalf of all of us who represent Highlands and Islands constituencies. We want to see regional development status restored as fully as possible to those parts of the area which lost it in the redrawing of the regional development map two years ago. It is surely the case that an area of the country which has great difficulty competing on an equal basis, as it does because of its distance from markets, is bound to be more severely disadvantaged and face even more unfair competition when it is not able to offer companies the same level of inducements as they are able to attract or receive elsewhere within the Scottish economy. I hope that the Minister, despite the reticence, that he has shown on this issue in recent weeks in the House, will be able to say that he is willing to look again at the matter, because the present situation is a strong disincentive for a potential inward investor in the Highlands and Islands.

Secondly, we have recently seen the boundaries of the Highlands and Islands Development Board extended to include the Moray area, but, sadly, and not in line with the recommendation of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, that increase has not been met or matched by a requisite increase in finance. I believe that the Budget should be increased by at least £1 million. I hope that the Minister will consider that.

Thirdly, despite the overall economic gloom, there are still some exciting economic projects being mooted within the Highlands and Islands, in which the Highlands regional council — particularly the planning and development departments of the council — and the Highlands and Islands Development Board have been involved. One is the Dornoch crossing, which could be an important addition to the infrastructure, and indeed to the entire lifeline of the northern community, stretching right up through Ross-shire, Sutherland and Caithness and to Orkney. My hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland will confirm the importance of this project to the passage of goods and people. I hope that the difficulties which that dual road and rail crossing, which we want to see in the Highlands, ran into earlier this year can be overcome by the Scottish Office dealing with ScotRail and with the help of the European regional development fund.

I would also say in passing, as one is talking about bridges, that I am sure that in the coming weeks and months the Minister will see more material on his desk on the proposed bridge to Skye, about which the Highlands regional council has recently had a further consultant's report delivered to it. It seems an exciting project and one which could do a great deal to open up again the economic potential of the west coast and of the island itself.

Equally, on the tourism and leisure side, there are two skiing developments — one at Ben Wyvis, in my constituency near Strathpeffer, and the other at Aonach Mhor in Lochaber, in the constituency of my hon. Friend

[Mr. Kennedy]

the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, both of which I know have been brought to the attention of Ministers by the local authorities concerned, by private developers and by others, and both of which I think deserve careful consideration by Ministers as a possibly valuable contribution to the leisure orientation of the Highlands economy.

All those who wish to support the development and further stimulation of the Highland economy can only shake their heads in disbelief at the current difficulties faced by a valuable project which would be a unique facility, not just for the Highlands or for Scotland as a whole, but for the British economy. It is not the Minister's fault. Indeed, perhaps it is no Minister's fault. It is the fault of the bureaucratic inertia which envelops the British planning system. The Land and Marine Company has a strong desire to open a subsea facility near Tain. As it breaches a site of special scientific interest, a public inquiry has had to be held. The Scottish Office is considering the matter further. The company will clearly have difficult in tendering effectively for an international contract when it is faced with such planning blight.

If I say that the amount of the site of special cientific interest which is affected by the proposal is less than one quarter of 1 per cent. and that a petition signed by hundreds of people in the area has been sent to the Scottish Office, saying that they want the project because of the jobs that it will bring, it seems crazy that, against the generally gloomy backdrop, and with an exciting project which is wanted by the Department of Energy—it is the sort of project which any Government would want—the planning procedures of the Scottish Office are such that it is taking a long time to come to fruition.

There are opportunities on the horizon, but I should leave the House and the Minister in no doubt that there are great difficulties, too. The oil decline has been largely to blame for the problems that we are encountering and for the excessive and unacceptably high unemployment. Although it is an international problem which ultimately will demand international solutions, none the less the Government could take some steps. The Opposition have been urging them to take those steps during this year, and I hope that tonight the Minister will confirm that some of those steps will be considered and carried out.

10.56 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I congratulate the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) on his success in affording the House the opportunity to consider the economy of the Highlands and Islands and how it is affected by reduced oil prices. The Government are conscious of the benefits which have accrued over the years to the Highlands and Islands from the development of the United Kingdom continental shelf, and we share the understandable anxiety of those who live in the area about the impact of the downturn in some oil-related activities on communities, especially those where local employment is heavily dependent on the fabrication yards.

I shall consider several aspects of the current position, but, first, I shall try to set it in perspective. The difficulties of achieving consistently high employment in the Highlands and Islands are well-known to successive Administrations; and they have not proved amenable to any single all-encompassing solution. The discovery of oil in the North sea led to a surge of activity, and from the early 1970s until 1981 oil-related work provided a noticeable and welcome boost to employment. Much of this was related to the construction of the oil terminals, with a high proportion of incoming workers, at Sullom Voe and Flotta. As these were completed, there was a corresponding reduction between 1981 and 1985, leaving about 1,200 permanent jobs at the oil terminals. Added to these were about 3,500 jobs at the end of 1985 in the fabrication yards.

Against that background of an inevitably reducing construction-related work force — it is important to recognise the distinction — the number of jobs wholly associated with North sea oil in the Highlands and Islands has not shown a dramatic change of late. For example, the June 1986 figure of 5,783 was slightly up on the 5,573 recorded in December 1985. However, I recognise that the fabrication yards face a very difficult ordering position. I am aware that the McDermott yard at Ardersier has notified redundancies of more than 500, and the problems of the Howard Doris yard at Kishorn, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, are widely recognised.

But it is important to keep the matter in perspective. Low prices inevitably give rise to short-term difficulties for oil supply industries. The oil industry is by no means all doom and gloom. It will not help to talk down its prospects, as is happening in some quarters. There will continue to be opportunities for tough, competitive companies that are willing to face up to the challenges. We need to consolidate and to sustain the United Kingdom's leading position in this industry, especially in developing new, cheaper means of exploration and development.

Oil exploration activity is holding up well this year, and oil and gas production continues at high levels. My colleagues at the Department of Energy have approved 12 new developments this year worth over £2 billion. The forthcoming tenth round of offshore licensing will help to maintain the momentum of exploration activity.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Does the Minister agree that, if the Government were to follow the prescriptions of alliance policy, as announced by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), and limit the output from the North sea, unemployment in the Highlands and elswehere in Scotland would be a good deal worse?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend has made an important point. I shall refer to that point shortly. There is good reason to have confidence in the future.

It has been suggested — it is precisely the point that my hon. Friend made — that the Government should intervene to cut the rate of oil production as a means of forcing up the oil price and thereby increasing development activity. This is not a practical or desirable proposition for a variety of reasons. United Kingdom production amounts to only about 6 per cent. of the world total. Any action we take would therefore have a negligible effect on world markets. Activity in the offshore supply industry depends on the level of current production being maintained. Any cutback could have disastrous effects. In any case, it must be remembered that lower oil prices benefit the wider economy and help to create jobs.

The Government are well aware of the need to maintain the right fiscal regime in the United Kingdom continental shelf. The system created in 1983 is generally responsive

to oil price fluctuations and does not inhibit worthwhile new activity. But the position is kept under constant review, and I am aware of the various suggestions for change which have been put forward. Of course, we recognise that some operators are facing cash flow problems as an immediate result of the fall in oil prices. It is for this reason that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor intends to accelerate the repayment of some advance petroleum revenue tax. Again, the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye referred to it. This will inject over £300 million into the United Kingdom oil economy and will, I hope, be reflected in an increase in offshore activity.

Turning to a more general consideration of the area's economy, we are taking positive steps. The Highland and Islands Development Board is the Government's principal agency for improving the Highlands and Islands economy and social conditions. The board is very well aware of the difficulties that the oil industry is facing. The board has already identified the Invergordon area and Stornoway as priority areas and has expressed concern about the effect of the impending closure of the Kishorn oil rig yard on the local economy of Lochalsh and Wester Ross. The board is constantly seeking new developments and projects which will be suitable for the Highlands and Islands, and particularly those which will make use of the natural resources and the natural advantages of the area.

Direct financial assistance to businesses is available in the form of loans at below commercial rate, interest relief grants, equity participation and relocation grants. The board can provide assistance for capital projects and for working capital. In special circumstances, for example, when a project faces high start-up costs and offers particularly good economic potential, special grant assistance towards the cost of buildings and for other capital outlays can be available from the board. The board is empowered to assist all types of projects that would contribute towards the development of its area, and these are divided between its four functional divisions — fisheries, industrial and commercial development, land use and tourism.

In 1985-86 the HIDB provided over £20 million in assistance for 1,891 projects. The board expects, during 1986-87, to approve total assistance of £18 million to about 1,600 cases, providing around 2,200 jobs. In addition, it may also give financial assistance to projects which have social or partly social objectives but which may not be commercially viable.

Therefore, the board's activities are already geared to improving the economy and creating new jobs, and any adverse effects of the oil industry difficulties will be taken into account. I mention these points to demonstrate that action is already being taken as part of the board's normal functions, without the need for new incentives. The board is not short of funds, and it has been successful in attracting £3 of private sector investment for every £1 spent by the board. The total investment in 1985-86 from both sources was an impressive £85 million. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has already told the board that its powers of assistance can be supplemented as necessary through regional selective assistance when major projects are at stake.

The board has had considerable success in attracting new developments and this can be measured by the number of new jobs created in projects which the board has assisted. The estimated number of jobs created in 1985-86 was 2,500 and this was an increase over the 2,000 jobs created in the previous year. I am satisfied that the board is doing all that it can to stimulate the Highlands and Islands economy and encourage private sector investment in its area. Naturally, I hope that it will be even more successful in creating jobs in the years to come. I was glad recently in Committee to move a motion relating to an order to extend the HIDB area to include parts of Moray within its borders.

I draw the attention of the House to Invergordon, where we have set up an enterprise zone. I recognise that the number of new jobs in the zone is small in absolute terms, but nevertheless progress has been reasonably encouraging. There are now almost 400 jobs in 50 firms in the zone compared with 100 in eight firms at designation three years ago. It would, of course, be wrong to compare Invergordon in its rural setting with the other Scottish enterprise zones. It is not in direct competition with them over projects for which a central Scotland location would be appropriate. There are still seven years of the enterprise zone to run and infrastructure, such as the link road at Alness, is now virtually complete. Considerable opportunities remain for further development and employment at the zone. Indeed, only yesterday, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland — the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) — was in the area opening BP's £3·3 million fish farm food manufacturing plant and subsequently returning to Edinburgh down a now quite excellent A9 road.

On the positive side, the Invergordon area is benefiting from oil developments. The Cromarty Firth is now firmly established as the United Kingdom's main centre for the inspection, repair and maintenance of oil rigs and has made excellent progress in attracting a large share of the IRM market. Other assistance available within the HIDB area includes that provided by the Scottish Development Agency. The agency can and does operate within the HIDB area, principally through its land renewal and environmental projects but also in respect of major industrial projects. In certain instances, such as Highland Craftpoint, the agency provides support for the venture's operational budget alongside assistance from the HIDB.

Under a special arrangement, the European Commission has accepted the whole of the HIDB's area as eligible for assistance from the European regional development fund, notwithstanding the fact that parts of it are now non-assisted following the 1984 changes. Since 1975, some £98 million of ERDF assistance has been provided to the area. Selective financial assistance may be available to projects which operate, maintain or safeguard employment in manufacturing, mining and construction industries within assisted areas. In addition, assistance may be given to meet training expenses associated with start-up or expansion.

The Scottish Development Agency contributed some £700,000 towards the upgrading of facilities at the Invergordon support base in 1984 and is now contributing a further £1 million towards a new wet dock there. A further £1·5 million is being provided through the European regional development fund and the Highlands and Islands Development Board. The temporary downturn in the oil industry will obviously affect trade at the base, but I am confident that the provision of the new dock will leave the base extremely well equipped to compete for available work.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye suggested that changes should be made to the existing

[Mr. Lang]

assisted area status in parts of the Highlands and Islands. I know that that is a favourite theme of his. As the House knows, the present assisted area structure was established after a comprehensive review of regional policy and the assisted area map. It must be remembered that the designated status of an area is based on an assessment of relative needs across the United Kingdom as a whole. Changes to the status of particular areas inevitably have implications for others and it is by no means certain, even given the difficulties in the oil industry, to which reference has been made, that a review now would result in the changes which the hon. Gentleman seeks. It is important to achieve some stability in the present arrangements which have been in place for only two years. I do not believe that the time is yet ripe for considering a change of status.

The drop in oil prices has brought about some retrenchment by the operators. Inevitably, there is an initial reaction to review spending programmes and this has led to some companies reducing or delaying development projects. However, current production is largely unaffected. Delays in new projects have hit most severely orders to the fabrication yards, and with four of them — at Nigg, Ardersier, Kishorn and Lewis — the Highlands and Islands area has been particularly affected. The hon. Gentleman has rightly referred to the concern over the Howard Doris yard going into receivership and the redundancies announced at McDermott, both in areas where unemployment is already high.

I would not attempt to argue that the present oil price climate makes the short-term prospect for major new fabrications other than difficult, but it is wrong to look only downwards at the present trough. The oil industry is essentially cyclical by nature and the operators essentially realistic in approach. The industry will now be looking to the smaller less capital intensive developments in both gas and oil, to methods of enhanced recovery from existing fields, and at technological and work practice improvements to enable it to continue production and bring new developments on stream at costs which make these profitable. It is essential that the oil-related industry in all its aspects, in the Highlands and Islands and throughout Scotland, gears itself to respond to these requirements and that it recognises the existing and potential markets not only on the United Kingdom continental shelf but elsewhere in Europe and further afield.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 26 November 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

CONTINGENCIES FUND 1985-86

Ordered,

That there be laid before this House accounts of the Contingencies Fund, 1985-86, showing:

(1) The Receipts and Payments in connection with the Fund in the year ended the 31st day of March 1986,

(2) The Distribution of the Capital of the fund at the commencement and close of the year; with the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General thereon.—[*Mr. Malone.*]

Mr. Martin: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I noticed that until recently, on the Order Paper, I was first in the ballot for questions to the Solicitor-General for Scotland. I understand from the Table Office, which accepted my question, that the Solicitor-General's Department removed my question and transferred it. According to the Table Office, the Department has the power to do that. I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker. If the Minister can remove a question, it means that he has some control over which question comes first. I wonder whether that problem can be looked at.

Mr. Speaker: I undertake to look at the matter. It is in order for Ministers to transfer questions, but in view of what the hon. Gentleman has said, I shall certainly look into the matter.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Domestic Violence

1. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to increase the period available for training of constables in order to operate the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981 and to police domestic violence generally.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): The 1981 Act and the problem of domestic violence generally already feature prominently in the training programme at the Scottish police college. That programme is kept under regular review.

Mr. Ross: Does the Minister really think that two 50-minute periods during an eight-week course are adequate when he says that the problem features prominently? Can he confirm that those two 50-minute periods take place? How can he assess the use of the video "Getting over the Fear", produced by Strathclyde regional council and Scottish Women's Aid, as an aid to the training of the officers under the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act when the Scottish Office has neither borrowed nor purchased a copy of the video?

Mr. Lang: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that training is kept under careful consideration. Proper emphasis is given at the Scottish police college as well as at individual force level. The relevance of the video "Getting over the Fear" is being assessed at present by the Scottish police college.

Mr. Tom Clarke: In view of the drastic need for additional hostel accommodation for women who are the victims of domestic violence—I understand that at the moment there are 184 places in Scotland compared with a minimum of 500 recommended by a Select Committee over a decade ago—does the Minister agree that it is not simply a matter of detection and prosecution, important though it is, but is a matter of making adequate resources available so that we can deal with that dreadful problem of women's rights and the defence of them?

Mr. Lang: I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his first appearance at the Dispatch Box in his new role. The point that he raises is worthy of further consideration, although it does not relate directly to the question.

Council of Fisheries Ministers

2. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last attended a meeting of the EEC Council of Fisheries Ministers.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): As Minister responsible for Scottish fisheries I attend meetings of the Council of Fisheries Ministers and was present at the most recent one on 5 November.

Mr. Wallace: I thank the Minister for his answer. Whether he or the Secretary of State attends the next meeting, on the agenda one will expect to see a report on the negotiations between the European Community and Norway on the share-out of North sea herring for next year. Is the Minister aware that the share given to Norway last year was unacceptable to the Scottish fishing industry? Can he assure the House that Her Majesty's Government, through the Community, will press for a fairer share-out for the Scottish fishing industry in the coming year?

Mr. MacKay: I should expect the negotiations between the Community and Norway to be reported to us at the next Council meeting. In fact, the negotiations resumed today. Our objectives are, first, a fair allocation of the joint herring stock between Norway and the Community based on the recent scientific report on the zonal attachment of stocks and, secondly, to agree the transfers of herring and other species in return for transfers of white fish from Norway, which are so important to our industry.

Mr. Pollock: Did my hon. Friend have a chance to discuss at the meeting the funding difficulties experienced by the Scottish fleet? Now that the Community structural programmes are running out, has the Commission put forward any new proposals? Does my hon. Friend agree that, if possible, it would be desirable for such proposals to be in place by the beginning of 1987, so as to provide continuity of employment and support for the hard-pressed boat building yards in Scottish coastal areas?

Mr. MacKay: At our last meeting we discussed the structure proposals put forward by the Commission, but did not reach any conclusions. These matters are currently subject to negotiations in the Community and we expect to return to them at the meeting to be held on 3 December.

Dr. Godman: Has the Council considered the implications of the Falkland Island fisheries zone for EEC vessel activities?

Mr. MacKay: That was not raised at the last meeting.

Mr. Henderson: Although it is important to accept scientific evidence up to a point, does my hon. Friend agree that in negotiations with our European partners it is important to maintain the closest relationship with the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, which generally gives extremely good and wise advice to Ministers?

Mr. MacKay: Yes, I maintain very close contact with the Scottish fishing industry. As my hon. Friend rightly says, we must look to the future of the industry, not just to the year ahead in terms of total allowable catches, and so on, and to the long-term health of the stocks, which are so important to the future of the industry.

Urban Aid (Strathclyde)

3. **Mr. Millan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with Strathclyde regional council about the urban aid programme.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I met Strathclyde representatives last on this subject on 18 April 1986.

Mr. Millan: Will the Minister meet Strathclyde representatives again to discuss the very disturbing situation that has arisen? With regard to the suggestion in a recent Scottish Office report that there might be deliberate discrimination against urban aid projects from the west of Scotland, will he give an assurance that there is no such intention and that all projects, whether from the east or the west of Scotland, will be judged strictly on their merits? Will he also discuss the crisis arising from urban aid projects running out in the current year and the pernicious penalty system which means that Strathclyde now faces a burden of £13 million compared with £1¼ million previously? Will he exclude the urban aid programme, at least, from the penalty system, as is the intention with teachers' pay?

Mr. Ancram: I have agreed to meet representatives of Strathclyde region in London on 2 December and I am sure that a number of the points raised by the right hon. Gentleman will come up again then. All projects put forward within the urban programme are considered strictly on their merits, within the limits set some 18 months ago after consultation with Strathclyde and Glasgow as to maximum planning figures for both those authorities. The right hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that in the past four years Strathclyde, taken as a whole with all its districts, has received about 80 per cent. of urban programme funding—both capital and current. No doubt the right hon. Gentleman will welcome that. I am sure he will also welcome the fact that under this Government the amount of money being made available for the urban programme, both capital and current, is now double what it was in 1979.

On the question of penalties, the right hon. Gentleman knows that a disregard is, in fact, an increase in resources. All resources in that sector available for this year have already been allocated.

Mrs. McCurley: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is widespread discontent about the urban aid projects, many of which go straight into mainline finance when they finish, thus starving constituencies such as mine of vital resources?

Mr. Ancram: I accept the need to look carefully at projects funded through the urban programme. In the past two years we have attempted to tighten the criteria to ensure that only the best projects receive funding. The urban programme is based on a pump-priming principle and it is for the local authority to decide whether it wishes to take the projects on mainline.

Mr. James Hamilton: Will the Minister give us an assurance that the discussions that he intends to hold with Strathclyde regional council will be meaningful? He is, of course, aware that I wish two of the areas in my constituency to be mentioned—Harthill and Newmains, which are very deprived areas, with no social amenities whatsoever. Will he give those areas serious thought and consideration and ensure that, above all, the discussions are meaningful?

Mr. Ancram: The position in Strathclyde has not arisen out of the blue. Strathclyde knew that it was coming for at least the past two years. If it had wanted to take these programmes on mainline, it could have made spending provision to do so. After all, its estimate of the cost of the projects was £2·6 million. That must be set against a total guideline for this year of £1·2 billion for Strathclyde region.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Further to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley), does my hon. Friend recall the representations that I made to him on the need to consult hon. Members about potentially controversial urban programme projects in their constituencies? When he meets representatives of Strathclyde region, will he ask them how many of their projects employ Labour councillors, or is that practice limited to my constituency?

Mr. Ancram: I note what my hon. Friend has said. I am sure that Strathclyde region will also have noted it and will wish to comment when we meet. I am concerned to ensure that only the best and most viable and innovative projects are funded by central taxpayers' money in this way. That is how I am trying to operate the urban programme.

Mr. Maxton: First, I hope that the Minister will ignore the cheap remarks by the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) and by the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) about urban aid projects. Is the Minister aware that many of the projects employ many people and that they help many more very poor people in the poorest parts of Strathclyde? Unless he is prepared to disregard for penalty purposes the funding of these projects by Strathclyde region, when Government funding ceases many of them will close. That would cause considerable social distress throughout Strathclyde.

Mr. Ancram: When the projects are first put forward and sponsored by the local authorities, they are fully aware of the need to decide whether to take them on mainline at

the end of the period when they are funded by the urban programme. Strathclyde knew for at least two years that the urban programme funding for those projects would end this year. It was perfectly capable of making provision for them within its spending guidelines.

Prisons

4. **Mr. Norman Hogg** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the design capacity of each of Her Majesty's prisons in Scotland and the present population of each institution.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): As the information can most conveniently be given in tabular form, I will arrange for this to be published in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Hogg: I thank the Secretary of State for that reply. Is it the case that, in 1985, 47 per cent. of receptions to Scottish prisons were for default of payment of fines and that 52 per cent. of those going to prison were entering for a sentence of 30 days or less? What can be done to reduce those worrying figures?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has identified a real problem. He will be aware that two or three years ago we introduced fines enforcement officers. It is hoped that they will lead to a reduction in the number of people admitted to prison for short periods. I accept what I believe is the hon. Gentleman's view; clearly it is highly undesirable that a person for whom the courts have found a fine to be an adequate punishment should end up in prison, although that position normally arises through failure to pay the fine that has been imposed.

Mr. McQuarrie: In regard to the design capacity of the proposed new Peterhead prison, will my right hon. and learned Friend place a copy of the plans in the library at Peterhead so that people in that part of my constituency can see the sort of prison that will be erected there, which we hope will be commenced in March 1987?

Mr. Rifkind: I shall be happy to ensure that the fullest possible information is made available to my hon. Friend and his constituents. Clearly the co-operation of the local community in the town of Peterhead is an important factor in developing the prison in that town.

Mr. O'Neill: Is the Secretary of State aware that there is a sort of Parkinson's law of penology which suggests that the space available will be filled by ever-increasing numbers of prisoners, and that we should be extremely careful about sanctioning any further extensions to our prison space? All that the Secretary of State will get is a larger prison population. Therefore, will the Secretary of State consider very carefully any plans that he has to extend prison populations by this method, and especially the siting of another facility in a place which is so far removed from the centre of Scotland as Peterhead?

Mr. Rifkind: When the second phase of Shotts prison is opened early next year, the capacity of the Scottish prison system will be greater than the number of people presently in Scottish prisons. Of course, there is still an imbalance, with significant overcapacity in young offenders' establishments and overcrowding in some adult establishments. We are trying to rationalise to ensure that all prison establishments are properly used.

Mr. Wilson: In relation to the recent disturbances at Saughton and Peterhead, is it within the remit of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons to consider the general question of congestion and what impact it has had in occasioning those disturbances? If not, will the Secretary of State ensure that the remit is expanded to include that?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should be aware that in Peterhead the problem is not one of congestion. The design capacity of Peterhead is 281 and there are only 181 prisoners at Peterhead now. Whatever caused the problem, it clearly was not overcrowding.

Mr. Hirst: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the present overcrowding could be relieved by sending people convicted of drunk and disorderly offences to detoxification centres and hospitals rather than giving them prison sentences? Does he also agree that, given the present overcrowding, there is a place for Low Moss prison in Bishopbriggs? Will he take this opportunity to place on record his admiration for the work done at that prison during the recent period of uncertainty about the future?

Mr. Rifkind: I happily pay tribute to the staff of Low Moss. We have decided to keep open Low Moss, at least for a further year, because of the present position in the prison establishment. As a general principle, it is desirable to keep imprisonment for those for whom no alternative source of punishment is available to the courts. Ultimately, it is for the courts to decide whether imprisonment is appropriate in any case, but I agree with the principle that my hon. Friend has enunciated.

Mr. Hugh Brown: Before the Secretary of State places plans for the proposed new Peterhead prison in Peterhead library, or in any other library, will he suspend a decision until the Chief Inspector of Prisons reports? There must be the possibility of using capacity in the new Shotts prison.

Mr. Rifkind: Even when phase 2 of Shotts prison is opened, the need to refurbish two halls at Barlinnie will mean continued problems of overcrowding, although we hope only for a reasonably short time. I hope that the report of the Chief Inspector of Prisons will be available in the relatively near future. If it made fundamental recommendations such as the hon. Gentleman suggests, one could take them into account.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman regret having paid little attention to the stringent criticisms of the Parole Board of Scotland in its annual report in July? Was it not a mistake to have changed the parole system on the basis of administrative diktat instead of having wide debate and discussion, especially in the House?

Mr. Rifkind: I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's point. Under the present rules the Parole Board can take into account any exceptional circumstances that it may believe to be appropriate in recommending to the Secretary of State that parole should be granted to an individual prisoner. It has exercised that discretion in some cases and is free to do so whenever it thinks it appropriate.

The following is the information:

Inmate Population on 4 November 1986

Prisons	*Design Capacity*	*Population*
Aberdeen	170	199
Barlinnie	943	1,292
Barlinnie Special Unit	8	5
Cornton Vale	178	149
Dumfries	143	144
Dungavel	146	143
Edinburgh	547	646
Friarton	85	68
Greenock	180	210
Inverness	88	118
Low Moss	400	350
Penninghame	75	73
Perth	532	597
Peterhead	281	181
Shotts	60	59
Total	3,836	4,234
Young Offenders Institutions		
Castle Huntly	114	103
Cornton Vale	41	34
Glenochil	496	366
Noranside	111	75
Polmont	410	381
Total	1,172	959
Detention Centre		
Glenochil	182	142
Remand Unit		
Longriggend	201	299
Grand Total	5,391	5,634

Aonach Mor (Ski Development)

5. **Sir Russell Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration his Department has given to providing assistance to the ski development at Aonach Mor in Lochaber; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: A thorough assessment has been undertaken. We now await a response from the sponsoring bodies to the questions raised by the Industry Department for Scotland.

Sir Russell Johnston: Such a response is on its way to the Minister. Is he aware that there is great disappointment in Lochaber that the delay in reaching a decision has already cost a year of this project? Can the Minister assure me that, in making the decision, he will take into account not only the notional cost per job but the economic activity in Lochaber, and more widely in Scotland, which the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Scottish Development Agency believe the scheme would generate?

Mr. Lang: We shall certainly take those points into account. When I tell the hon. Gentleman that the proportion of public funding for this project would be about 84 per cent.—£4·8 million out of a total cost of £5·7 million—and that the cost per job would be a minimum of about £60,000, and possibly as much as £80,000, he will realise that it is important to study the matter closely.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that there are few places in Scotland where regular skiing is possible? That being so, will he do everything that he can, through the Highlands and Islands Development Board, the Scottish Development Agency and local authorities, in consultation with conservation bodies, to provide better skiing facilities in Scotland in the interests of tourism and so that the Scots can have good recreational facilities themselves?

Mr. Lang: We are keen to encourage the development of skiing in the north of Scotland wherever this can reasonably be achieved. We must consider such development closely, since so much public funding is required for a specific project.

Mr. Ron Brown: Ski development at Lochaber or elsewhere may be important, but is it not barbaric that prisoners Kinnon and Smith are placed in cages——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is a further question to which the hon. Gentleman could easily attach that supplementary question. He cannot attach it to the question that is now before the House.

Council of Fisheries Ministers (Quota)

6. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to have discussions with the Scottish fishermen's organisations on the quota decision taken at the recent Council of Ministers meeting.

Mr. John MacKay: I met representatives of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation on 19 November, when we discussed among other matters the decision taken at the last Council of Ministers meeting enabling the Commission to close a fishery when the total allowable catch is exhausted.

Mr. McQuarrie: I hope that my hon. Friend will continue to meet the Scottish fishermen's organisations to discuss this matter. Is he aware that the proposal to grant power to EEC officials to ban fishing once an allocation has been exceeded is abhorrent to the fishermen in my constituency and in the rest of Scotland? Is he aware also of what will happen when TACs are exceeded by other member states? The answer is that the penal effect will bear only on Scottish fishermen who continue to look after their total allowable catch? Will my hon. Friend explain how compensation is to be paid and how the fish will be collected?

Mr. MacKay: The fishermen who came to see me expressed the same points as my hon. Friend has mentioned. If we are to conserve stocks and ensure that the total allowable catch is not exceeded, there must be some mechanism to ensure that those who exceed their quota are punished. The proposal is that the Commission will punish them in the following year by taking some of their catch from them and giving it to those who suffered because of the over-fishing. I think that that is sensible. It punishes the offender and compensates the person who suffers. Above all, it conserves the stocks.

Community Charge

7. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from local authorities concerning the proposed community charge.

Mr. Rifkind: In addition to a response from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, I received 37 responses from individual local authorities on the Green Paper and on the subsequent Scottish Office paper on operational issues.

Mr. Home Robertson: How have the Government managed to come up with a system of local taxation that will be even more arbitrary than the rating system? As the Secretary of State for the Environment told the House on 17 November that under a poll tax people would pay the same bill for a given level of service, how can it be that someone on the Island of Mull, who might have access to limited levels of local services, will have to pay the same regional poll tax as someone who enjoys all the benefits of life in places such as Bearsden or Eastwood?

Mr. Rifkind: I am interested to note that the hon. Gentleman concedes that the rating system is arbitrary. As one of the Opposition's spokesmen on agriculture, I hope that he will seek to persuade his party not to impose rating on agricultural property, which he knows would devastate Scotland's agricultural economy.

The hon. Gentleman has spoken about the effect of the community charge. He knows that if those living on Mull or in Bearsden were to live under the same regional authority, they would receive similar regional services. It would be the responsibility of the regional council to provide services. Under our accountable system, it would be for the electorate to determine whether the level of services should be increased, reduced or remain the same.

Mr. Fletcher: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the majority of those who pay domestic rates in Scotland are eagerly awaiting the publication of a Bill that will distribute the cost of local authority services more evenly among those who use them?

Mr. Rifkind: Indeed, yes. As my hon. Friend will be aware, it is interesting to note that among those who have welcomed the proposals for a community charge and the Government's other proposals are the ratepayers associations in Scotland, the chambers of commerce, which represent small businesses, and the CBI in Scotland, which represents industry. These organisations have all given a full welcome to the Government's proposals. As they represent pretty well all the ratepayers of Scotland, that is something from which we can take great satisfaction.

Mr. Maclennan: Has the Secretary of State calculated what proportion of total local authority expenditure will be constituted, on average, by the community charge?

Mr. Rifkind: It will be broadly that proportion of local authority expenditure that is presently funded by domestic rates.

Mr. Forth: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that this long overdue reform is being watched eagerly by people south of the border to see how successful it is, so that we can follow Scotland as quickly as possible? Does my right hon. and learned Friend realise the burden of responsibility that he carries in that regard? Will he take with him my best wishes, and the best wishes of my constituents and everyone south of the border, in making this a very successful measure?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks, and I think that I can cheer him up even more. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has made it clear that legislation will be introduced to enact similar provisions for England, even before the Scottish measure has come into effect.

Mr. MacKenzie: Is the Secretary of State aware that the list that he read out of friends who support the community charge is very small indeed compared with the number of ratepayers who forcefully demonstrated during the last municipal elections that they did not like the idea at all? The right hon. and learned Gentleman should drop this pernicious tax. Why are we in Scotland to be punished when the people of England and Wales will not be punished in this way?

Mr. Rifkind: I have just said that similar proposals are to be implemented for England and Wales, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has made clear. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that one of the basic defects of the present electoral system is that a substantial proportion of the electorate make no financial contribution to the revenue of local authorities through the present rating system. Therefore, it is not surprising that they should be happy to vote for high spending.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it cannot be fair that a widow in a small bungalow should have to pay the same rates as another household where four wage earners are living? The sooner the leglislation is enacted, the better. It will be warmly welcomed by many householders in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: It is interesting that the Labour party, which is now the only political party in Scotland that wishes to keep the present domestic rating system, seems to equate Socialism with the outcome that my hon. Friend has just described.

Crofters (Rating)

8. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the position of crofters under the Valuation and Rating (Scotland) Act 1956 in so far as it relates to the reduction from gross to net value in the valuation of their houses, in the context of the proposed legislation on the abolition of domestic rates in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations on this matter from the Western Isles islands council, the Crofters Commission, the National Farmers Union of Scotland, the Scottish Crofters Union and the Harris Council of Social Service, as well as from a number of individuals in the crofting areas.

Mr. Stewart: I thank the Minister for his reply. Is he aware that the arrangement for rating crofts has been accepted for a long time by all Administrations as being fully justified and essential, and that if it is changed as a result of the legislation there will be severe social and economic consequences? There will be no incentive whatever for crofts to remain in the outlying areas of the islands or mainland.

Mr. Ancram: I listened to the right hon. Gentleman, but he is as aware as I am that the reliefs at present attach to property, and that the Green Paper's proposals suggest the abolition of a property tax and its replacement with a

personal community charge. A community charge will be much simpler, in that there will be a flat rate per adult, with a rebate available through the social security system to protect those on low incomes. The right hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that, on this year's expenditure, a community charge in the Western Isles would be about half the average applied in mainland Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will my hon. Friend confirm that because of lower incomes and the narrowness of the tax base in the crofting areas, a local income tax, as suggested by the SNP and the alliance, would have a catastrophic effect on Crofters and would add a substantial burden to the amount that they would have to pay in income tax?

Mr. Ancram: I agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. McKelvey: Does the Minister recall that I recently sent him a letter on behalf of a crofter in the rural area of Kilmarnock and Loudoun? That crofter is complaining that he does not qualify for the crofters grant because he is not in the designated area. Why is the Minister discriminating against my crofters?

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He is always helpful. We can end this discrimination by removing the property tax element of local government financing and introducing a community charge.

Pupils (Expenditure)

9. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the expenditure per pupil in Scottish schools for the year 1987-88, indicating the comparable figures in real terms for 1977-78.

Mr. Rifkind: In 1977-78 actual expenditure by local authorities per pupil was £883. The provision made for schools in the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement represents an expenditure of £1,332 per pupil. The figures are at 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Henderson: Will my right hon and learned Friend say whether these figures are reflected in better pupil-teacher ratios over the same period and state the extent to which teachers pay is also included?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I can confirm that pupil-teacher ratios, both for secondary and primary schools, have improved during the period in question.

Mr. Steel: In view of the decline in pupil numbers over the decade, will the Secretary of State tell us what in real terms, has been the reduction of expenditure on school maintenance during those years?

Mr. Rifkind: I cannot give the right hon. Gentleman a specific figure at this moment. Undoubtedly one of the problems that educational authorities are experiencing is the result of the disinclination to close half-empty schools. They are having to spend a substantial proportion of resources on the maintenance and heating of buildings when those resources could otherwise be used for text books or educational materials, which would be of more immediate benefit to their pupils.

Mr. Dewar: I am sure the Secretary of State will accept that the overwhelming aspect of the educational scene is the teachers' pay dispute. According to information that has reached me, in an 89 per cent. poll the EIS membership voted against his proposition by 84 cent. to 16 per cent.? Does this not underline the tragic blunder that he made in refusing to honour the essential financial recommedations made in Main?

Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that he must take responsiblity for a situation that could easily lead to the return of confrontation and disruption? Will he now accept that it is essential that Ministers allow negotiations between employers and teachers to start? An agreement is infinitely preferable to any imposed solution that could never command goodwill. In view of this overwhelming vote, will he accept that the worst possible result will occur if Ministers maintain their present die-hard stance and pupils are inevitably asked to pay a price for that obstinacy.

Mr. Rifkind: I have yet to receive any official notification of the figures. Therefore, one would clearly wish to consider them when they are made available. I think the hon. Gentleman will be the first to admit that Scottish teachers have been offered one of the most generous settlements that have been offered in the public sector in recent years.

If it is the case that the EIS has rejected the Government's proposals, and if it is the case that, at the recent general meeting, the leadership appeared to reject the Main report, at this stage it would appear that the only thing that has been voted for is a renewal of disruption in schools. I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that Scottish parents and the Scottish public would find that result inexplicable and unacceptable, particularly if it arises out of the Government's offer, which, as I have said, is the most generous offer in the public sector in recent years.

Rates

10. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the proposed legislation to replace rates.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend received about 750 representations during the consultation period on the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" and the Scottish Office paper on operational issues. Further representations have been received since the end of the formal consultation periods.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Minister acknowledge that among those representations there is genuine concern about the implications of replacing the existing system with a poll tax or a community charge, first, because of the administrative difficulties associated with it and, secondly — and he received these representations from Grampian regional council even when it was under Conservative control— because the system will adversely affect the young and pensioner couples and is much more repressive than local income tax? Does he agree that the Labour party's position of opposing both the existing system and the Government's alternative is wholly untenable, given that it has no policy of its own?

Mr. Ancram: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has read the Green Paper, so he must be aware that among those who will gain from the community charge are single pensioners and single-parent families. Given what he has said in the past about those categories, I am sure that he will welcome that. We have looked closely at the representations that have been made to us about the administration of the community charge and when the Bill

is introduced the hon. Gentleman will see that we have taken account of many representations. I know that he supports a system of local income tax with an equalisation grant to make it work fairly. That surprises me, as the area that he represents in Grampian region would cross-subsidise other areas. I am sure that that would not be welcomed in his constituency.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Is my hon. Friend aware that I have received an enormous number of representations from elderly and single people in places such as Newton Mearns and Giffnock who are in favour of the community charge? I know that my hon. Friend does not pay much attention to opinion polls, but he may have seen a recent one showing a huge swing to the Conservative party. Could that be because more people are now recognising the Government's determination to push through the community charge Bill?

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding the House about the most recent opinion poll. Usually after the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) has mentioned the previous one we go up six points in the poll the next day. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is worth reminding the House that under the community charge proposals single pensioners will do particularly well. Over 85 per cent. of them will gain, and of those, 30 per cent. stand to gain over £1 a week. Other single adult households will fare well, with 18 per cent. gaining and of those more than half gaining more than £1 a week. Within that last group are one-parent families. More than 80 per cent. of them will gain from the community charge, with about half of those gaining more than £1 a week. I am sure that that will be welcomed by all those categories and by the House in general.

Mr. Eadie: Which Scottish local authorities have responded favourably to the proposed legislation? If it is such a wonderful idea, why is there not a Bill running in tandem with this legislation to make the same wonderful provision for England and Wales?

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has already made it clear that our hon. Friends in England intend to follow this path next year. That is the timetable that they have set themselves. It is hardly surprising that Scottish local authorities have opposed the community charge proposals, because at present they have a cosy arrangement under which only a minority of their electors pay for their spending decisions. I would be extremely surprised if local authorities were willing to give that up easily.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that the community charge is no more arbitrary than the circumstances in which we all pay the same price for a postage stamp, and that the capitation charge is much closer to the present regime, being a tax on the consumption of services? Does he further agree that we have quite enough tax on income?

Mr. Ancram: Yes, I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend. It is also worth remembering that the community charge will finance only about 13 per cent. of local government expenditure in Scotland. Fifty-nine per cent. will continue to be financed by the central taxpayer through rate support grant and rebates, where the ability to pay is fully recognised.

Mr. Maxton: Will the Minister answer the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) and say how many local authorities in Scotland have approved of the scheme, how many officials who will have to administer it have approved of it, and how many other professional bodies who are involved have approved of it? Will he also tell the House what percentage of householders in Scotland are widows who are paying rates at present?

Mr. Ancram: A number of authorities have said that they support general or specific parts of the proposals. It would be surprising if local authorities were prepared to give up a system which at the moment works wholly and exclusively to their advantage and to the disadvantage of ratepayers. It is the ratepayers about whom we are concerned. I find it surprising that the hon. Gentleman does not regard single parents and single pensioners as vulnerable sections of the community who deserve the protection that the community charge would give them.

Firth of Clyde (Fisheries)

11. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any intention to review the inshore limits within which trawlers can fish in the Firth of Clyde.

Mr. John MacKay: There are no fishing limits in the Firth of Clyde, but there is a ban on vessels over 70ft fishing for white fish. We have no plans at present to review that ban, although we have discussed the matter with interested fishermen's organisations.

Mr. Lambie: Is the Minister aware that when the Saltcoats Sea Angling Association recently held its annual sea angling competition, I was not able to hand over the first prize of about £2,000 because that prize was for the heaviest cod and not one cod was caught. In order to protect the activities of the sea angling industry in the Firth of Clyde, is the Minister prepared to ban trawlers from fishing within the present limits, which are there no matter what the Minister says?

Mr. MacKay: Obviously I am sorry to hear that the hon. Gentleman was not able to present the prize. Perhaps if he had invited a better quality of angler to the competition they might have done better. I appreciate that sea anglers wish to catch fish and that historically the Clyde has a good record on cod. I could not agree to banning commerical fishermen from the Firth of Clyde, many of whom are my constituents. It would be quite wrong, and I see no reason to do that.

Mr. McQuarrie: My hon. Friend should be aware that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) was referring to an international angling conference and that over 1,000 people took part in it. They did not catch one white fish. My hon. Friend should look at that matter to see whether there is the possibility of having some form of restriction to allow anglers at least to catch fish.

Mr. MacKay: I always accept the advice of my hon. Friend on fishing matters. Indeed, if the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) wishes to write to me and draw my attention to the competition and when it took place, I shall look into the matter. I have to reinforce what I just said. I do not believe that we should consider banning the Clyde fishermen from the traditional fishing which they have always had in the Firth of Clyde.

Prison Officers

12. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current ratio of prison officers to prisoners in each of the Scottish prisons; and what was the corresponding ratio in 1980.

Mr. Lang: I shall arrange to have the figures for each establishment published in the *Official Report*. The overall ratio is 1:2·07 compared with 1:2·14 in 1980.

Dr. Godman: What effects do staff turnover rates have on those ratios? Is the Minister satisfied with the recruitment, selection and training of recruits to the service, and does he agree that there seems to be a thousand times more formal job security for a prison officer than for a shipyard worker, especially if the latter works at Scott Lithgow? I hope that his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will agree to a meeting with me to discuss today's announcement by Scott Lithgow concerning the massive number of people who are to be made redundant.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is very inventive in his supplementary question. Close attention is given to the training of prison officers. They have a six-week initial course and a further week a short time after. That seems to meet most of the basic requirements for training. Great care is taken in the matter.

Mr. Ron Brown: Is it not clear that Messrs Smith and Kinnon are being placed in cages in Inverness as punishment for the recent protest at Saughton prison? Is that not barbaric? As Mr. Smith is one of my constituents, I am entitled to speak about him. Is it not also an abuse of human rights or is it simply a question of Victorian values coming to the fore and the Government, who talk about enlightenment, really putting the boot in, not just for prison officers but for prisoners themselves?

Mr. Lang: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that the ratio of prison officers to inmates in Inverness is 1:1·64, which is a considerable improvement, even on the Scottish average.

Following is the information:

The following table shows the ratio of prison officers to prisoners in each penal establishment in Scotland as at the beginning of November 1980 and 1986:

Establishment	*1980 Ratio of prison officers: inmates*	*1986 Ratio of prison officers: inmates*
Aberdeen	1:2·19	1:2·65
Barlinnie	1:3·02	1:3·63
Barlinnie Special Unit	1:0·40	1:0·36
Castle Huntly	1:2·00	1:1·91
Cornton Vale	1:0·76	1:1·07
Dumfries	1:1·60	1:1·57
Dungavel	1:2·55	1:2·80
Edinburgh	1:2·77	1:2·04
Friarton	1:1·76	1:1·42
Glenochil	1:2·14	1:1·68
Greenock	1:0·64	1:1·96
Inverness	1:1·37	1:1·64
Longriggend	1:2·79	1:2·18
Low Moss	1:3·65	1:3·50
Noranside	1:1·27	1:1·53
Penninghame	1:1·77	1:2·70
Perth	1:2·80	1:2·49
Peterhead	1:1·19	1:0·76
Polmont	1:1·86	1:2·01
Shotts	1:0·94	1:0·69

Notes:

1. 'Prison Officer' includes all uniformed discipline staff up to the rank of Chief Officer I and Specialist Officers (nurses, caterers, works officers, clerk officers and instructors) who assume an element of discipline duties.

2. Non-uniformed staff (including Governor grades, civilian instructional staff, civilian tradesmen and secretarial staff) are excluded from the calculation of ratios.

Education

13. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the action which he is taking to promote peace, stability and progress in Scotland's schools.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement on the Main report made by my right hon. and learned Friend on 30 October.

Mr. Hirst: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that the position of the SSTA, in seeking negotiations with Ministers rather than resorting to strike action, is infinitely preferable to the position of the other union, which has threatened to impose disruptive and vexatious action on schools in Scotland as a result of strikes?

Mr. MacKay: I agree with my hon. Friend. The SSTA came to talk to my Department about a number of specific concerns. I would be delighted if the EIS would like similar discussions, but the position remains that the formal negotiations are with the Scottish joint negotiating committee, and we have urged all along that the negotiations should take place.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: If the EIS ballot result is as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) has suggested, will the Secretary of State cease to adopt this holier-than-thou attitude in blaming everybody but himself for the teachers' situation? Does he not recognise that if he does not exercise some flexibility and humility in these matters, the fault for the ensuing strike will be his and not the teachers'?

Mr. MacKay: I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman, although I am not in the least surprised to hear him make such an accusation. Obviously, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I will have to study the details of the ballot, but although there has been a no vote, as I understand it, that leaves the door open to negotiations, and that is what we are urging. Surely that is what all parents will want.

Mr. Dewar: I am glad the Minister has said that he would welcome negotiations. All of us, particularly in the light of what appears to be an overwhelming vote of no confidence in the Government's proposals, want to find a way forward—certainly every Labour Member wants to do so. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that we, too, want to see negotiations started? However, the Minister cannot argue that there should be negotiations while imposing on negotiations conditions so restrictive as to mean that they have to produce the same result as the offer that has been rejected. On what basis will the Minister welcome negotiations, and on what basis, and with what remit, will he allow the parties to sit down at the negotiating table?

Mr. MacKay: If the hon. Gentleman were to re-read what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said on 30 October, he would see the basis on which

we can move ahead. However, it is clear that the overall cost laid down by my right hon. and learned Friend and the timing of the two phases of the pay increase are not negotiable, but that still leaves a good deal of room for manoeuvre. The SSTA clearly felt that when it came to discuss this. Within these parameters, we can discuss something, and something could be negotiated on the SJNC.

Sir Russell Johnston: Is the Minister aware that that is not good enough and that he must now admit that the Government were wrong to break up the Main proposals? Is not the only hope of securing some peace to recognise this, because the outcome of that ballot has been a devastating rejection of the Minister's proposals?

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Gentleman says that, but he may recall that EIS meetings were rejecting the Main proposals before my right hon. and learned Friend's statement on 30 October. I understand that part of the ballot rejects the Main proposals. The EIS has gone a long way to throw out the proposals of this independent committee. My right hon. and learned Friend made it clear that we accept the main points of this proposal. Our only point is that the overall cost and the timing in two phases have to be within the terms of the statement by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We started with a point of order and I have allowed injury time on this question. We have three questions to the Solicitor-General for Scotland, so we may be able to return to question 14 if there is time.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Duke of Argyll

35. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what action has been taken by the Crown Office following the complaint of illegal fishing by the Duke of Argyll or his associates.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): No proceedings have been instructed, but the trustees of the tenth Duke of Argyll have been advised that Crown counsel consider the method of fishing used on Loch Shira is illegal. I understand they are now seeking legal advice.

Mr. Canavan: In view of the complaint submitted last month by Jimmy Reid, is it not a glaring case of double standards for the Tory Government to introduce Draconian legislation in the House of Lords to penalise working-class poachers when a member of the other place is allowed to indulge in illegal net fishing on Loch Fyne near Inverary castle? Is it not another glaring example of double standards for the procurator fiscal at Dunoon to tell the *Glasgow Herald* that he submits cases involving the hierarchy to the Crown Office in Edinburgh? Is there one law for the dukes and another for the rest of us? The whole thing looks distinctly fishy to me.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Gentleman's pun was certainly predictable. As I said, Crown counsel have said that in their view the method of fishing used on Loch Shira, part of Loch Fyne, is illegal. That method of fishing has been used at that location throughout the century without challenge and there has been nothing surreptitious about it. Thousands of tourists have seen it happening. There is no salmon fishing going on at the moment. There should not be anywhere in Scotland because of the regional restrictions, but it has been made clear to us that if, following a consideration of the particular legal situation in Loch Shira, that method of fishing is found to be illegal, it is not intended to resume it.

Mr. Soames: Has my hon. and learned Friend received any complaints about illegal fishing by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) and his associates?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: No, Mr. Speaker. I have received none at all.

Mr. Buchan: The Solicitor-General said that now that the Duke of Argyll has been found to have behaved illegally he has promised not to do it again if the case is dropped. Does the hon. and learned Gentleman apply that to the full range of criminal actions?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Gentleman should listen. I said that the Duke of Argyll has been advised that Crown counsel take the view that the particular form of fishing there is illegal. As the hon. Gentleman might appreciate if he knew anything about fishing in Scotland, a variety of techniques are used and various——

Mr. Buchan: May I go out and break a window?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: If the hon. Gentleman really wants an answer I shall give it to him.

Specialties apply to fishing in various parts of Scotland. The trustees' legal advisers have said that they will look at the matter and in the meantime they have said that there will be no resumption of the fishing there.

Mr. Fairbairn: May I ask the Solicitor-General this matter? Since the last time a Duke of Argyll was beheaded it was on the orders of the English, by a machine called "The Maiden", without evidence, would it not at least be reasonable for the Scots not to attempt to prosecute another one when there is no evidence either?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I can only repeat to my hon. and learned Friend that, following the information that was given to us, we have looked at the matter. There is nothing surreptitious about what is being done. If the hon. Gentleman had ever been to Lock Fyne he would appreciate that thousands of tourists have stood and watched this activity in the past. Nothing has been concealed from anyone. If, technically speaking, the manner that is being deployed is illegal, that will not be resumed.

Mr. Home Robertson: Since the procurator fiscal at Dunoon evidently understood that it was his duty to refer the case to his superiors in Edinburgh on the grounds that the Duke of Argyll was a member of the hierarchy, will the Solicitor-General give clear instructions to procurators fiscal throughout Scotland to deal with all alleged offenders equally?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: As the hon. Gentleman ought to appreciate, where there are cases involving any difficulty, particularly those relating to ancient fishing rights and those in which particular specialties may be involved, it is only sensible that they should be referred to the Crown Office. I seem to recall that on previous occasions the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends took exception to the fact that such difficult

matters were not reported to the Crown Office. In particular, in relation to the miners' strike I was enjoined to make sure that exactly that happened.

Prosecution Policy (Procurators Fiscal)

37. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will arrange for regular meetings with the procurators fiscal to discuss prosecution policies.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Prosecution policy is discussed at monthly meetings between the Crown Agent and regional procurators fiscal who, in turn, meet regularly with their district fiscals. Additionally, the law officers and the Crown Agent visit individual procurators fiscal in their offices from time to time and meet them in the Crown Office.

Mr. Henderson: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that his meeting on Saturday with solicitors in Cupar was extremely useful? Is he able to say whether complaints against police and prison officers, while being rigorously pursued, could result in prosecutions if they are found to be malicious or frivolous?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Yes. Particular arrangements are set out for complaints that are made against the police. They are dealt with at local level and they are also reported to the Crown Office. By the same token, to ensure that we are even handed, if the view is taken that the complaint is malicious or is wasting the time of the police, in turn the complaint, if there is sufficient evidence against him, may find himself being prosecuted.

Mr. Pollock: Is my hon. and learned Friend able to tell the House whether are not the fiscal's offices within the sheriffdom of Grampian and the Highlands are adequately staffed for the purposes required of them?

The Solicitor-General of Scotland: At present, there is no significant shortfall of either legal or non-legal staff within the area. There are certain problems with regard to accommodation in fiscal offices in Scotland, though not particularly in Grampian. However, where there are deficiencies, we hope that shortly they will be remedied.

SCOTLAND

Licensing

15. **Mr. Hugh D. Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* all the organisations that have received the consultation paper on the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976; and when he hopes to make a statement in response to representations received.

Mr. Lang: Yes, Sir. Copies of the consultation paper have also been placed in the Library of the House. The closing date for comments is July 1987 and a statement will be made after they have been fully considered.

Mr. Brown: I do not know whether the Minister was as surprised as I was that this question was reached, but it means that I do not have a carefully rehearsed supplementary. However, is it not far too leisurely that the consultation period should be to the end of July on a consultation paper that is of no great significance in any case?

Mr. Lang: Given the wide range of interests that are involved, it is probably appropriate to have a fairly leisurely period of consultation. At the end of that period, I hope that we shall be that much better equipped to react to the consultation process.

Following is the information:

List of Organisation in Receipt of Consultative Document on the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976

Alcohol Studies Centre
Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland)
Association of Scottish Chambers of Commerce
Association of Superintendents of Police (Scotland)
Baptist Union
Bishop's Conference of Scotland
Boy Scouts' Association
Brewers' Association of Scotland
Brewers' Society
British Airports Authority
British Hotels, Restaurants and Caterers Association (Scottish Division)
BP Petroleum Development Limited
Catering Managers' Association of Great Britain
Church of Scotland
Confederation of British Industry (Scotland)
Congregational Union of Scotland
Council on Alcohol (Belfast)
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Educational Institute of Scotland
Episcopal Church in Scotland
Faculty of Advocates
Federation of Scottish Junior Chambers of Commerce
Free Church of Scotland
Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland
Girls' Brigade and Boys' Brigade
Girl Guides Association
Headteachers Association of Scotland
Highlands and Islands Development Board
International Distillers and Vintners
Jewish Faith
Law Society of Scotland
Local Authorities in Scotland
London Clubs Limited
Lords Day Observance Society
Mecca Limited
Methodist Church in Scotland
National Federation of Licenced House Managers
National Consumer Council
National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses
Rank Leisure Services
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland
Restaurateurs Association of Great Britain
Royal College of Physicians
Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons
Royal College of Psychiatrists
Salvation Army
Scottish Airports Limited
Scottish Conservative party
Scottish Consumer Council
Scottish Council for Civil Liberties
Scottish Council on Alcohol
Scottish Grocers' Federation
Scottish Health Education Group
Scottish Labour Party
Scottish Law Agents Society
Scottish Law Commission
Scottish Liberal Party
Scottish Licensed Trade Association
Scottish National Party
Scottish Police Federation
Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association
Scottish Social Democratic Party
Scottish Tourist Board
Scottish Trades Union Congress
Scottish Transport Group
Sheriffs' Association
Strathclyde Licensed Trade Association
United Free Church of Scotland
United Kingdom Bartenders Guild
Working Men's Clubs and Institutes Union Limited

Mr. Speaker: Private notice question.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take points of order after the private notice question.

Invisible Trade (Statistics)

3.34 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the Government's recalculation of invisibles in the trade figures to show a higher surplus.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): Statistics of invisible trade are compiled by the Central Statistical Office, mainly from quarterly and annual surveys of businesses and individuals engaged in invisible trade transactions. This information becomes available much less frequently than the corresponding information for visible trade. Estimates of the invisible balance for the third quarter of 1986 and the month of October were calculated by the statisticians of the Central Statistical Office on the basis of the latest information available to them.

Mr. Smith: Were the Government concerned to read the report in today's edition of the *Financial Times* which said:

"but the large revisions in the invisibles came as a surprise and were greeted with widespread scepticism in the City"?

Is it not disturbing that scepticism should exist about figures on which the markets crucially depend and the integrity of which, in any proper system, ought to be beyond question? Given the Government's record on the manipulation of unemployment statistics, ought they not to be especially careful that their previous convictions do not run before them in this area?

Why did the Government depart from the practice of waiting for the figures that will be available to the Central Statistical Office on 4 December, which is only two weeks away, upon which a more justifiable revision could be made and which until now has been the standard practice?

As the Minister will be aware, the revision upwards of invisibles of about £200 million in each month over a three-month period, which leaves October out of account, gives a large increase of about £600 million. Can the Government give the basis for their confidence that these increases have occurred? Why have they occurred? On the assumption that the Government's forecasts are correct, would it not have been more prudent to have announced prior to the publication of the detailed figures that an upward revision of invisibles was at hand? That would have been better than offering an explanation after the event, especially since the upward revision has the convenient effect of changing a deficit into a surplus.

In order to restore confidence in the figures, and bearing in mind the heavy reliance placed on increases in invisibles in the Chancellor's autumn statement, would it not be desirable next time to produce more detailed justification for the calculation of invisibles and to show them in future announcements so that the scepticism that this month's experience has clearly engendered does not recur?

Mr. Howard: Unlike the right hon. and learned Gentleman, I read with a degree of scepticism some of the newspaper reports on these matters. These changes were made because it became clear to the statisticians of the Central Statistical Office that they were changes of a magnitude that ought to be drawn to the attention of the public. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman is in any way alleging that these figures were doctored by the statisticians of the Central Statistical Office, I hope that he will make that allegation in the clearest possible terms.

We are accustomed to the Opposition finding failure where there is none. Will they now stop sniping at the success represented by these figures for invisible balances? The right hon. and learned Gentleman is widely respected in the House. At this advanced stage of his career, there is no need for him to start modelling himself on his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott).

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that every time we have good news about the economy the Opposition make wild and frivolous accusations and do not bear in mind that the Government do not produce these figures but that they are produced by the CSO? Does he also agree that the increase in our invisible earnings is due to the increased investment that we have put abroad since 1979, and that invisible foreign earnings are as good foreign earners as manufacturing industry?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right. The trouble with the Opposition is that they cannot bear to see good news and desire to misrepresent it whenever it appears.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The Minister ought to accept that the scepticism is not just on this side of the House but is in the City as well, as the figures clearly show. Will he address the fact that the figures he has produced do not engender confidence in the City and that that cannot be good for him or for the figures? Is he aware that today's report in the *Financial Times* used the rather Delphic statement that the statisticians had detected some buoyancy but could not say where or how that buoyancy had taken place? Can the Minister tell us where and how it has taken place and, if possible, whether this convenient buoyancy will take place again?

Mr. Howard: I do not for a moment accept that scepticism is widespread, particularly in the City. Indeed, it is due in no small part to the City's performance over the period in question that the figures for invisibles have improved.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that it is quite extraordinary that when a trade deficit is announced the Opposition blame the Government's economic policies, but when a trade surplus is announced they accuse the Government of fiddling the figures? Is it not clear to everyone that it is not the Government but the Opposition who are in need of some creative accounting in support of their economic policy?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Opposition are quite unwilling to recognise good news when it is thrust before them.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Is the Minister aware that adding up the surpluses and deficits for all industrial countries shows that there is a large and unexplained deficit, which if allocated proportionately amounts to about £2 billion a year for the United Kingdom? This has been known for years. Can he explain the suspicious circumstances as to why this should apparently be corrected just at the moment when the balance of payments is in deficit?

Mr. Howard: I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not hold me responsible for statistics of this kind that are produced for the world as a whole. My responsibilities are much more limited, and all I am doing is reporting the fact that the figures that have been questioned by the Opposition were produced by the statisticians of the Central Statistical Office. If any charge is to be made against them, I hope that it will be made in the clearest terms.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Is not one of the reasons for the increase in invisible earnings the recovery in tourist earnings that we have seen in recent months? To what extent will the pessimistic noises from the Opposition affect the value of the pound?

Mr. Howard: I think that the markets are sufficiently used to the antics of the Opposition to be able to take their comments in the appropriate spirit.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Will the Minister answer the question that he has avoided so far? Why has the publication of these figures been brought forward and done in advance? For example, will he give a previous occasion on which figures which have been deteriorating have been announced in advance?

Mr. Howard: I did answer that question. The point is that there became evident to the statisticians large changes that they thought it right to bring to the attention of the public in the context of these figures. That is why they have been produced in this way. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that inaccurate figures should be put forward knowing them to be inaccurate and without making an attempt to reflect the most up-to-date information available.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that the House has witnessed yet again the Opposition taking an opportunity to denigrate the City and to ignore the very great export potential for invisibles?

Mr. Howard: I fear that the Opposition's inclination for denigration goes far wider than the City. The invisibles sector of our economy is by no means limited to the City, and it is right that its good performance should be drawn to the attention of the nation.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Did the statisticians insist that their latest figures be incorporated within the trade statistics?

Mr. Howard: I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman is suggesting that the Government ought to have told the statisticians to take their figures back.

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): Can my hon. and learned Friend confirm that there has been no change in the relationship between Department of Trade Ministers and the Government's professional statisticians, as the same statisticians provided figures for the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) when he was a trade Minister?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend tempts me, but I fear that I cannot say what the relationship was between the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his statisticians. All I can say is that these figures come from the statisticians, were brought forward by them and were not subject to any interference whatever by Ministers.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The Minister has attributed this change to the work of the statisticians in the Central Statistical Office. Has there been a previous occasion when the statisticians have revised the figures, in one case by one third upwards and by 50 per cent. upwards in relation to the October figures? That surely shows that there was a major error in the first place.

Mr. Howard: As I have said, the information about invisibles becomes available at less frequent intervals than does that for visibles. When it becomes available, it is right and proper that the statisticians should bring forward the most up-to-date information so that that is within the knowledge of the public. That is what has happened on this occasion. It is a pity that Opposition Members cannot recognise good news when they hear it.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is it not clear that my hon. and learned Friend and the Department have in no way interfered with the statistics that came from the Central Statistical Office? Is it not also clear from these exchanges that it is the shadow Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who apparently would fiddle the figures?

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that there is no question of anyone fiddling anything.

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. In the interests of Christmas, and good order, I think that the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) should rephrase the word "fiddling". I do not think that he intended to suggest that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) was a fiddler.

Mr. Gow: I think that the implication of the private notice question asked by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) was that my hon. and learned Friend had in fact done that.

Mr. Howard: I have invited the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East to say in the clearest possible terms whether he is making any allegations against the statisticians in the Central Statistical Office. That is something that he has consistently refused to do.

Mr. John Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) suggested that I would fiddle the trade figures. In the circumstances, and if he is a man of decency, he should withdraw that wholly unjustified allegation.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We often hear the phrase "fiddling the figures" in this House in all sorts of connotations. I do not think that the hon. Member for Eastbourne was intending to impute any dishonour to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. *[Interruption.]* My understanding is that the hon. Gentleman did not intend that. I gave him the opportunity to clarify the matter as I was anxious to move on in a spirit of good will.

Points of Order

Mr. Speaker: I shall take first points of order arising from questions today.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory reply to my question No. 6, I give notice that I intend to raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Mr. James Callaghan (Cardiff, South and Penarth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. While no one would accuse any Minister on the Treasury Bench of ever fiddling any statistic, is it not a fortunate, fortuitous and happy chance that every revision of figures that is published, whether in this area or on employment, redounds to the advantage of the Government?

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise from questions today?

Mr. Atkins: Yesterday.

Mr. Speaker: It would have been more appropriate for the hon. Gentleman to have raised the matter yesterday when we had points of order. We cannot back deal.

Mr. Robert Atkins: I am not given to raising points of order ad lib, unlike some hon. Members I could mention. Conservative Members instinctively support your rulings, Mr. Speaker. It is with that consideration in mind that I ask permission to raise one or two points of order on matters that concern me.

Following consideration of what is reported in column 138 of today's *Hansard*—which was not available yesterday so that I could not check it—I want to ask your advice on a number of points. We are awaiting your ruling, Mr. Speaker, on the contention of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) yesterday that the so-called point of order raised by the Leader of the Opposition was not a point of order. We await your ruling on that with some interest.

Mr. Speaker: I am not prepared to take points of order today on what happened yesterday.—*[Interruption.]* I am not. That matter was fully dealt with yesterday in a long run of questions. It is quite out of order for the hon. Gentleman today to raise points of order that he could easily have raised on a previous day.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take points of order only on matters that do not refer back to what happened yesterday.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you now able to give the House guidance about the use of points of order, specifically when hon. Members use a point of order wrongly, in order to make accusations and allegations against members of the public, members of the Civil Service, or, indeed, other Members of the House? Many of us are becoming concerned at the abuse of the procedures of the House, mainly by Opposition Members, by making allegations under the guise of points of order? Will you give us guidance on that, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Let me clear up the matter once and for all. We are getting into the bad habit of raising points of order on political issues — [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Order. Such issues are nothing to do with the Chair. The House will know that I am frequently on my feet repeating the words, "This is not a matter for me". Indeed, these points of order are not matters for me, and I must say to the House that it would be in the interest of good order if we stopped it.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that the House will agree that from the moment when, according to ancient custom, you were dragged into the Speaker's chair you have been a model in upholding the traditions of the House. Having said that, I have never raised with you a bogus point of order, but I am growing deeply concerned that many hon. Members, not just on political points, but on security points— [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] When one seeks to table a question with any element of security, the Table Office rightly says that that is prevented under the Burke arrangements [HON. MEMBERS: "Burke?"] The Birkett arrangements- not Edmund Burke. That being so, one is always willing to acquiesce with the ruling of the Table Office, which comes from you, Mr. Speaker. But I am deeply concerned—and I mean deeply concerned—that we have Members in the House who would disregard the political security of the country to make cheap political points——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is doing exactly what he was hoping nobody else would do.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am the last to add to your problems, but the House can look only to you for guidance. I say this with great and genuine sincerity. The Vote of the House, which we all have every day, is now being used almost like a mail catalogue of innuendoes and accusations about people outside the House. There was a time in the House when the Vote was used very sparingly to draw the attention of the people and of the House to various matters. Now, day after day, not one, not a dozen, but 20 people who may well be innocent, who have not had the benefit of trial and who do not have the benefit of defence, are abused and have their names dragged continually into the Vote by seekers, not after truth, but after what they think of their own careers.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) once honourably withdrew an accusation against a member of Rolls-Royce. It used to be a rare occurrence to abuse someone who was not in the House. It is now an everyday occurrence. Have you no control, Mr. Speaker, over what goes in the Vote, because if it goes on as it is we shall all be brought into disrepute?

Mr. Speaker: I have control over what goes in the Vote. The Table Office and I apply very strictly the rules regarding early-day motions. I imagine that that is what the hon. Gentleman means. If the hon. Gentleman believes that the procedure is being misused——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Abused.

Mr. Speaker: If it were being abused, the motion would not go in. If the hon. Gentleman believes that the procedure is being misused, the proper course is to bring the matter to the attention of the Select Committee on Procedure which, I understand, is minded to examine this very matter.

Last week, I said that we were getting into the habit of naming people outside this place who had no redress and that we should watch this very carefully because, although we have an undoubted right of free speech in this place, we have an equal obligation to use it with discretion.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask for your guidance? Early-day motion 160 on today's Order Paper specifically names Lord Rothschild and accuses him in blatant and direct terms of having committed a criminal offence. That accusation has been put on the Order Paper by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). You have reminded hon. Members on many occasions that they are responsible for their statements in the House. In view of what you have just said, Mr. Speaker, may I ask for your guidance? Is there no vicious or slanderous calumny that cannot be put on the Order Paper without your having any control over it?

Mr. Speaker: Every question and every early-day motion on the Order Paper has been carefully screened by the Table Office to ensure that it meets the rules. If it did not meet the rules, it would not be on the Order Paper. I repeat, however, that if rules become misused it is right that the Procedure Committee, which is a Select Committee of this House, should look into the matter and I understand that it is seeking to do so.

Mr. Nicholls: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have dealt with the matter. The hon. Gentleman cannot ask supplementaries of me.

Mr. Nicholls: I asked for your guidance and I did not get it.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am not in the habit of raising points of order and I know that you regard it as very important to protect the interests of Back Benchers. I am very perturbed that every day seems to bring a long spell of bogus points of order, which inevitably takes time from Back Benchers because the Front Bench speakers always get their allocation. In future, when dealing with points of order, will you bear in mind the amount of time being taken from Back Benchers?

Mr. Speaker: That is exactly what is happening today—an Opposition day when a long list of Members wish to speak. Did I not make the same remark yesterday?

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Reference has been made to questions that I have tabled. Perhaps I could just establish——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is exactly what I hoped that the House would stop doing. It is absolutely out of order for the hon. Gentleman to seek to raise a political point or to draw attention to his early-day motion on a point of order through me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Sit down, please. If the point of order is a matter touching directly on my responsibility, I will take it. If not, I shall ask the hon. Gentleman to sit down at once, because this is happening too frequently.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My point of order does not relate to early-day motions. It relates specifically to questions on the Order Paper in my name. All the individuals that I have named on the Order Paper have been the subject of a reprimand by letter from the Attorney-General and have either been referred to the Metropolitan——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not taking that. It has nothing to do with me.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think that this is the first occasion in this Parliament on which I have sought to raise a point of order in what might be described as prime time. I raise it because I, too, have decided—as is my right, provided that it is in order—to table a number of early-day motions which the Table Office has accepted and which appear on the Order Paper today.

I ask you to reconsider your remarks yesterday about the way in which the point of order raised by the Leader of the Opposition——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall not do that. I told the hon. Gentleman that we had a long run on this yesterday. I will take points of order touching on matters which have arisen today. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise a point of order about the numerous early-day motions that he has on the Order Paper today, I shall take it.

Mr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, you will see that the numerous early-day motions that I have tabled refer to the fact that some Opposition Members signed the early-day motions tabled in the name of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). Some of those hon. Members have Front-Bench responsibility——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Brown: I must finish this sentence.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. The hon. Gentleman seeks to raise in the House the subject of his early-day motions. That is out of order. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Brown: I am not seeking to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman seeks to do that, I shall stop him at once.

Mr. Brown: I wish to complete the sentence. The point I am making to you, Mr. Speaker, is that I invited Opposition Members to withdraw their names from an early-day motion on the assumption that they believed that they were being spoken for by——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is precisely what the hon. Gentleman's early-day motions are about. It is not a matter for me. He has staked them out clearly in his early-day motions. That is within order and is fair enough, but it is not a matter for me.

Scotland (Education)

4.1 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the crisis in Scottish education as a result of the Government's rejection of the Main report and the subsequent ballot of members of the Educational Institute of Scotland."

I promise to be brief. This is a genuine emergency about the gravest crisis to face Scottish education in its history. Shortly after the present Secretary of State for Scotland was appointed he agreed to set up a so-called independent inquiry into the salaries and conditions of teachers. That was a rather belated response to the longest and most bitter dispute in Scottish education. Nevertheless, there were great hopes and expectations that the setting up of the Main committee of inquiry would lead to a successful solution. When Sir Peter Main and his committee published the report a few weeks ago, there were many comments about shortcomings, misgivings and reservations. Nevertheless, the Secretary of State's response was such a disgrace that it almost finished any chance of the Main report ever being implemented and a successful solution to the dispute being found.

The Secretary of State rejected one of the principal recommendations of the Main report on the timescale of the salary proposals. If he had his way, some Scottish teachers would lose literally thousands of pounds. The largest teachers' union in Scotland, the EIS, responded by holding a special general meeting. It unanimously decided to reject what has come to be called "the Rifkind package". It decided to ballot all of its members. Just an hour ago, the result of the ballot was announced. There was an 89 per cent. return: 84 per cent., or 28,257 teachers, voted no. That represents more than half the day school teachers in Scottish education. Whatever the other trade unions decide, the majority of Scottish day school teachers have rejected the Secretary of State's package.

Now there is a threat of further disruption in our schools. We must bear in mind the fact that some children have not experienced educational normality for two years or more. Therefore, undoubtedly the Secretary of State has plunged Scottish education into this state of deep crisis. He has ultimate responsibility for Scottish education. He is or should be accountable to Parliament. I believe that he should resign forthwith for failing to deliver and for abrogating his responsibilities to Scottish teachers, parents and schoolchildren. At the very least, the House should debate this important matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member has asked leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the escalation of the crisis in Scottish education following the Government's rejection of the Main report and the result of the ballot of members of the Educational Institute of Scotland."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Member said and also to Scottish questions this afternoon. I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised as being appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 12 DECEMBER

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): I beg to give notice that on Friday 12 December I shall call attention to extremism in local government.

Mr. Lewis Stevens.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken.

Opposition Day

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY]

Bus Deregulation

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Front Bench spokesman, I must tell the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.6 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the loss of essential services to the public in rural, suburban and urban areas by the failure of the 1985 Transport Act and bus de-regulation; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to repeal the 1985 Act and to replace it with legislation designed to put the social and economic needs of the community and the travelling public in the forefront of public transport policy.

I am sure that the House will join me in wishing the Secretary of State a happy birthday. I am only sorry that today's debate will disrupt and spoil his birthday celebrations. Having said that, I wish to comment on the origins of the 1985 Act.

On 12 February 1985 the then Secretary of State for Transport, the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), in moving the Second Reading of the 1985 Transport Bill, set out the purpose of the measure. He said at column 192 of *Hansard* that the objective of the Bill was competition, providing an incentive for better services and providing better services and lower fares. Later, he anticipated that there would be considerable savings to ratepayers and to the public purse. The Minister of State went further in claiming major savings in Lancashire. I shall return to that in a moment.

In Committee the Minister of State said that another purpose of the Bill was to create new businesses.I do not know how far all the objectives of the Secretary of State have been met. He claimed that the Act would produce more helpful and polite drivers on the buses. I do not know whether that has been achieved, but the helpfulness has been the other way round. In Tyne and Wear, for example, it is not uncommon for passengers to guide the drivers around the routes. The passengers are being helpful to the driver, not the other way round.

As for the other criteria laid down by the Secretary of State, I can tell him that, without a shadow of doubt, the Act has been an abject failure. How could it be otherwise? Twelve months after his Second Reading speech the former Secretary of State told the annual dinner of the Bus and Coach Council:

"The result of the 1985 Act was that operators were now free to conduct their businesses free from the constraints of a social conscience."

Of course, by then, the Act was safely on the statute book. We are entitled to conclude that, on that occasion, the Secretary of State was being less economical with the truth than he was on Second Reading, but we should be grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's candour. He clearly let the cat out of the bag.

The effect of the Act is simple. Those who depend upon public transport — the elderly, those with personal mobility problems, women and children on large housing estates and those who live in rural areas — are being sacrificed in the pursuit of profit. Indeed, all the evidence shows that the position will become worse as the months go by. The Office of Fair Trading has already received 50 complaints of unfair competition, and I understand that a test case is being prepared.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): The hon. Gentleman said, "as the months go by". Does he recognise that the Act has been in force only since the end of October? Is it not premature to make such comments until we have received all the evidence?

Mr. Hughes: Since the Act was put on the statute book Ministers have said, at the Dispatch Box and elsewhere, that we should wait until 26 October to see what would happen. We now know what has happened. There is no longer a need to predict. I shall deal with exactly what has been happening and allow the Secretary of State to answer the case. Unfortunately, lack of time prevents me from going through every piece of evidence which has been submitted to me. Therefore, I shall have to give a snapshot of what has been happening, but many of my hon. Friends will give more detailed analyses from their areas.

Let us first consider the level of service, about which the evidence is clear. Services in the early morning and in the evening have been drastically cut. On Saturdays and Sundays, services have almost disappeared in many areas. I am told that, in Derbyshire, the villages of Froggatt, Hassop, Pentrich, Twyford, Thulston and Coombs now have no services at all, where they previously had services. There are complaints that hospital visiting has become much more difficult and that visits must be curtailed because of cuts in services and frequency.

In Kettering, a perfectly good bus station has been closed because the county council reduced its subsidy to the National Bus Company subsidiary. The result is that passengers must queue outside in the rain — they will soon have to queue outside in the snow — while a perfectly good station remains empty. Far from being satisfied with the service, the public are dissatisfied. In Lancashire there have been 12,000 telephone calls of complaint and requests for information during the three weeks since bus deregulation day.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that precise point?

Mr. Hughes: No, I shall not give way.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member who is leading for the Opposition deliberately to mislead the House when he knows perfectly well——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must withdraw the words "deliberately to mislead".

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Accidentally to mislead, then.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members do not deliberately mislead each other.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. There will be ample opportunity for the hon. Lady to answer the case that I shall put and to deny the information that I have given.

Tyne and Wear has received more than 1,000 telephone calls a day — complaints and requests for information. Bus Watch, which is an independent monitoring group and which has among its members the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds and the National Federation of Women's Institutes — bodies which are not subsidiaries

[Mr. Hughes]

of the Labour party, although the Minister might level that charge against some others — has been inundated with letters of complaint. I have some of them with me.

I expect that the Secretary of State will say, "It is all right for the Opposition to concentrate purely on the problems. Why do they not mention some of the success stories?" I have looked very hard for success stories, but I have found none. I wonder whether the Secretary of State can conjure up some success stories. Will he quote Glasgow as a success story? There are plenty of buses plying the streets of Glasgow — so many that they cannot move. The town is chock-a-block because of traffic congestion. The same is true of Newcastle, where the congestion caused by buses at some times of the day and in some parts of the city has been aggravated by a major switch back to the use of private cars.

Perhaps the Secretary of State will argue that, despite the problems, the deleterious effects of deregulation have been offset by fare reductions. Again, the facts reveal a different picture. Bus fares have increased because of direct increases and because of different travel patterns. Many people must take two or three buses to complete a journey for which they previously needed only one bus, so they have to pay twice or three times. A constituent of mine aged 63 wrote to tell me that his three-month season ticket has increased in price from £50 to £78, which is more than a 50 per cent. increase. What is worse, the new City Ride ticket does not cover the same distance as he used to travel. He has to pay again to use a different bus because another company running on that route will not accept his season ticket. When he asked what he could do about it he was told, "That is all right. You need walk only three quarters of a mile from the end of your journey to your place of work."

Many other examples could be quoted. However, perhaps the Secretary of State's last line of defence will be that the loss of services and the fare increases are offset by savings to the ratepayers. On 8 July this year the Minister of State said in press release No. 374, headed "David Mitchell welcomes bus tendering success in Lancashire":

"As a direct result of the Government's new policy of competitive tendering for local bus services, Lancashire County Council has cut its planned spending from £8·3 million to £2·5 million this year—a 70 per cent. saving for broadly the same level of services."

On reading that press report one can almost feel the self-satisfaction oozing from the Minister of State. Unfortunately, he got it wrong. I received a letter from the leader of Lancashire county council, Councillor Louise Ellman——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: A biased source.

Mr. Hughes: —in which she said:

"On the financial side, Mr. Mitchell's statement about £5 million savings for Lancashire this year are clearly ridiculous. No such saving is envisaged even on the low tenders received and we will have to add to the current bill to remedy some of the problems already identified. I see that Mr. Mitchell has recently (in an interview on Radio Lancashire) re-worded his assertion to state that we will be saving £5 million next year. This projection is equally wrong."

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): If the hon. Gentleman checked the facts, he would know that that is the annualised rate of saving that is envisaged in Lancashire. I entirely accept that between now and the end of the financial year there will not be the full £5 million savings, but they will be of that order during a full year.

Mr. Hughes: The bullish demeanour of the Minister of State in the press release is not borne out by what he said elsewhere. At a meeting of transport professionals he said that the apparent savings this year may not be repeated next year. He must make up his mind on where he stands. He may challenge the accuracy of that statement, but I have in my pocket the Department of Transport official minute of the meeting, stating exactly what he said. Consequently, the Minister must make up his mind. Are there savings, this year, next year, or not at all? In reality, he is all at sea, and at sixes and sevens.

There is no evidence anywhere else in the country for cost savings. For example, Fife county council has increased its expenditure by £400,000 a year and has sent the bill to the Secretary of State for Scotland. I see that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland is in the Chamber, and perhaps he has the cheque for the money in his pocket. Oxfordshire has increased its expenditure from £500,000 to £700,000. Derbyshire expects a 20 per cent. cost increase. Consequently, the Government cannot rebut the facts by claiming savings in other areas. I accept that some savings can be demonstrated, but they are often the result of the creative accounting that the Government allowed for in the legislation.

We know, for example, that many of the loan debts of the previous public transport undertakings were left with the local councils, and so it would appear that some of the new companies are more viable and commercially profitable than they are. Indeed, can the Secretary of State tell us how much of the debt was dealt with in that way? As I have said, the Minister of State has rebutted his own case when it comes to savings. Thus, all the agony faced by passengers, by the 9,000 who have lost their jobs with passenger transport authorities, the 9,000 who have lost their jobs in the NBC, and the agony of those still employed who have had to take wage cuts of up to £20 to £30 a week and who face much worse conditions, has had to be borne for, at best, transitory savings, and, at worst, illusory savings.

I turn briefly to another aspect of the 1985 Act—the privatisation of the NBC. In the interest of time, I shall not give all the quotations that I could give from letters or from *Hansard*, but I asked the Secretary of State how many of the NBC subsidiaries had been sold, the price that they were sold for, and what their assets were. He replied that he was not prepared to make that information available, and that in due course he would tell us the aggregate amount for the sales.

We exchanged correspondence on that point. The Secretary of State said that while the sales were going on it would be damaging to give the information that I sought, as it would make it more difficult to sell the other companies. That confirms that the Secretary of State has sold off, or given away, those companies just because he is obsessed with the ideology of privatising public assets. There can be no other explanation. If he had obtained a good price for them, he would have been keen to make that known, as it would have helped his negotiations. Worse, he said in his letter to me that he would never tell the

House or the public what the individual sale price of any company would be. He said that he would tell us only the aggregate amount from those sales.

If the Secretary of State was the managing director of a private company and told the annual shareholders meeting that he would not tell them what he had obtained individually for all the companies that he had sold, he would be out of his job so fast that his feet would not touch the ground. He has a duty to the House and to the public to come clean about the facts. On previous occasions we have been told to wait and see before going off at half cock about fears and worries. Well, we now know the facts. The Secretary of State also knows them. His reaction to the facts was shown in a speech that he made to the Institution of Civil Engineers on 20 November. That speech was breathtaking in its complacency. The only part of it that I could agree with was when he complimented those who had to do the work of preparing for deregulation. I accept that they have done a tremendous amount of work, in very difficult circumstances.

In his speech the Secretary of State said:

"the legislation that we have put in place for the change is clearly generally working well."

The right hon. Gentleman concluded by telling the people involved that he hoped

"you will look back on these times with some pleasure and some sense of achievement".

I was too kind when I said that the right hon. Gentleman's speech was breathtaking in its complacency. It showed that his spell in the Treasury did him a lot of harm. There he learnt that two half truths make a whole truth, and that is the basis of his policy.

The evidence shows that the 1985 Act has failed, and that is why our motion calls on the Government to repeal it. There are no practical obstacles to doing so. The Secretary of State has plenty of time, as the Department of Transport's legislative programme is the lightest that I have ever known. The Department's only Bill, the Pilotage Bill, is starting life in the other place. If the Secretary of State will accept the repeal of the 1985 Act, I can promise him the Opposition's co-operation in speeding that repeal through. Furthermore, we offer to draft the Bill for him. We cannot be fairer than that.

The principles of that legislation will be based on service to the customer, provided by directly elected local transport authorities. The local transport authorities will be charged with the responsibility of producing and executing plans for the integration of bus and rail transport. The plans will be concerned with the needs of the customer and will cater for those in society who have special needs. The plans will ensure that the services are provided at reasonable fares that people can afford.

The legislation will ensure the widest possible local consultation on the needs of the locality, and will take account of the social fabric of the society in which we live. The legislation will restore local decision making and local democracy when it comes to transport needs and to determining the socially necessary financial support for maintaining those services.

From my travels up and down the country it is clear that a great deal of local initiative and innovation have been stifled by the 1985 Act. Those concerned desperately wish to be free of the constraints with which they are now saddled. I do not expect that the Government will take up our very generous offer to assist in the repeal of the 1985 Act, but we will repeal it, and we shall restore the concept of public service to our transport undertakings. For the Labour party, a social conscience is not a constraint: it is a stimulus to action. That will be the hallmark of our transport policy in government.

4.27 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John Moore): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'congratulates the Government on its radical measures to arrest the long running decline of the bus industry by abolishing outdated controls and creating the conditions in which competition, innovation and enterprise can flourish and provide better bus services, whilst at the same time enabling local authorities to obtain value for money in subsidising socially necessary services, thereby putting the social and economic needs of the community and of the travelling public in the forefront of public transport policy.'.

Before beginning the main thrust of my speech, I should like to respond to one or two of the points made by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes). My hon. Friend the Minister of State will respond to some of the other points at the end of the debate. However, I must say that many of the points made by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North were made in his normal measured style.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the National Bus Corporation, and the House has a legitimate interest in accountability for public money. He was right, in that the letter that I sent to him on 31 October says:

"because it involves the sale of a large number of similar bodies over an extended period."

But it might have helped if the hon. Gentleman had continued the quotation. The letter continues:

"The price of any individual sale, if published now, could in my view, and in the view of the Chairman of the NBC, prejudice negotiations with those who are interested in future purchases."

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North may not be aware that I once had the privilege of serving on the Public Accounts Committee. Although we need to protect confidentiality to ensure that the proper benefits go to the taxpayer, the information must be regularly made available to the National Audit Office, and so to the PAC, which has arrangements for conserving commercial confidentiality. The hon. Gentleman is a fair man, and I know that he would want me to make the House aware of that.

Again, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North was very fair in drawing my attention to remarks made by my predecessor. I thank him for his courtesy and for his reference to my birthday, although perhaps one does not really want to spend one's birthday standing at the Dispatch Box. However, he drew my attention to two of my predecessor's speeches, and said that he would mention them. On 11 February 1986, my predecessor spoke to the Bus and Coach Council. He referred to operators having the freedom to manage their businesses without the constraints of a social conscience. That was fairly quoted by the hon. Gentleman, but he neglected to turn over the page. My predecessor referred not simply to the role of management, but to decisions about social needs by local authorities. That was the other side—the legitimate side —of the problem.

The hon. Gentleman rightly referred to the Second Reading of the Transport Bill when my predecessor mentioned the things that he thought competition would provide — an incentive to be efficient and offering

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passengers a better quality of service. The hon. Gentleman neglected to quote my predecessor fully. The precise phrase used by my predecessor was:

"The customers may want greater efficiency, lower fares, smaller buses going into residential estates, greater comfort or a more polite and helpful driver."—[*Official Report*, 12 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 192.]

I am simply making it clear that that reference was made in relation to the legitimate desire of the customers. I wished to put the whole quotation on the record.

I shall try not be be extensive in my remarks because this will obviously be an interesting debate, because clearly it will illuminate the fundamental differences between the parties. I fully accept that fact. I will not accept the offer made on behalf of the Opposition by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North to assist in the repeal of the legislation. The debate will show again that Labour is trapped in its past. Labour Members are incapable of meeting modern problems. They have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. Under Labour—should the party obtain office —bus users, like everyone else, will not be allowed to decide what they need and want. The planners and bureaucrats will decide for them.

The Labour party sees no future for the bus industry other than ever-increasing subsidies and ever-declining services. We must contrast that Labour defeatism with the bold measures that we have taken. We have made the most radical changes in the bus industry for 50 years. We have removed the out-dated controls that were crippling the industry, and instead we have sought to create the maximum possible potential for innovation and efficiency. At the same time, we have sought to safeguard the provision of socially worthwhile, but commercially unprofitable, routes.

After hearing the hon. Gentleman's speech, we must ask why it was necessary to be so radical. First, the bus industry has been in decline for 30 years whichever party was in office. Secondly, bus usage has halved since 1955 —that is a fact. Thirdly, the bus share of the travel market has also dropped from 38 per cent. to a mere 8 per cent. in the same period. Fourthly, in the past 10 years, bus fares have risen 24 per cent. in real terms, and risen 19 per cent. more than motoring costs. Fifthly, within the same 10 years, local services declined by 15 per cent. and employment dropped by 22 per cent.

Those are the facts of an industry trapped in a spiral of decline. I recognise that that decline was not due to a lack of support from taxpayers and ratepayers. Quite the contrary. Subsidies to support the industry's losses grew in real terms from £20 million in 1970 to over £¼ billion in 1985. There were increasing subsidies, decreasing services, a declining industry. Clearly, we had to act. We attacked the root cause of the problem. Bus services did not ebb away through lack of demand for them. The market was still there.

Thirty-nine per cent. of the nation do not have access to a car. Many people who do would much rather use a bus if there were a service that met their needs. We recognise that thousands of people want good bus services —the commuters, the elderly, young people, and the less well off. Under the old system, these people's pleas mostly went unanswered, except in areas where larger and larger amounts of public money were spent to lesser and lesser effect. Under the old system, the market mechanism to meet their needs did not exist. It is on behalf of these people that we have been trying to restore to the bus industry the ability to respond to its customers' demands. We have deregulated the industry—despite what some hon. Gentlemen have said — not because of the ideological dogma that is so familiar on the Labour Benches, but because we wanted to give the industry back to its consumers. The existence of a large group of consumers who wanted better bus services gave us the confidence to think that it was possible to check the industry's decline. It was obvious that here was the market by which the industry could, and ultimately must, live.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): How has the Minister passed the bus service back to the consumer? On Merseyside, on days one and two, cleaners, who start their work at 5.30 in the morning, waited three-quarters of an hour for a bus for the first time in their lives. To my personal knowledge, that week, the first system changed on at least three occasions. Unlike the Secretary of State, I am a public transport user; I do not own a car. Therefore, I travel by public transport. All that the Government have done, as far as Merseyside is concerned, is to create absolute chaos and impose avoidable hardships on people on the outskirts of Liverpool. In many cases, fares increased four times.

Mr. Moore: Before deregulation day, 26 October 1986, I said, as did my hon. Friend the Minister of State, that the changes would create initial difficulties and disruption. Anybody who seeks to make changes of the radical kind that we are talking about, after 50 years of long-term decline, must expect initial difficulties.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Will the Secretary of State quickly refute the allegation that the Government are motivated purely by dogma by quite properly claiming that the Government nationalised London Transport, took it out of the hands of the GLC politicians and put it back into the hands of professional transport operators? Since then, there has been a marked increase in the number of passengers, a tremendous improvement in the service and a reduction in the necessary subsidy.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is a little ahead of Monday's Question Time when, obviously, the great success of London Regional Transport are to be discussed.

The fainthearted—obviously there are some in the House—could have been forgiven for thinking that the bus industry's future was bleak. But the Government were not fainthearted. We realised that buses could have a future. We tested that belief. It is interesting to hear some remarks one month after deregulation day. We tested that belief in 1980 when we deregulated long distance coaches. Do hon. Members remember what Labour said then? Mr. Albert Booth said that that Act

"would pose a serious threat of damage, possibly irreparable, to bus services in many parts of the country."

He added that he believed

"that an expansion of bus services based on competition between private operators exists only in a Tory dream world."

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), whom I believe is still with us, said that that Bill was

"an ideological concept, which will reduce the mobility of those who are most needy and disadvantaged in our society."—[*Official Report*, 27 November 1979; Vol 974, c. 1133 and 1235.]

What have we heard since? We have heard nothing. Opposition Members were wrong. The 1980 Transport

Act led to the starting up of 700 new services and a sharp fall in coach fares. That was the reality of the "Tory dream world"—better services at lower prices. The Opposition might be disappointed by the success of the 1980 Act, but the travelling public are not. I am delighted that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North is not disappointed in it. He was not trapped in some of the remarks that I can quote. The travelling public is receiving good, fast, efficient coach services at the right price.

Understandably, with the success of long distance coach deregulation behind us, the Government turned to local services. The system that we replaced was embodied in the Road Traffic Act 1930. It may have been the right one for the 1930s, but by the 1980s it had, for many years, restricted the bus industry's ability to compete with the private car. The industry was unable to compete with the car because the Act limited the number of bus operators. Operators needed a licence for each route they ran, but once they had the licence their lives were comfortable. If another operator applied for a licence to run on the same route, they were allowed to object, and their objections were often upheld. Once the operator had his licence, there was little chance that he would have a competitor to keep him on his toes, to keep him alert to his customers' needs, to keep his fares down or to encourage him to run on time. This lack of competition accelerated the painful decline of the bus industry. No competition meant that the consumer had no effective way of telling the bus industry what he wanted. All that was said in 1980. How wrong the Opposition were. When the bus industry did not supply what the consumer wanted, he went away.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, just as the Opposition were wrong about long distance buses, they have also been wrong about local buses? I am not sure what sort of world they live in. If Opposition Members come to Banbury, they will discover that where previously there was only one bus every half hour to a council estate there is now a bus every 15 minutes. There used to be only four buses an hour to the most populous housing estate, but now there are at least 10 buses an hour and on some parts of the route 16 an hour. Opposition Members are welcome to come to Banbury as my guests to see exactly what is happening there.

Mr. Moore: I thank my hon. Friend for that. Many of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Minister of State, will make similar detailed points and illustrate the success stories that abound throughout the country. I am trying to deal with the main frame of the policy, as the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North suggested I should do.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) read out some figures for Lancashire. There were 11,000 queries, but few of them were complaints. The cameras went round the first day when the buses were deregulated and there was, indeed, something of a problem. *[Laughter.]* A photograph was taken of a gentleman who was dissatisfied on that first day. The next day I bumped into him when I was shopping and asked him how the service was now. He said, "Perfectly all right. The only thing was that on the first day we couldn't get used to the new numbers. Now everbody has got used to them." That is extremely interesting. Another elderly chap said, "Although I'd been using the old service for years, I soon got used to the new one."

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. Interventions must be brief.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend with her knowledge has made her point. I shall proceed because this is a short debate.

Protecting existing operators from competition was justified, and is about to be justified again by Opposition Front Bench spokesmen, on the ground of cross-subsidy. Operators who ran loss-making routes were allowed to make up for them by charging unnecessarily high fares on their profitable routes, so the one type of route subsidised the other. That might appear reasonable, but it was not —not at all—because charging high fares on profitable routes drove custom away to such an extent that some of those routes became unprofitable and needed the support of the remaining profitable routes to be maintained. So the downward spiral continued. Cross-subsidy by its very nature made services worse, not better.

Protection from competition to shield cross-subsidy is both unjust and ineffective. I should have thought Opposition Members understood that. It is unjust because cross-subsidy for unprofitable routes comes not from the general public purse, but from other bus users. Bus users have a generally lower income than average, so cross-subsidy means that the less well off are made to subsidise themselves. To make the poor subsidise the poor is not part of Conservative philosophy. The changes that we have made to the bus industry rest on the principle that the consumer comes first because we know that putting consumers first is not only good for them, but vital to the well-being of the bus industry and its employees. It is only by serving customers well that an industry grows and prospers.

A clear-sighted look at the bus industry immediately identifies two kinds of bus service: that which is commercially viable on its own and that which is socially necessary but cannot be operated without a subsidy. Who identifies which is which? We say that the free market must do this. Only the free market can determine which routes are profitable, and only the free market can properly match buses and bus routes to the needs of the passenger.

Under the new Act any licensed operator can run a bus route so long as it meets safety standards, so there is now no cosy protection for those who run routes. Competition is ever present and it is having a remarkable effect on the efficiency of bus operators. It is encouraging them to think——

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Moore: No. I must continue.

Mr. Wareing: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Moore: I will not give way. It is encouraging them to think of new ideas to develop their markets——

Mr. Wareing: Will the Minister give way on the point of safety?

Mr. Moore: It is inspiring them to take the new opportunities that deregulation offers.

Mr. Wareing: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that the Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Moore: Overall, the free market found that about 75 per cent. of bus services were profitable—that was

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the amount registered. But—I stress this—we recognise that there are socially worthwhile services which cannot run without subsidy.

I know that our desire to maintain subsidised services was a great disappointment to the Opposition parties. On many occasions they made up for that disappointment by giving the impression to people that we were going to do away with subsidised services. I hope people now realise with what cynical contempt they were being treated by the Opposition. Local authorities have stepped in with subsidy as they were always intended to and the free market has played its part in providing better services at a better price. Local authorities have not been able to throw public money about with the gay abandon some did before. Local authorities do not decide how much subsidy a route needs; the market decides. Local authorities now put the route out to open tender and, thus, discover who can run it most efficiently and give the best value for money.

We have removed the restrictions on the quantity of bus services under the 1930 Act, but not the parts of it which related to safety. There is no compromise on safety under deregulation.

Mr. Wareing: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Moore: Safety remains the priority it always has been and the traffic commissioners and my Department will be enforcing it every bit as strictly as before.

Mr. Wareing *rose*——

Mr. Moore: Indeed, we have increased the number of staff engaged on safety checks by 24 per cent.

The broad maintenance of service levels does not mean that every bus which was previously running still is. For local authorities one of the great benefits of the Transport Act 1985 is the financial transparency in the organisation of bus services. Under the old system many councils simply did not know where their money was going. Now they have the information to judge expenditure properly. Some services have been revealed as bad value for money while others have turned out to be less expensive than was thought. This means that local authorities can focus their limited funds on services that really benefit the people of their area.

The greatest achievement of the Transport Act is not that service levels have been maintained or even that enormous savings have been made, but that the bus industry now has a structure which will allow it to serve its customers better for years to come. It now is, and will remain, open to new ideas and innovation so that it can meet the real needs of its consumers. Before, buses were unable to adapt to a changing market, but now all that is changing.

The results of the new freedom are visible already.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Moore: New services are being introduced and neglected corners of the market are being developed.

Mr. Wareing: The Minister is frightened.

Mr. Moore: I have already given way many times because I am endeavouring to allow hon. Members who wish to speak to intervene. Normally I give way to every intervention. I am endeavouring politely to respond to the usual pattern of sedentary interruptions, but they will only prevent Back Bench Members from speaking in the debate.

Bus operators started operating mini-bus services even before official deregulation. Now there are many more. By the end of the year the old NBC companies plan to have 3,000 mini-buses. In Lincoln the presence of a fleet of NBC mini-buses has encouraged the formerly municipal-owned transport company to run taxis as a bus service in competition. That is a good demonstration of how competition spurs innovation and benefits the passenger.

The Transport Act ensures that the bus industry will continue to be invigorated by competition and guided by the needs of its customers. It is an excellent example of Conservative philosophy in action — it is practical, rational and gives people what they want. The contrast with Socialism could not be more stark. The motion shows with frightening clarity how the Opposition are locked in the straitjacket of outdated, ineffective, autocratic ideas — the kind of ideas that sent the bus industry into a nearly terminal decline. I urge the House to reject it and to endorse instead the measures that will put the industry back on its feet and ensure its robust health for years to come.

4.49 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I shall first say a word about my predecessor, Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk, who, during his time in the House, represented the problems of many constituents, on occasions very successfully. He also served with some distinction on the important issue of penal reform. That is still an important issue.

In recent weeks Knowsley, North has received the full thrust and glare of national publicity. Unfortunately, much of that publicity did not really focus on the devastating problems that confront many of my constituents. This issue is one of them. It is a matter of grave concern that unemployment in Knowsley, North is officially 23 per cent. and unofficially, as we know, probably much higher. That is nothing short of a scandal. Many skilled and enthusiastic people in the constituency have little or no prospect of a job. Especially heartbreaking is the plight of young people, many of whom do not believe that they will ever have the opportunity of employment or the dignity of being able to support themselves and any family they may have. Unfortunately, their cynicism and scepticism are borne out by the fact that in 1984 only 6 per cent. of school leavers in the borough of Knowsley ended up in employment.

The consequences of excluding so many people from economic life are invariably depressing and debilitating. Two examples sum that up very well. In 1978, 30 per cent. of schoolchildren were receiving free school meals in the borough of Knowsley. That is bad enough, but the current figure is about 45 per cent. A poem was written by one of my constituents during the election campaign. She asked me to draw it to the attention of Conservative Members. The poem says:

"To you we're known as them up there:
Mum, why do I get free dinners when a few kids have to pay?
That's the question asked by my young son the other day."

That is a real comment from a real person suffering from those problems.

Of particular relevance in this debate is the fact that in my constituency 67 per cent. of households do not have

access to a motor car. Perhaps it is interesting to note that in the constituency of the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), who introduced the measures, only 23 per cent. do not have access to a motor car. That sharpens the divide between north and south yet again. It is clear that, as most of my constituents do not have access to a car, many of them depend exclusively on public transport for their means of travel.

Deregulation has had many effects, all of them for the worse, on those who live in my constituency. My constituents were not given any clear information about route changes or timetables, and that resulted in absolute and utter chaos on the day that the measures were introduced. There are examples of fares doubling and, in some cases, trebling, which, in a poor area—it is a poor area—is devastating. It prevents people from being able to make necessary journeys, and that means that people cannot visit families and cannot go shopping comfortably. In some cases, it makes it difficult to seek employment. Moreover, the lack of buses is beginning to have a deleterious effect on the local economy.

A good example of that is a local employer, Mysons, a manufacturing company on the Knowsley, North industrial estate. I should say a word of thanks to the former Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). During his time as the Minister responsible for Merseyside, in addition to his other responsibilities, he and the local authority identified that industrial estate for special attention and additional resources. We applaud the local authority and Conservative Members for co-operating in that. The sad fact is that the management of Mysons has said that, in spite of that and the fact that £5 million has been poured into the industrial estate in the past few years, the company is now suffering from lost production, which will lead to lost orders, because there is no reliable public transport system for the workers to travel to work on. A total of 35 per cent. of the work force depend on public transport. What the Government and the local authority are doing to build up the local economy is being undone by the lack of public transport.

Earlier, I referred to a poem by one of my constituents. A few lines of that poem sum up how I and many of my constituents feel. I hope that right hon. and hon. Gentleman will listen to and take heed of what is being said. The poem says:

"Somebody's got to help us, it really isn't fair,
Because we're penalised for looking,
For jobs that just aren't there.
I want to shout and make a fuss,
It's our kids suffering more than us."

I pledge on behalf of the woman who wrote that poem, and other constituents, that I shall shout and make a fuss. I hope that Conservative Members will listen, because we need their support.

4.56 pm

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): It is a pleasure for me to follow the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth). It was thoughtful, forceful and lucid. He told us about his constituency and the anxieties of the people whom he represents. I thought that in all the circumstances he mentioned his predecessor very gracefully. Many of us thought that his seat was well represented before, but it is certainly well represented now. It was an excellent maiden speech and we shall listen most carefully to his future contributions.

My remarks must be set in the context of my experience in the midlands with the West Midlands passenger transport operation, and, in particular, the experience of the borough of Solihull, part of which I represent and where I live. As in so many things in human affairs, while our best hopes may not yet have been realised, it is true that the worst fears have not come to pass. That is in sharp contrast to the cynical and unscrupulous way in which some of the Government's opponents sought, in the period leading up to reorganisation and deregulation, to arouse the anxieties of our constituents who are dependent on public transport, especially the old-age pensioners. The worst deed of those opponents was the propaganda that old-age pensioners would lose their concessionary bus passes. That was never true, and they must have known that it was not true. I regret having to say that the local Labour party in my constituency in particular must stand condemned for worrying old people in that way quite unnecessarily.

It would be a bold man who would predict the final outcome of the changes until some time after 27 January 1987. There has been a great deal of change, and many of the changes have had to bed down and settle and people have to become accustomed to them. Certainly in Solihull every route in the borough has changed to some extent. A total of 115 bus routes have been registered, 63 as commercial routes and 52 as routes subsidised by the West Midlands passenger transport executive. It has to be said as a word of caution that in the west midlands there is not as much competition as might have been hoped for. There are historic reasons for that.

Of the 115 bus routes in Solihull, 75 are run by West Midlands Travel, which is the commercial entity spawned by the former public monopolist. West Midlands Travel is in a dominant position, but, despite that, changes of attitudes are to be noticed. Competition has motivated people, and that is welcome and worth while. However, we do not have buses going down the same street fighting for passengers. That was a phantom paraded before our eyes, but it has not been observed in practice.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge) *rose*——

Mr. Taylor: I shall give way only once, as this is a short debate. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's colleagues will bear that in mind.

Mr. Clelland: In reply to a question that I asked the Secretary of State for the Environment only the other day, he told me that, instead of people queuing for buses, buses were queuing for people. Surely the hon. Gentleman has it wrong.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to develop his points in his own speech.

We do not have the phenomenon of buses racing down streets in masses. The development has been much more ordered. The overall level of services, certainly in my part of the midlands, is almost exactly the same as previously. With keen tendering, of which there is evidence, we have every reason to hope for savings in public expenditure.

Although the overall volume of provision is the same, the service is different. West Midlands Travel has purchased a substantial fleet of "mini-buzzes"—they are spelt like that. To start with, they were mechanically rather unreliable, but those problems seem to have been overcome. The only criticisms about these small "buzzes"

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relate to lack of individual passenger space and the occasional incidents when school "buzzes", and certainly those for Solihull school, have found more passengers at the bus stop than can get on. The first of these problems is a design challenge, which can probably be met. The second is a good problem for the operator. He should, and will, respond by putting on more buses.

It is important that the operator should buy a British vehicle whenever possible. Even if it is not a Land Rover, it can be a Sherpa, made by Freight Rover. It remains as true in this as in volume car making that if the British people want a home-based vehicle industry they must be prepared to support it as purchasers and buy the product. The political shouting in my part of the world has died out and other forms of competition are asserting themselves, although there is a high level of administrative wait and see. One thing is clear: there is a bus stop outside my house, and there was not one there before.

5.3 pm

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): It so happens that I shall be quoting from a letter from a constituent of the hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor). I hope that he will wait to hear what his constituent says.

I add my praise to the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) who made a confident maiden speech. I wish that I could make such competent speeches after 12 years in the House. He spoke from the heart, and knows his constituency and its transport problems. I know that from the short visit that I made to Knowsley.

I do not propose to rehearse the arguments that were made about bus deregulation when the Bill was debated in the House. My concern is to review what has happened since then, acknowledge the benefits, such as they are, that have been secured, and draw the Minister's attention to the mistakes and weaknesses that he should try to remove. I shall deal first with the improvements.

There is no doubt that, in anticipation of competition, many bus companies, and particularly the National Bus Company, sharpened their operations considerably. Management had grown complacent and become used to a cycle of declining services and higher fares. We have heard the frightening statistics about subsidies growing over the years 1970 to 1982. The unions had become more concerned to protect the outdated working practices of the existing, and shrinking, work force than to look for an expansion of jobs.

In the best cases, such as the Exeter city services, operated by Devon General, there has been an explosion of new, innovative minibus services, with frequencies in many places of five minutes and the operating day extending to midnight. Ridership on some routes has tripled and employment opportunities have increased. Up to 300 more people are now working for Devon General. As the Secretary of State said, all this was accomplished before privatisation, in anticipation of the market becoming contestable.

That success is a tribute to the managerial team which, I am pleased to say, was successful in buying the company. It is also a tribute to a city council and a county council, neither of which is under Conservative control, which have tried to make the new arrangements work. The situation in the neighbouring county of Somerset is also encouraging, with an increase in the work force and a positive response by the county's transportation committee to the views of the users, who were fully consulted on routes required before tenders were invited.

I am glad that other companies have been bought out by management, and particularly pleased where these buy-outs are to be extended to cover all grades of staff, as in the case of Badgerline. In particular, I mention Southern Vectis—no doubt, Ministers were expecting that. I was privileged to break a bottle of champagne over the wheel of a double decker bus in celebration of the fact that it had been bought out by its management. I am grateful to the Minister of State for his help in pulling off that transaction. As he knows, there was opposition and people were frightened that an operator from Yorkshire, using German buses, would get the company. However this is one concern that the island has bought for itself, and we mean to hang on to it. All the vehicles operated by Southern Vectis are British built. Regrettably, that is not so elsewhere. It is not so in London Transport, and those of us in Norman Shaw, North look out on Mercedes minibuses operating to Kensington.

I urge the Minister to reach speedy decisions on the disposal of the remainder of the former NBC companies. I hope that he will continue to look with favour on management and management-staff buy-outs. I am sure that these professional busmen, who have spent a lifetime in the industry and are strongly imbued with the tradition of public service, will rise to the challenge that has been set. Many are risking their homes and life savings in taking over their businesses, which have few tangible assets. I, for one, wish them success, and hope that the Minister will quickly end their uncertainty about the future.

It is interesting to contrast the reaction of alliance-led councils in the west of England, which are trying to make deregulation and privatisation work, with the attitude of some bus undertakings in the former metropolitan areas. I understand that in Manchester the bus company has cut back services, declined to innovate, and apparently hopes, in vain, that a Labour Government will be returned to save it from competition and from the effort needed to revitalise services along the lines successfully developed in Exeter. In contrast, we believe in innovation, which brings better services and more jobs.

Having said that, I must acknowledge that there are undoubtedly many problems and a great deal of dissatisfaction in various parts of the country, much of which was confidently predicted in Committee. It would have been avoided if the Government had not been so hell-bent on total deregulation of the industry, leaving it to market forces and a free-for-all. Here I quote Mr. C. J. Noble of Solihull, from 16 Willow Drive, Cheswick Green, Solihull.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: That is not in my constituency.

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that that is in my constituency?

Mr. Ross: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon and accept the correction.

Mr. Noble said:

"Until the 26th October 1986, the West Midlands had an integrated travel network similar to that of London Transport but without the underground. Now, as a result of deregulation of local public transport, West Midland commuters are at the mercy of a financial lottery which determines their daily journey. Rival operators will not co-operate in providing common travel cards, timetables, or tickets—even when they share the same route.

The annual cost of my daily journey, twelve miles across Birmingham via three different operators, has risen from £200 to £460. This increase is largely due to the non co-operation between different operators, the number of which has increased significantly—a direct consequence of deregulation. The equivalent journey in London using a London Transport two zone travel card would cost only £224 per year. Unless a reasonably priced common travel card is introduced in the near future I intend to travel to work by car.

What incentive is there for the unemployed to obtain work or for people in low paid jobs to continue working if a large percentage of their income is spent in reaching work. A person earning £6,000 per year would need a 6·2 per cent pay rise to finance a fare increase of £260.

The transport act of 1985 has removed the power of the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive to compel all operators in the area to accept a common travel card. The act must be amended to restore this power. The arguments that exempted London from the act apply equally to the West Midlands and other metropolitan areas. A journey from home to work in a large urban conurbation is likely to involve more than one connection; co-operation not competition is required to provide an efficient, cost-effective transport system. Public transport is a service not a commodity."

That story can be repeated in many large conurbations in the country, and certainly in Knowsley, North, as I discovered.

Mr. Iain Mills: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that matter, because I have been outside in the Lobby and unable to raise it myself. I assure the hon. Gentleman that his correspondent has been to see me and that he has had my full attention. Some weeks ago I referred the matter to the Minister for his consideration, with the strong recommendation that we find some way to make common travel cards acceptable throughout the country.

Mr. Ross: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has responded to his constituent's complaint. He was right to do so, and I hope that he has some effect. I now have to buy two tickets to come to London every day because Sealink will not accept through booking from certain stations on British Rail. In that respect, we have gone back 50 years.

Last week the Pre-school Playgroups Association held its birthday celebration in this House, and many hon. Members attended. One of the ladies present told me about a young mother in south Herefordshire who attempted suicide because she could no longer get her three children to their playgroup. In that part of the world there is now only one bus per week, in contrast to the former daily service. I was almost attacked by pensioners when I was in Newbury recently, as they have been similarly affected. There is now only one bus on two days, Thursday and Friday, whereas there used to be a regular daily service. The bus now only goes into town for two hours. I am also told that there is no longer a direct bus service from Newbury to Oxford, and one has to go via Reading.

Services in north Northumberland have disappeared altogether, which has cut off Newcastle from many villages in that part of the world. Drivers employed by the Provincial Bus Company covering Gosport and Fareham recently staged a three-day strike—probably their first in living memory. They are faced with losing £25 per week, or more, from their weekly pay packets following the introduction of a fleet of new minibuses, whose schedules they claim were far too tight and left many customers standing at the bus stops. I believe that there have also been stoppages in nearby Portsmouth.

Mr. Michael Hancock (Portsmouth, South): Is it not strange that in Portsmouth the bus operators have had to be subjected to strikes by the work force to try to bring to the attention of the public and their employers the problems that they had in trying to provide a bus service which they felt was wholly inadequate and also unsafe because of the very tight schedules?

Will the hon. Gentleman congratulate the "4 What It's Worth" programme, which has been virtually the only television programme to have taken up the issue? It has received objections to what has happened from over 200 different constituencies. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows only too well that an area of old Portsmouth has been completely isolated. Nobody has come forward to replace the bus service which was previously provided as a social service by the local authority.

Mr. Ross: The hon. Gentleman has made his point, and I understand it. The whole exercise has been a failure because only about 200 new operators have entered the field—an average of four per county. Only about 50 taxi operators have registered. I believe that to be the correct figure, but no doubt the Minister will correct me if I am wrong. The Minister must take some important steps if he wishes to encourage the development of better bus services. I say that in all honesty, because it is our country and it affects the people whom we represent.

First, insufficient money is available to maintain even a basic level of service in some areas, mainly in those of a rural and semi-rural nature. Competitive tendering will reduce costs, but local authorities need to have enough money to maintain essential services to more remote places. In too many cases bus services have been reduced to a level where people no longer find it possible to work a normal day. I have cited such examples. There is a need to review funding. Vast sums are not involved, but something more is needed.

Secondly, it is the Government's duty to secure fair competition. The regulations relating to the roadworthiness of vehicles and drivers' rest must be applied equally and forcefully. In the past, vehicle examiners have set higher standards for companies in the public sector than for the smaller private operator. We know that the facilities of the public companies are generally very good. Many of the smaller operators do not have such facilities, and I can cite an example of that in my area. In a competitive market that sort of subjective discrimination must stop and all operators must meet the same high standards.

Many smaller operators, some undertaking school contract work, have used drivers who have worked a full week driving lorries or performing other activities. I have drawn the attention of the traffic commissioner at Eastbourne to a particular service in my area which worried me. We discovered just in time that an operator who was to take school children on double-decker buses was going to use off-duty Southern Vectis men. That was stopped, but such matters must be investigated. Some drivers are working far too many hours. Operating buses is not an occupation for cowboys. The possession of an operator's licence or a public service vehicle licence should be restricted to those willing to observe professional standards, and those who flout the rules should be cleared out of the industry.

If competition is to be fair, there must be one set of rules for all, and they must be firmly enforced. For that to

[Mr. Ross]

happen there must be an adequate force of inspectors, and I look for a Government assurance that, in the freer market that has been created, the Minister is planning to provide an adequate inspectorate. I know that he announced that there would be an extra 24 inspectors, but that is not enough to meet present demand.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, as this is a short debate. Does he agree that the situation that he has described is not new? It was technically possible even before the Transport Act.

Mr. Ross It is far more prevalent now. We shall in any case get our answer at the end of the debate.

Thirdly, in a competitive market, it is essential that a publicly owned operator—for example, a local authority bus company — does not force a privately owned operator off the road by predatory action, that is, using ratepayers' money to subsidise the fares or service frequency of the local authority service to win a larger share of the market. That happened in Cardiff a few years ago, when a private operator tried to enter the market.

Fourthly, we are concerned about the future of railway services in the conurbations in which the amount of money available for supporting public transport has been reduced. What is to happen to the railway services or the Metro services in Tyne and Wear—this issue was raised continually in the debates on the Bill — if the local authorities decide to concentrate their remaining financial resources on the bus services? Those local authorities employ the bus staff, but, except in Tyneside, they do not employ the railwaymen. They may decide that, from an industrial relations viewpoint, it is easier to reduce train services than bus services.

Has the Minister any plans to protect the level of rail services and to protect the bus/rail interchanges which have been so painstakingly built up over the past decade? The most appalling thing about the Act is that it puts at risk the integrated transport system—such as it is—in this country. The Minister should not tell us that the market will resolve those problems.

The method by which railway services are funded—section 20 payments through the passenger transport authorities—might well encourage the reduction of rail services because the extra congestion that would be caused in city centres if passengers were transferred from trains to buses does not appear in anyone's balance sheet. It just causes misery for all. In the absence of any credible system of road pricing, and bearing in mind that the buses pay next to nothing for the use of road space, there is a real danger of many more buses and fewer trains, which will lead to much more congestion, pollution and delay for everybody.

That has already happened in London, where there are vast numbers of coaches and double-decker sightseeing buses. Often, when I am waiting for a bus, about 16 sightseeing buses pass before a No. 159 appears. Those sightseeing buses come in many hues and can be seen parked all over town in places such as Oxford street and the Haymarket, causing terrible congestion.

Bus deregulation has only just begun and it is too early to draw firm conclusions. At this stage, my hon. Friends and I believe that some good may come of it, and I stated that at the beginning of my speech. That is more likely to happen if the Minister will take account of the constructive points that I have tried to make. The Exeter experience suggests that services improve when the operators realise that in future the market will be contestable. That seems to be far more important than to have open unregulated competition on the streets. The final madness was clearly demonstrated in Glasgow, where a national bus subsidiary is chasing the municipal buses, costing the country God knows how much and blocking the streets.

5.19 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) has just said, and my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) said at the start of the debate, that the debate is being held far too soon. It is indicative of the Opposition's general Luddite attitude towards any form of innovation that they are prepared to cry "stinking fish" before the new services are up and running. It is a pity that the Opposition were not prepared to look closely at some of the areas where experiments were carried out and where deregulation has been in force for a long time.

It is also a pity that my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) is not present this afternoon. He is in his constituency promoting yet more new industry. He has won wide acclaim on the Conservative Benches for the manner in which he has presented the facts of the Hereford success instead of the fiction perpetrated by the opportunists of the Hereford Liberal party. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight was candid about some of the successes and it is a great shame that some of his colleagues have not been as generous in their comments on the Hereford experiment. There and elsewhere where experiments have been carried out, and where a system has been in play for a reasonable time, the travelling public are receiving better value for money, better services at lower cost to the ratepayer.

Mr. Stephen Ross: As a member of the Select Committee on Transport, I visited Hereford, and the experiment there cannot be described as a success. If only the Government had taken rather more notice of what the Hereford and Worcester council wanted in the way of regulation, there might have been a better outturn.

Mr. Gale: My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford anticipated some such comment and provided me with a copy of the *Wye Valley Review*, which is not known for its specific support of my hon. Friend. It says:

"The new Transport Act should make little difference to local bus travellers as many companies have anticipated it and introduced revised services, says the Gloucestershire County Council. The Council has let 56 contracts for otherwise uprofitable routes."

That gainsays what the hon. Gentleman has just said.

It is inevitable that the gloom-mongers should seize on every defect in the new timetables and present them as a complete failure of what will prove nationally, as has been the case in trial areas, to be an excellent system.

I want to refer briefly to one difficulty that we face locally. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight referred to his support for management buy-outs. At least we can agree on something. The East Kent bus company is due for privatisation shortly. My hon. Friend will know that when the Maidstone company was floated recently a French company, Galleon, put in a bid. I am happy to say that the Maidstone bus company was sold to the management and is now being run successfully.

The Galleon company is determined to establish a foothold at the English end of the Channel tunnel. I have no reason to believe that Galleon is not a good company, but I question whether its interests are in the best interests of the travellers of east Kent.

The management of the East Kent bus company would not thank me for suggesting that it is afraid of competition. It is an excellent management and is certainly not. But the management and we need to know that any bidder for the company will guarantee the service to the public. It will also need to know that any competition to which it is subjected will be on equal terms.

I understand that in order to operate a bus service in France a green card is necessary. In order to acquire a green card it is necessary to prove that a different market from any that currently exists can be developed, and that can take years. I also understand that in relation to longer routes in France objections are taken from railways and others and are always upheld.

The French bus and coach service is almost completely regulated and the French could not achieve in France what they would be given on a plate if they were allowed to purchase the East Kent bus company. I also understand that the protection given to West German coaches is even stronger than that afforded in France to the French.

I appreciate that the decision is one for Mr. Rodney Lund and the National Bus Company, not for the Government. However, I hope that my hon. Friend will remind the NBC that we look to it to protect customers and the interests of the United Kingdom within the terms of the treaty of Rome.

It will not have escaped your notice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in east Kent there is considerable suspicion that the Channel tunnel is likely to become a French benefit. That is partly because of French money poured into Nord Pas de Calais. However, it would be taken amiss if the French were permitted to succeed in a predatory bid for an English company that would not be permitted in France.

5.25 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): The Secretary of State said that the Government were instituting the new organisation of buses on a number of criteria. One was that there was a fall-off in passengers and another that there was a reduction in services. He listed them all. However, he chose not to tell the House about a survey that was put in train by the Department of Transport some years ago. The Committee reports deal with the survey that was instituted in south Yorkshire where transport has developed differently since the middle 1970s. That report clearly showed that, using the resources of the United Kingdom effectively, that type of transport model was by far the most economic, and was socially and environmentally desirable. The Committee chose to ignore that. Indeed, to some extent it has been ignored today as well.

No Act has devasted south Yorkshire more than this Act. I shall try to explain the Government's political vindictiveness towards south Yorkshire and its people. We are now being asked to run our transport system on £59·3 million in the current year, of which some £7·5 million is a one-off payment for the massive redundancies that have taken place. So we are talking about £51·8 million. In south Yorkshire this year that has meant fare increases of 225 per cent. The service has been reduced by 10 per cent., there has been a drop in passengers of between 25 and 30 per cent., and more than 2,000 transport workers have been made redundant.

Over the next two years expenditure will drop from £51·8 million to £45·7 million—a reduction of 23 per cent. Under the Act we are obliged to make projections over three years and to organise the transport for three years. In 1988-89 expenditure will drop to £41·1 million. Between this year and 1989 there will be a reduction of some 40 per cent.

Under section 59 of the Transport Act and the scheme to transfer the assets and liabilities from the PTEs to the operating companies, the instruction—that is what it is—from the Department of Transport will cost the local authority £5·6 million. That is about 12 per cent. of the expenditure within which the Department of Transport has said that south Yorkshire must operate.

When the Secretary of State spoke to the local authorities some months ago, he said that he would meet any local authority that sought a redetermination. My local authority had a meeting last week with the Minister, but it got very little out of him.

South Yorkshire has had to go to law to extract the calculation of expenditure levels for its transport policy. Therefore, one wonders whether this Government are hammering south Yorkshire far beyond their hammering of the other ex-metropolitan counties. South Yorkshire seems to have been singled out for a reduction in expenditure levels of 23 per cent., whereas the remainder of the metropolitan counties have suffered a reduction of only 12 per cent.

The difference between expenditure levels and the grant-related expenditure assessment for south Yorkshire for 1986-87 has resulted in the authority receiving no block grant. The cost of transport is having to be borne, therefore, by the ratepayers. South Yorkshire has one of the best transport systems in the country. Tens of thousands of people use south Yorkshire's transport system. The Minister will probably say that grannies have been writing to him to thank him for the improved transport services in rural areas, but the major conurbations are losing out.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Ought not the Minister also remember that, although accommodation that has been provided for elderly people by local authorities was formerly on bus routes, those services are no longer being provided? It is no use having a shiny, new bus pass if there are no buses. My hon. Friend knows that the village of Cawthorne has no medical services. It is dependent upon the medical services that are available in the next village. However, there is no bus service to take the villagers of Cawthorne to the next village.

Mr. Caborn: Yes, and that example can be repeated many times all over the country. Many of the examples that were given in Standing Committee were bad, and they will get worse.

It is no use Conservative Members saying that the system has been operating for only a few weeks. In January there will be a further decline in services. The inevitable result of the projected expenditure levels and the grant-related expenditure assessment will be a cut in services. In 1987-88, concessionary fares in south Yorkshire will have to be increased by 75 per cent. if the

[Mr. Caborn]

load is to be spread. As for local rail fares—we have tried to create an integrated transport system—they will have to be increased by 10 per cent. The tendering for mileage will also have to be reduced by 5 per cent. The Government say that local authorities will be able to support unprofitable services, but they will have no money with which to support those services. There will be an inevitable decline, therefore, in transport services.

Between 30,000 and 40,000 people are now using saver cards. However, the attitude of certain private operators has led to their discontinuance. They will not accept saver cards. We had brought public transport within the reach of poor people, but the loss of the saver card means that they will be deprived of that form of transport.

The Minister would not even discuss meaningfully projected expenditure levels with the representatives of my local authority. If the burden is to be spread, concessionary fares will have to be doubled in 1988-89. Rail fares will again have to be increased by 10 per cent. The projected expenditure levels could mean that tendering for mileage will have to be halved for those contractors who want to take over the mileage.

In south Yorkshire, 80 per cent. of the population have no exclusive access to private transport. The area faces major unemployment problems. Last week I spoke in a debate in which the depth of the unemployment crisis was fully revealed. My constituency has one of the highest levels of youth unemployment in the country. Nevertheless, access to transport is being curtailed by this Government's policies. The social cohesion and well-being of the community have been considerably affected.

Traffic congestion in major city centres, particularly at peak hours, has to be seen to be believed. Loss of wages occurs because people are late getting to work. That leads to loss of production, about which employers complain. A fresh look will need to be taken at road planning in south Yorkshire if this Act remains on the statute book.

The effect on the voluntary services has been dramatic. Those who work for the voluntary organisations now say that they cannot help more than once a week, whereas previously they were probably helping three or four times a week. The dramatic increase in bus fares has also had a dramatic effect on employment patterns. It has affected in particular part-time workers in hospitals. They cannot afford now to travel across the city and carry on with that type of employment.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): Hon. Members who represent Liverpool have received this week a letter from the Sir Robert Jones Workshops for the Disabled. It points out that handicapped people in full-time employment are now paying more than £2 extra a week to get to work. Is this not a disgrace? Should not the Government take on board, therefore, the protests about deregulation?

Mr. Caborn: Yes. That point was made in Standing Committee.

In south Yorkshire the pressure on working people will increase. A family in Sheffield will pay on average between £10 and £12 more each week on fares. Their wages are their only source of income. The workers will put pressure on their employers, and wage increases will be reflected in the price of the products that they sell. Production costs will inevitably rise. However, it is very difficult to get this point through to a Government who are following the dogma of the so-called free market. They do not have the sense to look at independent reports.

I am a member of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry which recently returned from a visit to the continent. We visited the Peugeot and Renault factories and examined the car components industry. I was asked how stupid can the Government be, with the Department of Transport deregulating while the Department of Trade and Industry cannot help the industry to deliver the new minibuses that the Government want the bus operators to use. Most of the minibuses, as happened with coach deregulation, are not British built. Most of them come from the continent.

The hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) referred to the devastation in Solihull caused by the Government's policies. He referred to the fact that the motor manufacturing industry is having great difficulty in coping with the problems caused by their policies and said that there had been lay-offs. It is absolutely stupid that deregulation has led to the massive import of minibuses from the continent. It is costing Britain jobs.

This is one of the worst Acts to reach the statute book. It is the result of party political dogma and shows no regard for the people whom it is supposed to be serving. I hope that the many examples that have been given by Opposition Members will result in people voting for a Labour Government at the next general election. The Labour party is committed to repealing the Act and to returning to a sensible, integrated transport system for the people of the United Kingdom.

5.40 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): My hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) said it all in an intervention when he remarked that one month after D-day is far too soon for this debate, because no one can make an objective comment on bus deregulation after about four weeks of operation. No hon. Member has argued that the change has made the system as good or as bad, depending on one's point of view, as the system that operated before. It depends on what existed before. If one lived in an area where there was already a variety of operators, the change was relatively smooth and a real element of competition and innovation came in. Where there was a single provider supported by a massive subsidy, clearly the change was more difficult, took longer and caused some of the problems about which the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) spoke.

I do not see why people living in south Yorkshire have a right to demand the kind of public subsidy which went into their transport undertaking and which was at the expense of my constituents and the constituents of other hon. Members. That public money had to come from somewhere, and it is quite wrong for people to vote themselves a service that will be paid for by somebody else. That also applies to people in Tyne and Wear.

Mr. Wareing: Ipso facto, does the hon. Gentleman agree that those of us who reside in urban areas might object to the massive subsidies given to farmers over the years?

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am tempted to ask the hon. Gentleman to translate "ipso facto", but I shall not. I come

from an urban area and I am aware of the problem that the hon. Gentleman mentions, but we are not here to debate whether public money should be spent on farming, on defence or on anything else. We are debating public transport, so let us stick to the subject.

Opposition Members talk as if complaints about public transport began on 26 October. Any hon. Member who says that there were no complaints about public transport before that date is treating other hon. Members as a bunch of fools. Of course people wrote to their Members of Parliament and to councillors complaining that local authority undertakings did not adhere to timetables. In the three or four years prior to deregulation responsible local authority undertakings experimenting with alternative services were constantly changing their timetables, and, no matter how hard they tried with free publicity, some constituents always rang up to complain that they did not know that a certain number bus was not running any more.

That process of change, a sensible process, was taking place before 26 October and there was nothing unusual about it. Opposition Members spoke about the absence of a timetable on 26 October. At best that was commercial incompetence, or at worst it was a deliberate act of political vandalism. The city of Nottingham serves a conurbation which is perhaps small by the standards of some hon. Members. It has between 500,000 and 600,000 people and our city transport undertaking has registered 97 per cent. of its routes. That is to say, 97 per cent. of the routes are commercially viable on the basis of a worthy accountant's report and were recommended by the then transport committee which is now the board of directors of the new undertaking.

I would not seek to mislead the House and I acknowledge that I am speaking about 97 per cent. of all the routes. I agree that route frequencies have changed and that we are currently dealing with some mid-evening gaps which are not commercially viable. The Bill makes it clear that those are precisely the areas which it is right for local authorities to examine and that, if necessary, they should put them out to tender so that a service can be provided.

In the county of Nottinghamshire, more than 400 routes were not registered and there was a predictable outcry from the controlling Labour group at county hall which said that that was the first problem about the new Bill—that over 400 socially desirable routes, especially in the rural areas, would no longer be serviced. But the Labour group put the routes out to tender and every one of those socially desirable routes has now been successfully taken up and our county council has made a reduction in what used to be its blanket subsidy of over £500,000.

That may not seem a lot of money, but the council has a choice. It can use the money to reduce the rate burden in the coming year or it can look further at routes that did not even exist before 26 October. In some parts of Nottinghamshire there are no bus services and that £500,000 can be properly used to service such routes in the same way as mid-evening gaps can be filled.

I am gravely suspicious of the noises made by hon. Members from Merseyside because where a local authority —and it is likely to be Labour controlled—has a vested interest in the failure of this Bill it will do everything possible to frustrate the Bill's purpose and will seek to make it fail. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Rubbish."] An Opposition Member says that it is rubbish, but I know that it is true.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that the situation in greater Manchester is exactly the same as the one that he has spoken about, because on its own admission the transport executive has over 5 million miles of unused bus routes that have still to be given out? Does he agree that that is a shocking indictment of the executive's managerial competence, and that it is also a shocking indictment that the executive has produced no proper timetables for my constituents? Is it not also disgraceful that the public transport executive in greater Manchester has not even provided bus drivers on routes north of Manchester but has moved people from the south? Does he agree that this is political chicanery and bad management?

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. It confirms——

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): It has nothing to do with the debate.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Would you like to intervene?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman must not invite me to intervene, although I should love to.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: My hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) is right and his intervention clearly illustrates the great dangers about which Government Members were conscious. If a local authority puts political dogma before its duty to its ratepayers, there will be trouble. I give credit to the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross), who at least had the courtesy to admit that in some areas local authorities are making an effort even though they are unsympathetic to the Government. I congratulate those authorities on making that effort.

I am worried about the role of the directors of the new companies, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will comment on this during his winding-up speech. One of the problems that I think he will find is that prior to 26 October the officers of the municipal undertakings were still employees of the councils and still subject to the pressures that could be put upon them by politically motivated city, county and metropolitan councillors. For that reason, those officers had to play things very quietly. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is wrong because those officers had a duty to the population to plan for 26 October and some of them were not allowed to do so. Now that those officers are executive directors with a commerical decision-making power, and given that the elected councillors cannot use their political clout to lean on them, I am sure that things will change.

Nottingham was the largest municipal undertaking in the country. We had a chairman of the transport committee with a vested interest in the failure of the legislation. He spent tens of thousands of pounds of public money doing all the things referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor), such as concessionary fares and so on. He spent £30,000 seeking to destroy the possibility of the Act becoming a success. Words almost fail me. That councillor is now the chairman of the board of directors which is running that bus company. Surely in commercial law no one ought to be able to serve on a board of directors if he does not have the interest of the company at heart and when everything he does seeks to destroy the very purpose of the Act. I hope that we can address ourselves to that matter.

[Mr. Brandon-Bravo]

I must refer to rural transport, because the nicest letter that members of the Standing Committee received came from the organisation Women in the Community. They wrote on behalf of rural areas that have no bus services, and said that the Bill would be a disaster. I had to reply, "If you have no buses, what harm can the Bill do?" The reality is that in those areas where there were no buses this Act had to be an improvement, however small. I believe that in many areas it will be a great boon, and I support the Government.

5.52 pm

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): The Secretary of State's remarks are indicative of the lack of understanding among Conservative Members about the far-reaching effects of deregulation on the lives of ordinary people. That view has been confirmed by the other contributions that we have heard from Conservative Members.

I do not want to be parochial, but the Government should understand that we have the responsibility of relating what is really happening on Merseyside and in other areas. Far from being parochial, we want the Minister to understand the problems that have ensued as a result of deregulation. They are real and are causing hardship, chaos and confusion in an undertaking which only a week before deregulation was reasonably well controlled and supplied a service.

For the life of me I cannot understand how Conservative Members can argue that deregulation has brought order which did not exist previously and has provided a better service to the people using public transport. On the contrary, the opposite is the case.

The constituency that I represent is nine miles from the city centre of Liverpool. In it are pockets of unemployment of 50 per cent., 60 per cent., and in some cases 70 per cent. or more. The people who moved there as a result of both post-war and pre-war housing developments are now virtually incapable of leaving their homes because fares have trebled and even quadrupled in the brief period since deregulation. That would not be so bad were it not for the fact that previous services have been severely cut. In other words, as a result of deregulation, they are getting a much worse service at a much higher price.

If that is the philosophy of the Conservative party, the Government should immediately repeal the Act, because the problem will not go away. The Act has caused concern because of its immediate impact — perhaps even more concern than any other piece of legislation introduced by the Government, most of which had been obnoxious in the eyes of the working class.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) spoke about the Sir Robert Jones Workshops. That organisation cares for a section of the community over which the Conservative party weeps tears — the disabled and people employed in sheltered workshops who must travel to their place of work. The director of the Sir Robert Jones Workshops states in a letter:

"It has been brought to my attention by the workforce that the people who are using public transport have as a whole had to pay £80 to come to work above what they were paying before deregulation. This works out at an average of £2 per worker"

in order to use public transport post-deregulation which has been imposed by the Government. People working part-time in an industry of that kind will have to decide whether it is worthwhile travelling to work, given the impositions that the Government have placed on them.

The Government ought to think carefully about the wider ramifications of what the Act has done to hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people. There is, for example, the difficulty of parents accompanying their children to school, and many other problems have arisen. These problems do not affect only the constituency of Garston. The constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) will be similarly affected, as will the constituencies of other Liverpool Members, except possibly those who represent the city centre. People travelling to the outer estates to work will be affected. The Government have failed to understand the problems. In the past, it has been said that the Labour party is dogmatic, doctrinaire and so inflexible that it gives no consideration to issues that fall outside that dogma. However, if ever a piece of legislation smacked of dogma, it is this Act. Apparently no thought at all was given by the former Secretary of State to the effect of the Act on the travelling public.

In areas such as Merseyside, Yorkshire and the midlands many people still depend solely on public transport. I declare an interest as one such person. I do not own a car and travel by public transport. In the first week of deregulation, I wanted to go into town on a Sunday morning. I waited for one-and-three-quarter hours for a bus, and when it arrived I discovered that my fare had risen from 30p to 60p. On the following day, the fare was 50p.

Mr. David Mitchell: So that I can understand the position properly, is the hon. Gentleman saying that he waited all that time as a result of a new timetable, or was it merely that he did not receive a new timetable and waited for the bus according to the old timetable?

Mr. Loyden: The bus drivers did not know what the frequency of service was supposed to be, nor did they know what the fares should be.

Mr. Sumberg: Whose fault was that?

Mr. Loyden: It was the Government's fault. With great haste they imposed the Act on the transport authorities without giving them the necessary time to ensure that the travelling public were not adversely affected.

As anyone with any common sense understands, bus drivers who receive their schedules on Saturday morning ready for Sunday will find it impossible to absorb them and translate the information about fares to passengers. During one week I paid three different fares, and the majority of drivers were unaware of the correct fares.

I place the responsibility for that at the Government's door. Before the Bill became law, they should have given local authorities time to sort out the problems that would face the travelling public. Meetings are taking place in every part of the country because people are now aware of the full implications of the legislation. They are waiting for a further disturbance in services in January and, in all probability, further disruption later.

Mr. Wareing: My hon. Friend will be aware that in the first few weeks of deregulation on Merseyside there were more than 1,000 complaints. I have scrutinised some of

them. Is my hon. Friend aware that an enormous proportion of the complaints were about the lack of school bus services? For example, at the Maricourt school on the fringes of Melling and Maghull—an area not noted for selecting Labour Members of Parliament — children leaving school at 3.30 pm did not arrive home until after 5.30 pm. They gave up hope of getting the school bus and had to walk through dark pathways and lonely fields to get home—and this is at a time when we have cause for concern about children being attacked.

Mr. Loyden: I take my hon. Friend's point, although he took a long time to make it. He raised an important point about children. Indeed, the Government have made us aware of the muggings and other things that go on in the estates on the outer edges of cities. Because of the high bus fares, many women feel forced to walk through dangerous areas.

Many of the problems that have arisen were ignored by the Secretary of State when he designed this atrocious piece of legislation. I take some comfort at least from the declaration by the Labour party that it will place this legislation in the dustbin of history and give back to the public a decent transport system based on Labour ideology. I accept that there are ideological differences between the parties, but in the Labour party we agree that transport is a service which should not be based solely on profitability.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a brief debate and the Chair is anxious that Members representing all areas of the country should have the opportunity to address the House. I appeal for brevity. The first Front-Bench speaker hopes to catch my eye at 6.30 pm

6.4 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I wish to ask the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) one question. When he goes to bed tonight, will he kneel beside his bed and ask himself the following question? Is his local authority — despite the fact that it is of a different political persuasion from the Government—making an honest attempt on behalf of the people it represents to make the most of the legislation passed by this democratically elected Parliament, notwithstanding that it may not like it, but bearing in mind that it is its duty to serve the people of Liverpool? Is the hon. Gentleman slightly concerned that the council, which until yesterday had Mr. Derek Hatton as its vice-chairman——

Mr. Wareing: Let us have some relevance.

Mr. Adley: This is relevant. The council is more concerned with making party political points at every opportunity, regardless of the effect of so doing on the people of Liverpool, whom it is supposed to serve.

Having said that, the House will know that I have not been an uncritical supporter of this legislation. It is foolish of either side of the House to paint this legislation as a panacea for all public transport ills, on the one hand, or the sole cause of every public transport problem that the country has ever known, on the other. It is not really a choice between euphoria and doom, and these are both poor guides for the debate tonight. The Government's main motivation has been customer satisfaction. That does not seem to me to be a matter of dogma. That is a perfectly proper thing for an elected body to seek to undertake on behalf of those whom it is trying to represent. The question that we should ask is whether the customer is actually receiving satisfaction, or likely to receive satisfaction, as a result of this legislation.

I plead with Opposition Members, if they can bring themselves for a moment to consider public transport aspects of the matter, to recognise that all was not well with public transport and the bus industry. It is conceivable that there will be some benefits flowing from the legislation. I believe that it is perfectly conceivable that problems will also flow from the legislation. I hope therefore that we can regard the debate—and I hope that the Government will also regard it thus—as the first but by no means the last word on a subject that is of great concern to all of us, not simply those who, like myself, use public transport, but all who are concerned about the standard of life in the great towns and cities in this country.

Comments have been made about timetables not being prepared in time. I speak without any rancour. It is not just those local authorities which might be construed as having a grudge against the Government's politics which have fallen down on the preparation of timetables. Surrey county council, having taken it on itself to produce a timetable for one section of the Green Line bus routes, was unable to produce its timetables as far in advance as is normal when new timetables are introduced by public transport operators. Having said that, I would no more chastise Surrey than anyone else. My point is that it is fairly early days.

One of the problems, about which I have written to my hon. Friend, relates to the routes on which services are run commercially during some parts of the day and week, and which are tendered during other parts. The point is that the same routes are running the same services — for example, let us say that it is route No. 222 while it is commercially operated, but it becomes route No. 333 when tendered. That may be a logical position for an accountant sitting in his office, but it is very confusing for someone waiting to catch a bus. Surely, however, we cannot condemn the legislation already simply because of such teething problems.

In my intervention in the Secretary of State's speech I referred to London, which of course has not been fully deregulated. It lies ill in the mouths of Labour Members to accuse the Government of party political dogma when the present Government have nationalised London Transport. That is what has happened. Let us not be mealy-mouthed about it. We have nationalised London Transport and it is a publicly owned service. The Government have put the running of London's transport back into the hands of professional transport operators. The service has improved, the number of passengers is increasing and the amount of public subsidy required is falling. Surely that is an end earnestly to be desired by everyone in the House.

I want to mention some of the real problems that are arising about coach deregulation. I do not believe at the moment that the position is really satisfactory, especially in London and one or two other cities. Local authorities do not have the powers that they need to try to prevent coach operators from abusing their position by using roads and streets that are unsuitable for the size of coaches, by parking, very often illegally, in places that cause considerable inconvenience to other road users and cause considerable problems for the police.

[Mr. Adley]

The latest evil, which is a problem particularly in London, is the polluting system being employed by the commuter coaches, of leaving their engines running, sometimes for two hours at a time, in an unattended vehicle, to keep the atmosphere inside the coach comfortable for the passengers. Those are some of the aspects of deregulation that should be raised in the debate, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will look at them.

I refer penultimately to the effect of deregulation on other competitors, particularly British Rail. One of the reasons why I was less than wholeheartedly enthusiastic about deregulation was that I thought it might provide additional unfair competition for British Rail. We all know that at the moment there is no such thing as fair competition between a public service vehicle on the road and a public service vehicle on the rails, the latter having to pay all its own track costs and the former having them almost entirely funded by the taxpayer.

I was in Manchester yesterday, making a few inquiries of British Rail. I have to tell my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) — I am sure that he knows it, being an assiduous Member — that bus deregulation in certain parts of Greater Manchester has not yet been a total success, nor is it an unmitigated disaster. Already, however, one of the main beneficiaries is British Rail, which tells me that on some of its commuter routes into the middle of Manchester it is now picking up more passengers than it has had for a long time, and that on the Bury to Manchester route it is now running longer trains than for 20 years. So, as a supporter of British Rail, I am delighted that my qualms about the effect of the Act on British Rail have been proved wrong and that as a result of bus deregulation British Rail is improving its services and picking up more customers, although I suspect that that was not one of the Government's original objectives when they drafted the Bill. Nevertheless, it is welcome to me.

My final point is this. In this country we have always acted in haste with our transport policy. I do not believe that political dogma and public transport policy necessarily make happy bedfellows; nor do I believe that some of the decisions that we have taken in the past 40 or 50 years in our cities have resulted in improved public transport. I deeply regret the way in which we swept away the tram, whem most other European cities have been rapidly developing their tram services, which are pollution free, and, provided that they can be operated on separated tracks, as they are in many European cities now, are excellent forms of urban transport which we should encourage. The same goes for the trolley bus.

My plea to Opposition Members is: let us give this Act of Parliament a chance. In a year's time, let us see whether all their predictions of doom and gloom have been proved wrong or right. I say also to my hon. Friends: let us be a little less euphoric about what is happening now and let us have another look in a year's time and see how we are getting on.

Listening to the Labour party today, we could almost forget that we are talking about the public transport requirements of human beings — people wanting to travel around many of our towns and cities. That is what we should be talking about. The policy advocated by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) from the Labour Front Bench can be encapsulated, like so many other Labour policies, in the words, "I am looking backwards for Christmas." I say to the Labour party: please do not do it. Give the Act a chance.

6.14 pm

Mr. Jim Callaghan (Heywood and Middleton): In the light of your request to make our speeches shorter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall endeavour to throw away a great part of the speech that I proposed to make about the chaos that has occurred and its effects on certain sections of our community. Let me mention one.

A month ago I was at a school, and at 4 o'clock the deputy head came to see the head teacher, full of consternation that the buses had not turned up for the children. I thought that it was an isolated incident. Later in the week I discovered in the local press that such incidents occurred in all the schools in the area. Last night my worst fears were nearly realised — I am glad to say that they were not completely realised. The *Manchester Evening News* stated that a little girl aged 11 had missed her bus and it had taken her four hours to get home. One can imagine the consternation of her family, who told the police, and the police thought the worst.

Is there anything that the Minister can do to ensure that schools have their proper allocation of school buses? This is the most vulnerable section of our community.

I shall not deal with old-age pensioners, nurses or the effect on trade in Manchester, but I shall go to the heart of the matter. The issues raised by the Greater Manchester transport authority with the Department of Transport on the re-determination of its expenditure level for 1987-88 are vital for the provision of a reasonable public transport service in Greater Manchester. There is no doubt that unless the Minister significantly increases the expenditure level announced earlier this year for 1987-88, which was £74·1 million, when the passenger transport executive and the passenger transport authority consider that expenditure requirements in that year will be about £87 million, further reductions in existing or planned levels will be inevitable. To prove that that will be so, we need only to look at the case in detail.

While all the new joint boards created by the Local Government Act 1985 are for the first three years precept limited, in the case of the PTA the Minister is empowered to determine an expenditure level that he considers appropriate for the PTA to discharge its functions. The expenditure level is used to calculate, first, the amount of block grant that the PTA receives for spending at that level and, secondly, the amount raised by the precept to make up the balance of expenditure. The precept, thus determined, becomes a statutory upper limit on the amount that the authority may raise in local taxes. It therefore becomes impossible for the authority to spend more money than the expenditure level as expenditure cannot exceed income.

In July the Secretary of State announced an expenditure level for the PTA of £74·1 million, which compares with £83·5 million in 1986-87, but the PTA has several statutory responsibilities relating to the provision of public transport in the area. I give concessionary fares for the elderly, children, the disabled and so on as an example.

The PTA inherited some debt capital projects from the former county council. So the PTA is developing the provision of special needs transport, for example, dial-a-ride community transport groups, all of which need

money. The PTA must also administer the system, and that costs money. It is also responsible for the increased pensions contribution for retired employees — a large item over which it has no control whatsoever.

The PTA and the PTE have had to incur substantial costs in the past year arising from the formation of Greater Manchester Buses Ltd. The bus company will need £19 million to cover the costs of redundancy and, in addition, the PTA has to give the bus company the assets that it needs to form a viable operation. That includes a cash injection of £11·9 million to meet the criteria laid down by the Department of Transport. The top cash requirements of the company are £30 million, of which the PTA can give only £2 million. Therefore, it has to borrow.

I know that the Minister has made it a little easier for the PTA to borrow over a longer period, but it still has to pay. If support for public transport in the metropolitan areas is reduced to the level proposed by the Secretary of State for Transport, the new PTA will be forced to withdraw support from the tendered services on a large scale. Concessionary fares schemes will be pruned and even greater hardships will be caused to the most vulnerable members of the population. The issue must be tackled in the current round of negotiations.

I wrote to the Minister on those matters on 4 November 1986. In the reply that I received on 20 November, the Minister said that he would give careful consideration to the case for extra money for the Greater Manchester transport authority, and that he hoped to announce his decision before the Christmas recess. I hope that his decision is such that the poor in our society will not be likening him to the ghost of Scrooge this Christmas.

6.29 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Bus services all over the country are in chaos, but the situation on Tyneside is comparatively worse due to the abolition of the county council, which created and developed one of the finest integrated public transport systems in the world. The system was built by a Labour-controlled council but it was ultimately supported by political parties and Governments of all persuasions. The Tyne and Wear metro with its integrated bus services was a vision for the future and a pointer to the way forward in developing efficient modern public transport in the conurbations. Contrary to what the Minister said earlier, the Labour party is far from being trapped in the past. In Tyne and Wear it created a futuristic and efficient public transport system — as people with greater experience and expertise than the Minister acknowledge, fully supported by the people of Tyne and Wear.

The House may be wondering why I refer to the Tyne and Wear transport system in the past tense. The answer is deregulation. Since 26 October, as Labour authorities on Tyneside predicted, deregulation has destroyed integration and our once envied and enviable transport system would have been reduced to near shambles but for the public transport authorities and the local councils. Utter confusion has been created by the Government's Transport Act and their blind, dogmatic adherence to the belief that the market will improve services and cut costs.

The passenger transport authority and executive tell us that the single major problem for bus passengers in Tyne and Wear has been the failure of operators to run to timetable, due to a number of factors such as drivers and passengers being unsure as to details of journeys. Yesterday's local morning newspaper showed a picture of a damaged bus with the headlines "Bus wedged under bridge" and "Wrong turning causes crash". That kind of thing is still happening 30 days after deregulation. The number of staff is inadequate to operate the registered services when sickness and other absences are taken into account and there has been a significant increase in congestion in all town centres and river crossing points. The same newspaper states:

"The statistics speak for themselves. Before deregulation, 28 buses crossed the Tyne Bridge and 20 went over the Redheugh Bridge every hour. The respective totals are now 112 and 46".

That is a 400 per cent. increase for Tyne Bridge alone. The AA blames much of the congestion on

"the spin-off from deregulation — motorists deserting the buses for their cars"

and an AA spokesman is quoted as saying:

"People have lost faith in bus schedules, and are now using their cars to get to work . . . The resulting increase in traffic means the rush hours, especially in the evening, have become a darn sight longer. And it's only going to get worse between now and Christmas."

The passenger transport authority states that bus crews are working in more difficult conditions with tighter timetables, lower wages and longer hours. The newspaper article states:

"The new boys are having to work to stay in the market place".

One of them is quoted as saying:

"We're working all sort of hours, but that's a sacrifice you have to make".

No doubt Conservative Members regard that as commendable and I am sure that the new boys are indeed working hard, but the danger to the travelling public is too often overlooked. Lest Tory Members think that we are exaggerating to discredit the Government, I will give two further examples of the effects of deregulation. The first illustrates just one of the many grim side effects of Tory transport policy.

The local newspaper of 11 November states that

"irregular bus services on Sunday night may have been a factor in the street disturbance in which a mob of 200 men pushed police resources to the limit.

Five policemen were attacked during the fighting in Grainger Street and reinforcements had to be called in."

The subdivisional commander of police in Newcastle said:

"The de-regulation of buses may have exacerbated the problem. People find they can't get the buses in the night. There just seems to be a dearth of public transport".

To show that all the criticism is not from the Labour party, I will quote the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) during his "poverty for publicity" week on the dole. The local newspaper states:

"After only two days he claimed local bus services are in a shocking state—unreliable and irregular"

and that he

"said he was only now aware of the problems facing passengers."

I shall be interested to see how the hon. Gentleman votes today. People may well be confused about his attitude as on 7 November 1984, when the deregulation proposals were being discussed in the House, the same newspaper stated:

"They were warmly welcomed by Newcastle Central Tory M.P. Mr. Piers Merchant, who claimed they would increase the flexibility of Tyne Wear's transport network, cut costs and boost efficiency."

The hon. Gentleman was then quoted as saying:

"The Government's proposals will obviously be painful for the bus bureaucrats who run the PTE, but for the ordinary traveller they will be good news."

[Mr. David Clelland]

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will support our amendment today.

That is just a sketch of what is happening on Tyneside. If time permitted, I could cite many more examples of the inadequacies of the private transport system. The five local authorities on Tyneside are struggling to maintain a reasonable level of service, but as three out of the five as well as the transport authority itself are rate capped it is a desperate struggle. The Government, blinded by dogma, continue relentlessly with their policy. They now propose to cut transport services in the county by £7 million, with all the threats implied by that for subsidies and concessionary fares. This week, the transport authority has argued the case for maintaining at least the current level of expenditure. I hope that the Minister will see the sense and justice of that case, especially in view of his remarks today about the subsidy functions of local authorities.

The Government said that privatisation would mean more choice, but bus mileage in Tyne and Wear is down 7 per cent. We were told that it would mean cheaper fares, but the rejection of the through ticket system by private operators means that many passengers now have to make more changes and pay each time. In Sunderland, some child fares have increased by 300 per cent. We were told that there would be healthy competition for routes—the Minister repeated that today—but 80 per cent. of the service routes in Tyne and Wear attracted only one tender and the public authority's negotiation skill saved £1 million on the private contractors' original demands, 30 per cent. of which were described as grossly overpriced. We were also promised improved services, but 60 per cent. of metro-related integration has been lost as a direct result of deregulation.

When Ministers say that these are just teething problems, they really mean that after a while the public will forget the old system and get used to the new, and to that end Conservative Members will troop into the Lobby to ensure the continuation of this discredited deregulation. But people will not forget, because this is just one more example of the Government's systematic destruction of public services, whether they be health, welfare, education or transport services. When the general election comes, people will remember—and they will realise that only the Labour party appreciates the true worth of public services and can restore them to their essential position in contributing to a secure and civilised society.

6.38 pm

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): I have listened with great interest and enjoyment as colleagues on both sides of the House have spoken almost entirely about the metropolitan areas. Without knowing the detail, I understand their problems and complaints. From the rural areas, the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross), though rather against the legislation, said that it seemed to be working. My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) made a speech without mentioning steam trains, which must be unique, and spoke of the excellence that he trusts that the future will bring.

I come from north Devon, in the west country. The transport system there works very well. I have no dogma on the system. As a youngster I travelled with the Devon General which became the Red Bus Company. It is now the little Red Bus Company. It has many small buses zooming around. A private organisation also exists called the Country Bus Service. My hon. Friend the Minister travelled on the first journey of that bus company. The timetable went rather backwards as there were many sheep on the roads. None the less, a year ago, the Country Bus Service had one bus. Now it has five. It serves villages in the west country which never had a bus service—although that is not quite true. The villages had a bus service 25 years ago, but over the years I have watched it decline.

The train service has declined in quality because there is no competition. Frankly, the first great step forward was the competition between coach and long distance bus services. Now, praise be, we have a service that suits the consumer as opposed to the timetabler. I understand the problems of the timetabler, but my constituents and I have no doubt that there is now a bus service in some villages where there was no chance of one a few years ago. I do not know how that compares with the metropolitan areas, but in the rural areas—I can travel for 65 miles without crossing my constituency boundary—it is a most welcome improvement.

I have only two points to make because time always presses. It is unfair to say that if one accepted a privatised enterprise bus service one would accept errors and faults. Private enterprise makes no pretence at being perfect. It makes no pretence at being dogmatic. It just says, "Let us give it a try. If it does not work, let us amend it. Let us keep amending it until it works." That, frankly, is precisely the problem with public transport: it has been run for the convenience of the operator, the driver and the staff, not for the convenience of the public. That has now changed. If an operator does not suit the public, it does not receive fares. Private enterprise offers profit, but it also accepts loss. That is the vast difference.

I welcome the working of the deregulated system so far. As many of my hon. Friends have said, how can something be condemned after one month of operation? If the best use to which two or three hours of debating time can be put is to argue about legislation which is one month old, it is a rather sad case.

The little Red Bus service in north Devon has caused a political furore in the hothouse of Devonian politics. The prospective Labour candidate objected to an advertisement calling the little red buses "Rosie" on the ground that it was sexist—*[Laughter.]* I am not joking. The suggestion to "Take a ride with Rosie" apparently angered the Devonshire Labour party. That is the level of complaint against the privatised service. The service is working well. It is working for the public. It will get even better as time passes.

6.32 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): I begin by referring to a quotation that was made by the Secretary of State when he responded to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes). He used the example of inter-city coaching as an example of a service where deregulation has worked. I say to the Secretary of State that one cannot compare inter-city coaching with stage carriage bus services. They are not comparable. Coach services used to pass through many cities, but that is no longer the case. Inter-city coaches now travel from London, up or down the motorway, to Manchester, Birmingham or Bristol. That cuts out many cities which

used to have the use of those inter-city coaches. The Secretary of State cannot use inter-city coaching as an example of good deregulation.

It is a pity that the hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) is not here, because he made some rather tendentious remarks a little earlier. I must tell him and other hon. Members that the bus companies now have an arm's length relationship between themselves and the passenger transport executives and the passenger transport authorities. It is not the responsibility of those bodies to roster bus crews. It is not their problem, but that of the bus companies. If the former Secretary of State had taken our advice in Committee and introduced deregulation more slowly, all the problems over bus timetables might not have occurred. The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), who sat through these debates, knows that only too well.

During this short debate on the effects of bus deregulation, many Labour Members have told the Secretary of State of the extent of the chaos in their constituencies since deregulation was introduced, and none more so than my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) who, in his maiden speech displayed a depth of understanding of the real problems of his constituency. He also showed that he has the compassion and the determination to represent the people of Knowsley, North in their fight for a better future for themselves and their families. I congratulate him on his maiden speech. I am sure that for many years to come the entire House will wish to hear him speak.

In a recent speech on deregulation to the Institution of Civil Engineers the Secretary of State said:

"I think that overall the timescale has proved manageable, and the system is in place. I congratulate those in local authorities, and the professionals running the bus services and their advisers, who have made what is after all a fairly momentous change with so few significant examples of difficulty."

To put it in the modern vernacular, the Secretary of State was being extremely economical with the truth. The plain fact is that, overall, deregulation has been a disaster. It has not just been a disaster because it has been running for only one month. The hon. Member for Nottingham, South, who sat in Committee with me night after night, knows that *Hansard* is littered with our predictions about how the legislation would cause devastation in our public transport systems. He knows better than most that what we predicted would happen has happened. Opposition Members take no pride or pleasure in having to say that. The previous Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), was the author of this piece of lunacy.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Although it is early to judge the legislation, may I say that the position will get worse, because many of the services which have been registered as viable, or which have been won on tender, will prove not to be viable on the basis on which they are being run at present.

Mr. Stott: That could be right, and the answer to my hon. Friend is that the Minister of State has acknowledged that point.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North said that he had a minute of the evidence of what the Minister had said, the Minister acknowledged that fact. More routes have been registered as profitable, and come the early part of January, these routes will be considered seriously.

In a press release on deregulation, the Secretary of State said:

"This change is necessary because for far too long the bus industry has been in decline. Bus travel is down by half in 30 years, fares are up faster than inflation and, ominously, faster than motoring costs."

The Secretary of State is falling into the same trap as the former Secretary of State when he talks about the bus industry being in decline. He is right when he says that it is in decline in areas which were controlled by Conservative county councils.

The hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), who was here a little earlier, told us how bus services had suddenly improved. The bus services in Oxfordshire were so lousy because Oxfordshire county council had one of the worst records on public transport before deregulation. Therefore, there was great room for improvement. To say en passant that bus services had been in decline is palpably untrue. The Secretary of State should recognise that.

In the metropolitan areas, bus services have increased during the past 11 years. Tremendous strides have been made by all those involved in introducing new buses, buses especially designed for the disabled, bus passes for old-age pensioners, through ticketing and other aspects of marketing. In addition, market research has been carried out with passengers to try to discover where bus stops should be located, the frequencies of buses, timetables and other matters.

I disagree entirely with the statement that bus services in the metropolitan areas had been declining during the past 11 years. If anything, they were increasing. My area, south Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear and the west Midlands had a record in public transport of which they could be proud, but since the Government introduced this wretched legislation the people who used to have good bus services are having to suffer all these problems.

Hon. Members have commented on what is happening in their areas. At my surgery last Saturday, a lady said to me, "Mr. Stott, what are you going to do about the bus services?" It is rather ironic for someone to ask me what I can do about the bus services, since night after night, and day after day, I and my hon. Friends fought against the Bill. Recently, I was asked to speak at a public meeting in Kettering. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North mentioned this problem in his opening remarks. In Kettering, there is a fairly new bus station. The subsidiary of the National Bus Company used to operate out of that bus station, but because the Conservative-controlled county council will not give the new bus company enough money, it has closed the bus station in the centre of the town. The people of Kettering are having to queue for their buses in lay-bys, in the pouring rain. This is supposed to be progress. This is supposed to be the great panacea that will flow from the legislation.

This morning I received a letter from a pensioners organisation in Manchester. It states:

"Unless there is a radical change in the present operation of the Transport Act, this coming winter will deprive many of them"—

old-age pensioners—

"of the means to travel as comfortably and as frequently as they have done in the past. For some it will mean being confined to their homes for long periods, with all the social and physical problems that can accrue. The cost of

[Mr. Stott]

concessionary fares has now doubled for those who use cross-city buses, and with the waiting time for connections, so has the journey time. Pensioners are understandably seething with anger with the undermining of what was a reasonable and good public Transport System."

Had my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) caught your eye a little earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he would have told the House that Mrs. Louise Ellman, the leader of Lancashire county council, said this in a recent press statement:

"There is mounting evidence that Lancashire schoolchildren and students are suffering from bus deregulation. Complaints are pouring in from right across the county, including Blackpool, St. Annes, Lancaster, Poulton, Blackburn, Ribble Valley, South Ribble and West Lancashire. Some people are unable to make formal complaints because the telephone lines are so overloaded. Problems range from youngsters being turned off buses after their passes had been rejected, to buses simply not turning up and schoolchildren left standing out in the pouring rain."

One of my hon. Friends made a serious point about schoolchildren missing buses and being left out in the rain. Now that winter is coming on and the dark nights are here, we shall have to do something about it. The Secretary of State and the Minister of State will be held responsible if the provision of school services is not maintained at the levels that existed before deregulation. It is essential that children who go to school on buses are provided with buses on time and regularly. If they are not, it will be the direct responsibility of the Government.

Some of my hon. Friends have told the Secretary of State that their local authorities had approached him regarding external financing limits, grant-related expenditure assessment and the amount of block grant that they would get. The Association of Metropolitan Authorities estimates a shortfall of £50 million in all the metropolitan areas. If the Secretary of State is not persuaded by the arguments of the metropolitan authorities and this shortfall continues, the only way in which the money can be made up is by attacking concessionary fares.

That point was made forcefully by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn). The Minister of State accused me repeatedly of scaring old people about concessionary fares, and he said, "The local authorities will have the money to do it." Now he must put his money where his mouth is, because if the authorities do not receive that money, concessionary fares will be threatened. The Minister will have to come up with the goods.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North told the House what the Labour party will do when it returns to office. I repeat that now, because public transport will be at the heart of our social policy. We shall put public transport back where it belongs—with the people of the country, through their elected representatives in the city and town halls. They will have a proper say in how public transport should be run. No one has taken out of context the comment of the previous Secretary of State for Transport, who said:

"Gentlemen, you are now free to run your services without the constraints of a social conscience."

Oh boy, are they doing that now. When the Labour party returns to power, it will have a social conscience and it will put public transport back on the map.

6.45 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): This has been a difficult debate for the Opposition since they had to choose their timing carefully. A year ago, too many people in the Labour party were doing their irresponsible best to frighten people by suggesting that there would be major cuts in services. The Opposition were set back a bit when they discovered that three quarters of all existing services were registered as commercial, but it did not stop them. They went round saying that local authorities would be unable to afford to buy-in the remaining one quarter of services with the aid of subsidy. Again, the Opposition were trying to frighten people, especially the old and the less well-off—the most vulnerable members of society who depend upon buses. Again, they were proved wrong.

By 26 October, the commercial services registered in the spring had generally been overlaid and the gaps filled by a network of subsidised services. Despite it being the biggest shake-up in bus services for 50 years, in most parts of the country D-day passed off perfectly well because operators and local authorities did their jobs properly. Of course, one knows of places where many cases were reported, especially where the local newspaper paid £2 a letter for each case that came to its attention. Even Labour local authorities—I say this plainly—mostly behaved responsibly and efficiently and ensured that buses were there for those who needed them. Of course, in a minority of places there were initial problems, especially when deregulation day coincided with traffic management arrangements being revised, as in central Newcastle, or with road works, as in central Glasgow, together with traffic light failures and a major procession. There was a new pedestrian scheme in Leicester. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) may laugh about Glasgow, but where are the 11 Labour Members of Parliament representing Glasgow today? Are they leading the attack on the Government? Of course, they are not.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North) *rose*——

Mr. Mitchell: This is the sole survivor, and he does not even come from Glasgow.

Mr. James Hamilton *rose*——

Mr. Mitchell: I will give way only to an hon. Member who represents Glasgow.

The problems are beginning to fade. That is why the Opposition had to rush in this debate immediately the House reassembled and within a month of deregulation coming into effect. They have a fading asset. The debate takes place against that background. It also takes place against the background of less efficient operators being shown up and an opportunity for the public to see where local bus management is good. It has sorted out the men from the boys and it has inevitably shown where local management is bad. If local management is bad, it will act as a magnet for new operators. I wonder whether it is chance that a new operator is lining up 200 minibuses to bring into the south Manchester area.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North raised several points which, to be fair, I should like to cover. He said that we had hoped that many new operators would come forward. He is right, in that not as many new operators have come forward as we might have wished. But quite a number have stepped forward, and he was right to say that the 50 taxibus operators represent one form of innovation. He was also right to say that, as yet, the enterprise culture

has not led to as many new operators as we might have liked. However, I should be very surprised if the new year does not bring with it more operators.

The Department has recently sent out a leaflet for prospective new operators, explaining how to start in business—*[Interruption.]* The creation of new jobs and new business is something that we are not ashamed of. As a result of advertising, more than 1,000 applications have been received for copies of that leaflet. That bodes well for the long-term future.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Minister look into the problems that face bus passengers in Bradford over Christmas and the new year as services are likely to be suspended? The west Yorkshire passenger transport authority has sought sponsorship from the brewers so that bus services can be run over the holiday. However, it seems unlikely that they will fund new services. Will the Minister look into the matter as soon as possible, and see what can be done to provide a minimum bus service in Bradford over Christmas and the new year?

Mr. Mitchell: I always like to respond as quickly as possible to hon. Members' requests. Accordingly, I shall go to Bradford tomorrow morning and will look into the situation that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North pointed out that we had said, during the Bill's passage, that we thought that drivers would become more helpful. He then quipped that it was the passengers who were having to become more helpful, because they were showing the drivers the routes.

The hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) cited the example of a bus that had got stuck under a bridge because the driver did not know the route. He and other hon. Members blamed the Government and the legislation for such mistakes. But they are, rather, the result of rank bad management, because companies did not train their drivers properly before sending them out on new routes. That is a matter not for the Government but for local management.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North referred to the months going by. So far, only one month has gone by and it is already clear that many of the problems that prompted the Opposition to table their motion are fading rapidly away—*[Interruption.]*—as local management tackles the problems. I shall come in a moment to some of the Opposition Back Benchers who are making such a cacophony.

The question of Glasgow was also raised. When we saw the photographs and television film of the traffic jams involving huge numbers of vehicles and buses in the centre of Glasgow on that Sunday, we did not see the traffic light failures, the processions or the other changes that made the congestion far worse than it might otherwise have been. An independent traffic commissioner has been approached by the highways authority and has been asked immediately to introduce changes. He has considered the situation, but the traffic has now returned to a sufficiently reasonable level for him to say that he does not consider it a matter for urgent decision, and so he will take it through the normal processes. That is a sign that things are not as bad as has been claimed.

I am glad that we then came to the subject of Lancashire, because I can deal with relish with what has been said about it. Lancashire county councillor Louise Ellman has been crying stinking fish ever since she campaigned in the local elections. Perhaps I can put the quotation that was given in context. I said that several services have been registered as commercial which the operators may find, come January, are not commercial, and so they will seek to de-register them. It was reasonable of the county council to keep a little money back against that eventuality. However, there are several points to be made. Those services are only marginally unprofitable, as otherwise they would not have been registered by the operator as profitable. Consequently, the cost of buying them in will be very small.

Mr. Robert Hughes: The quotation that I used did not refer specifically to Lancashire. It was the Minister's advice to all county councils, and not just to Lancashire.

Mr. Mitchell: I accept that, but I have applied it to Lancashire. As the hon. Gentleman quoted that case, I shall take the Lancashire figures a shade further. The new cost of providing services in Lancashire will be £2,480,000. The old cost was £8,367,000. I am using pages five and six of a document from the clerk of Lancashire county council to all members of the county council's transport sub-committee. I should be happy to give the relevant information to the hon. Gentleman if he wants it.

The net saving was £5,887,000, as postulated in that internal document from Lancashire county council. As I have said umpteen times, Lancashire will save £5 million or more of ratepayers' money. It has £5,887,000, and so there is £887,000 to play with, and we shall still be on the credit side of my assurance. Consequently, I say to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North, with the greatest respect, that he has got things wrong.

Mr. Pike: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mitchell: I shall not give way, as time is pressing.

I welcomed the maiden speech by the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth). He spoke like an experienced parliamentarian. He also spoke with compassion about his constituents' problems, and was given a sympathetic hearing by hon. Members on both sides of the House. He may be surprised to discover the extent to which the whole House shares his concern for the problems of Merseyside. Hon. Members certainly look forward to hearing him speak again. He inentioned a lack of timetables on Merseyside, and I hope that he will make his views known to the passenger transport executive.

The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) gave a very fair account of the success of deregulation in many parts of the country. I thank him for his support for the sale of the Vectis bus company on the Isle of Wight to its own management. However, although he wanted to adopt the typical Liberal attitude of sitting on the fence, he felt that he had to mount some attack. The best that he could do was to pass on complaints from other parts of the country. He raised the question of operators' licences. I assure him that the licence system will continue along with all the checks involved and, moreover, we have increased the number of roadside inspectors by 22 per cent., which should be sufficient at the moment.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) drew attention to the 225 per cent. increase in fares in south Yorkshire since the Act came into force—from a base of 10p for three miles. The rest of the country would consider it to be almost unbelievable that that fare level

[Mr. Mitchell]

had operated. The hon. Gentleman went on to say that south Yorkshire had cheap fares. Yes, fares were cheap for bus users, but they were damned expensive for ratepayers, for people whose businesses have moved from that area and for people who do not have jobs because of the high rates there. If people in that area knew that £60 per man, woman and child per year went into the provision of bus services, they might consider whether they would rather have the money in their own pockets to spend as they choose.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the expenditure limit and the consideration of the redetermination. We are giving it careful consideration. I cannot discuss it further today.

Leeds is another place in which there was chaos, but that was because timetables were not sent out on time. The PTE sought to blame everybody within sight, including the Post Office, until a contract was produced. That contract showed that the PTE had not asked for delivery of the timetables until after D-day. It is scarcely surprising that some people waited for buses that did not run. Some people used their cars and consequently there was chaos throughout Leeds.

A month after the biggest bus shake-up for 50 years, some things are becoming apparent. Broadly, the same network is being operated, with a temporary hiatus during which much depends on the competence of local management. In the past, a great deal of innovation was held down by the dead hand of regulation. Now, new minibus and taxibus systems are opening to provide better services for customers than has existed in many parts of the country. As the months go by, that improvement will spread to the areas from which the complaints have come.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 189, Noes 264.

Division No. 9] **[7 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*

Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Francis Maude and
Mr. Gerald Malone.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on its radical measures to arrest the long running decline of the bus industry by abolishing outdated controls and creating the conditions in which competition, innovation and enterprise can flourish and provide better bus services, whilst at the same time enabling local authorities to obtain value for money in subsidising socially necessary services, thereby putting the social and economic needs of the community and of the travelling public in the forefront of public transport policy.

J. E. Hanger and Co. Ltd.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): We now come to the second motion in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

7.13 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I beg to move,

That this House regrets the interruption of service to severely disabled people caused by the dispute at J. E. Hanger Ltd.; deplores the failure of Her Majesty's Government to end the crude intimidatory tactics of the owners of the company who have sacked 300 of their workforce; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to resolve the current crisis and secure long-term improvement in the standards of the artificial limb service.

This debate is about how a multimillion pound, multinational company is causing harm to severely disabled people in the hope of achieving a short-term advantage over some of its skilled, hard-working staff for the sake of private profit. For some years now there has been dissatisfaction with the service provided by the artificial limb service and concern about value for money. That was brought to a head by the findings and recommendations of the McColl report, but that cannot excuse the behaviour of BTR Industries, the owners of J. E. Hanger.

Amputees to whom I have talked do not complain much about the skill of the staff, or even about the standard of limbs or the skill of the fitters; they complain about the way in which the whole operation is organised and the way the service has declined since BTR took over. In other words, they complain about the owners and the managers. Typical of much of British industry today, those owners have not accepted their responsibility. Instead they have tried to visit the consequences of their failures on their work force and the limbless people whom the work force tries to serve.

It is typical of the Government to respond as they have done by saying, "This is not our responsibility. This is not our dispute. We leave it to managers to manage." That pursuit of blind Thatcherite ideology is bad enough, but it does not end there. It is wholly irresponsible and shiftless of Ministers to suggest that the Government have no responsibility to provide National Health Service patients with the service to which they are entitled. That remains a responsibility of the Government, whoever supplies the artificial limbs and does the fitting.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Surely the Government had the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service put in to resolve the dispute, which is exactly what ACAS is for. Therefore, it is false to suggest that the Government have neither intervened, nor involved themselves, and are not taking any interest in the matter.

Mr. Dobson: The staff of J. E. Hanger have wanted the dispute resolved from the minute it started. They have been suggesting that if an outside body needed to be involved, ACAS was the one. Despite everything, it took seven weeks for the owners of the company even to agree to go to ACAS. Those talks have made no progress whatever.

The matter does not stop there. The Government's assertions about their position are legally unsound—not that there is anything unusual about that. The contract for supplying and fitting limbs is not between the company and those who need limbs, but between the company and the Government. The failure to provide a proper service is in breach of that contract, yet still the Government refuse to take resolute action to end the dispute which has been going on now for 10 weeks and one day.

The Hanger factory normally produces about 100 new or adjusted limbs every day, so the output lost by the dispute could, in theory, be over 5,000 limbs. The Labour party does not claim that the dispute has harmed that many people; we simply do not know. I suspect that Ministers do not know either. However, we know of individual cases.

A month ago I had to raise in the House the case of Mr. Rod Dixon, a constituent who was driven to attempt suicide by the pain from his ill-fitting limb which could not be properly fitted. Since then I have had contact with others, including Mr. John Baller who has appeared on radio and television during the past few days. Both his artificial limbs were broken. One is irreparable and the fitter cannibalised the two limbs to provide one adequate limb.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. John Major): If the hon. Gentleman has been besieged with those cases, why has he not taken advantage of the offer I made to him and others when I responded to his private notice question and referred the cases to me so that we could give them the priority action that we undoubtedly would? Why not?

Mr. Dobson: I have referred to the Minister the cases that I have received from my own constituency in writing. I am now talking about those I have been in touch with within the last day in preparation for the debate. If he and his officials will sit and listen and take note, no doubt they will be able to do something for those people because they have not done anything up to now.

Mr. Baller needed to have one leg produced from the two he already possessed. That is unsatisfactory. He works for a living, and if that leg conks out he no longer has a spare. If the Minister is so quick to get to the Dispatch Box, he should undertake to ensure that Mr. Baller gets his spare leg tomorrow, or as soon as it is humanly possible to provide it. Otherwise, he is at risk.

There are other cases. I have spoken again today to a Mr. Hughes who told me that last time he went to the factory one of the people who was waiting was having a storming row with a fitter. He felt that it was unfair to the fitter because it was not his fault that he could not provide the connection to the artificial foot for that other person. The fitter was incapable of supplying that part of the artificial limb because of the fault of the management. I shall not go on because I know that some of my hon. Friends wish to raise other cases.

Even a month ago, when we raised this matter on the first day after the summer recess, the Minister apparently proudly told us that only about 50 appointments had not been fulfilled. That is all very well for a Minister, a civil servant or the chairman of BTR Industries, who gets about £200,000 a year, but it is not so smart for those 50 or so people who have not had an appointment. It is from that point of view that we have to look at this matter.

It would be fair to try briefly to describe how the dispute came about. In July the company agreed to discuss all changes in timings and work rates with the staff. It also

agreed to a procedure that would be followed in the event of failure to agree. Discussions went ahead, but in mid-September the company unilaterally ended discussions and announced the retrospective imposition of new timings and threatened disciplinary action against people who failed to meet the new timings, even though they had not known they existed and they were not in existence at the outset.

The joint shop stewards tried to activate the procedure which it had been agreed in July should operate in the event of a failure to agree. That was rejected by the company, and about 30 staff were threatened with disciplinary action. The stewards asked to be allowed to hold a committee meeting. That was refused. They asked to be allowed to hold a meeting of the full shop. That was refused. They therefore held a mass meeting off-site after 4 o'clock on a Friday. Despite it being 4 o'clock on a Friday, it was a well attended meeting. From the body of the meeting there were suggestions that the staff should impose an immediate overtime ban. The Committee, behaving responsibly, as elected representatives of working people nearly always try to do, persuaded the meeting not to impose an overtime ban because it believed that the agreement that had been reached with the company should be adhered to. In the event, that mass meeting decided to recommend that staff should not work on the immediately following Saturday morning, but that staff should make up their own minds. Six staff agreed to be at the gate to inform — I emphasise "inform" — anyone who was not at the meeting. I shall read the notice that was prepared to be handed out to anyone who turned up in case anybody here should suggest that there was intimidation. The notice stated:

"An emergency meeting took place of the joint shops at 4 pm yesterday to bring all members up to date re standards of performance and verbal warnings. A ban on overtime was called for (and rejected) after the chairman said we should stay fully in procedure to try to allow full time officials to resolve the situation on Monday. It was agreed by all, each individual member should decide for themselves if they wished to accept any agreed hours over 39 hours agreed between the company and the unions. The chairman stressed that no action would be taken against any member working outside the 39 hours. As agreed at previous joint shop meetings, all members should have the opportunity to have full information to decide for themselves."

There was no intimidation and there were no threats. It was emphasised at the mass meeting and outside the gate the following day that if people, exercising their own judgment, decided to go in, it was up to them. In the event, only three people turned up for work. Two turned back, one of them joining the people on the gate because he so strongly supported them, and one person went in. On Monday, four of the six who had been on the gate were sacked. They were sacked for

"coercing employees not to work overtime."

I urge the House to remember those words. Threats were even made to sue them for loss of production.

District union officials met the company, which refused to withdraw the dismissals but agreed to suspend them and hear appeals at 2 o'clock on Tuesday. A mass meeting agreed, with only two votes against, that if the four were sacked all members of the work force would withdraw their labour. The appeals were duly rejected by the managing director who had been party to the dismissals, breaching the rules of natural justice — not that they mean anything to a multinational company on the make. Having looked through the other companies that BTR owns, those rules would certainly not apply to a multinational company which owns another subsidiary called the Frankenstein Group Ltd. At about 3.20 pm all the staff concerned went home. Within one and a half hours notices of dismissal were issued, which even included employees who were off sick or on holiday.

On the Thursday a secret ballot endorsed a campaign to obtain reinstatement for all concerned by 234 votes to 17. Thus, 300 skilled and hard working staff who had followed agreed procedures and who were provoked beyond endurance were sacked and the people they wished to serve were put in difficulties.

The company has subsequently made offers to take back 70 staff and give the statutory minimum redundancy terms to most of the rest. It says that it does not need such a large work force. How strange. The dispute started because the company accused four staff of coercing others not to work overtime. The company cannot have it both ways. It said that it needed a work force of 300 who needed to work overtime, and then a week or two later it said it had no need for over 200 of them to work at all. It is absurd.

It is no good the Government trying to wriggle out of responsibility, because the industrial boot-boy tactics deployed at J. E. Hanger, no doubt learnt from BTR's activities in its South African subsidiaries, are precisely the sort of approach that the Government have encouraged. That must be what the Prime Minister means when she talks about the management's right to manage. People should remember that that is what she means.

That sort of behaviour raises major questions about the future. The artificial limb service needs to be improved. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), with his wealth of experience and concern, will deal with that when he winds up the debate. Fundamental questions include: should profit-seeking companies be involved in limb fitting at all? Is it right for a multinational monopolist to be the overwhelming source of supply for a service vital for severely handicapped people? Are the current owners and managers fit to be responsible for such a service? Why have Ministers sat on their hands during this dispute, pursuing a policy of non-intervention, which is designed to help the management of J. E. Hanger?

In view of what has happened at Wapping, and in other industrial disputes, why did the Metropolitan police take no action when one of the management assaulted the wife of one of the people who is out of work and damaged the camera of a press photographer? Why have Ministers not used the Government's legal powers as party to the contract? As shown by the fact that the the Press Gallery is nearly empty, why have the British press been so silent about this dispute? When staff at J. E. Hanger were on strike 17 years ago, the press harassed and harried them up hill and down dale, outside the factory and to their homes. There was no stinking smear that the British press did not put on these workers. Why is the same attitude not taken to the odious toads who own this company?

Some of these are longer-term matters to which the forthcoming Labour Government will swiftly give their attention. In the meantime, the Government should remember that severely disabled people who need the products of J. E. Hanger's factories are not getting them. They should act now to end the dispute. The trouble is that DHSS Ministers are a cheap and nasty combination of craven and complacent. They are just not up to the task.

[Mr. Dobson]

They would rather that patients suffered and workers and their families went without than risk offending the sort of acquisitive multinational company on which the Prime Minister dotes.

7.31 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. John Major): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"regrets the interruption of service to severely disabled people caused by the dispute at J. E. Hanger & Co. Ltd.; urges the management and workforce to resolve this dispute without delay; notes with approval the Government's initiatives to minimise inconvenience to patients; and congratulates the Government on the action it is taking to secure long term improvements in the standards of artificial limb services".

The House has been treated, if that is the correct word, to a speech that was partisan, contemptuous, mischievous, contentious, and ill-informed and one that will do nothing to bring a resolution to this dispute. That was not the purpose of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson).

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): The Minister is not interested in resolving the dispute.

Mr. Major: That is exactly the point. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras is not interested in the resolution of the dispute. He is interested in causing the maximum amount of difficulty that he can in these circumstances. His was nothing more nor less than a picket line speech, clearly learnt when he has visited a picket line, and not with the intention of resolving the dispute.

Mr. Dobson *rose*——

Mr. Major: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a minute. He has already made sufficient blunders, but I shall give him every opportunity to make more. While the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) sits jabbering at the back like a monkey on a pole, he will not get an answer to the questions that were asked. Should he care to listen, he might do so.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras spoke of a number of cases, some of which he clearly looked for in the past 24 hours to use in the debate. I look forward to getting the details of those cases as swiftly as possible —tomorrow morning I hope. We shall see whether he is as swift in giving me the information as we shall be in putting it to good use.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Minister will not do anything with the information when he gets it.

Mr. Major: It is nice to know that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is with us this evening. I hope that he will make a sensible contribution rather than utter his usual nonsense from a seated position.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras referred to his constituent, Mr. Rod Dixon. He did not mention —perhaps it has slipped his mind—that Mr. Dixon has been seen at Roehampton and is happy with the adjustments that have been made to his limb. I am sensitive about the cases of those who have been inconvenienced by the dispute. The hon. Gentleman mentioned Mr. Baller but not that the case had been picked up some time ago and is already substantially in hand. I am pleased to say that Mr. Baller will shortly have his limb. We have taken a series of material measures to ensure that we give priority to people facing such difficulties.

Mr. Dobson: As I have been pressing for a resolution of this dispute for a long time, when will I have a reply to the letter which I sent to the Secretary of State on 8 October?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman says that he has been pressing for a resolution to the dispute. He has a curious way of doing so when he addresses the House as though it were a picket line. I shall examine where the hon. Gentleman's letter is tomorrow morning, and we shall see what the position is.

Mr. Skinner: Tomorrow morning?

Mr. Major: I see that the hon. Member for Bolsover is making his usual intellectual contribution to our proceedings. It would be agreeable to see the hon. Gentleman, sitting there in his hacking jacket as if he were about to go shooting with the Duke of Devonshire, make a proper contribution to the debate.

If the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras had been interested in a resolution of the dispute, he might have taken the example of other hon. Members, in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), the Minister of State, Home Office, who has been in daily contact with both me and others to ensure not only that we get the best possible patient care, but that there is a solution. It might be helpful if the hon. Member were to take such a helpful attitude.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Get on with it.

Mr. Major: If the hon. Gentleman would listen, I would be able to get on with it, and perhaps the hon. Gentleman could encourage his hon. Friends to listen so that we could make a little more progress.

Before I respond to some of the specific concerns raised by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, and the wider issues that follow from them, I shall set out the nature of the dispute and the Government's views on it. Despite the hon. Gentleman's mischievous remarks, this is an industrial dispute between a management and one part of its work force. As such it must be settled between them. It is not a dispute between the Government and management of J. E. Hanger, or the Government and the work force at J. E. Hanger, and I regret that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras does not seem to have understood that. I emphasise that the Government are not a direct party to the dispute.

However, neither are the Government uninterested in the dispute, for our interest is in patient care, while the dispute continues and beyond. It is for that reason that I urged the two sides to refer the matter to ACAS when I replied to the hon. Gentleman's private notice question on 27 October. I was pleased that they speedily did so after that exchange. Discussions took place at ACAS on 7 November, 18 November and again yesterday. Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman said, I understand that some progress was made yesterday, and as a result a further meeting will be held next Wednesday. I hope that between now and then no one, notwithstanding the poor example set by the hon. Gentleman, will imperil those talks, and that they will be successful next Wednesday.

So that there is no doubt whatever about the Government's position, I make it clear that I urge both the company and the trade unions—I draw no distinction between them—to continue to meet and talk until they get a settlement. I have no doubt that both the company and the work force have an obligation to resolve the dispute without delay.

As the House knows, the Government have been pressed to intervene by the Opposition and the motion effectively endorses that decision. I have considered that option seriously but rejected it. I do not propose to intervene directly, because such action might become counterproductive. In any event, ACAS exists for such assistance, and is now being actively used, with a fourth meeting taking place next week. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman appears to have so little faith in it.

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): Does the Minister really think that the dispute started as recently as this? Might this have something to do with the possible loss of the company's monopoly position for providing lower limb prostheses?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman touches on matters that are directly germane to the McColl report, to which I shall refer later. I did not say that the dispute started on the date that I mentioned. I said that on that date I urged both parties to go to ACAS, and that soon afterwards they did so.

Although I do not propose to intervene in the dispute, I do propose to take sides, and I propose to take the patients' side. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras has not taken such a practical step. The patients are my primary concern and they will remain so. Until the dispute is settled my concern is to minimise its effects on patient care. I do not underestimate for a second the effect in human terms of a delay or inconvenience caused as a result of the dispute to any individual who depends on the artificial limb service. It must be deeply distressing for the patients and nobody could, or would, deny that.

It is important to keep the general position in perspective. At present, the service has about 62,000 patients, of whom 53,000 are lower limb patients. Each week, across the country, there are between 2,500 and 3,000 patient appointments for measuring for limbs, for fitting, repair or for some other service. The House will know that most patients have their limbs prescribed for them, manufactured and fitted in workshops in the regional limb centres. Patients from those centres are generally unaffected.

The main effect of the dispute is being felt by patients at the Roehampton centre. Because of our concern at the delay created by the dispute, we have examined all the files for the 3,000 Hanger patients at that centre, and have found there are just 300 or so, who appear—I stress the word "appear" because inquiries have not yet been completed—to have been affected in some way by the dispute.

We are giving priority to the cases of greatest need to children, to primary amputees, and to anyone who is immobilised because he has perhaps just one leg that requires repair or replacement. Special arrangements have already been made, or are being made, for 116 such priority cases. Any further priority cases will be given similar urgent treatment.

The House may wish to know that this morning I met Dr. Hiddleston, the managing director of J. E. Hanger and Co. Ltd., to confirm that the company is taking all possible steps to maintain its services to our patients. I sought from the company, and was given by the company, an assurance that priority action is being, and will continue to be, taken in urgent cases. I have subsequently instructed my officials to keep in the closest possible contact with the company to monitor the process and progress of such cases.

I am also concerned that, with 62,000 amputees to care for, one cannot be certain that some are affected of whom we are not aware at present. Therefore, I wish to take the opportunity to say yet again that I hope that any patients in difficulty will not hesitate to contact their local limb centre in the usual way, so that, if necessary, we can bring our emergency arrangements into play and make arrangements to deal with their needs as soon as possible.

I repeat to the House generally the offer that I made to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. If any hon. Members have specific instances of such difficulties, I hope that they will inform me without delay so that we can deal with them. I do not wish any patient to be inconvenienced if we are able to assist.

The dispute is clearly causing difficulties, which is why we wish it to be concluded as soon as possible. However, we should not lose sight of the improvements currently being made in the limb service following the publication of Professor McColl's report earlier this year.

Mr. Skinner: The Minister has just said that he met one of the doctors from the firm this morning, presumably to get some information relevant to the debate. Am I right—although the Minister has not yet mentioned this—that, in view of all the suffering, he called upon Dr. Hiddleston to allow people to get back to work? We have not yet heard whether the Minister made that request. Perhaps he will let us know at the end of the debate. We want an assurance that the Government, who came to power just after the so-called winter of discontent, said this morning to that company director, "Will you take back these people?" Could we have that assurance?

Mr. Major: The hon. Member for Bolsover is asking me to take sides in the dispute, and that is precisely what I have told the House I am not prepared to do however hard he may press me. I told the managing director of Hanger's that I expected the company to continue negotiations at ACAS, that I wanted to see a settlement as soon as possible and that I wanted priority action to deal with any urgent cases to minimise patients' inconvenience. Surely there is no doubt in anybody's mind that that is the Government's position *[Interruption.]* I am not on anybody's side.

I referred a moment ago to Professor McColl's report published earlier this year. It is clearly an exceedingly important report, to which the attention of the House has been drawn. We have still to reach conclusions on many of the major matters raised by the report. I hope to do so shortly and to advise the House of that as soon as possible. However, many operational and management changes have already been made in advance of the structural decisions on the McColl report and they are proving worthwhile.

The motion before the House calls upon the Government to secure long-term improvements in the limb service and I assure the House that we are as committed

[Mr. Major]

to that as is any hon. Member. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras can agree on that. Much has already been done. In particular, we have implemented a number of significant management changes to improve the limb service prior to the structural changes of ownership, and the related matters remaining. We have established a disablement services division, with its own general manager, a new director of operations, and a new director of procurement from the NHS, and a coherent line structure.

We are already using computers to improve patient and limb order information and for stock control purposes and have commissioned Coopers and Lybrand to undertake a consultancy study to identify the scope for further improvements. As a result of this, we have placed a contract with McDonald Douglas for the purchase of microcomputers for each artificial limb centre to hold patient details and up-to-date local information on delivery times. We hope that this will be operational in January and will enable us to identify and eliminate delays more effectively.

We are also taking urgent action to improve transport arrangements for patients and are testing initiatives—some in collaboration with local ambulance services—at various limb centres with a view to general implementation. I am also considering the possibility of a specific budget for limb centre transport to enable local solutions to resolve local problems.

I emphasise the changes—some of which are proving helpful during the dispute — to emphasise the high importance that I give to improving the service that we can offer to patients, even before we have reached conclusions on the structural changes recommended by Professor McColl.

Other changes are in hand. We are developing new strengthened management arrangements for each artificial limb and appliance centre, with a view to devolving more responsibility and discretion on local management to provide a good service at local level to patients. The emphasis must be on the delivery of service to patients, rather than on the central bureaucracy.

Mr. Michael McGuire (Makerfield): The Minister has listed the improvements towards which his Department is working, and mentioned that other improvements are in the pipeline, or being talked about. Are the Government prepared to give a cash allowance for double leg amputees who may have to pay for the adaptation of the cars with which they are supplied under Motability? Adapting car controls for double leg amputees is costly. Is that one of the changes that the Minister has in mind?

Mr. Major: I was referring to the structural changes that are taking place in advance of McColl. The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) is discussing an important matter, but it is a social security change which is important to the patients, but unrelated to the McColl report. Therefore, it is not part of the changes that we are considering.

We have also set clear objectives for the contract arrangements between the Department and all the artificial limb manufacturers. Last April, we put foward proposals for new contractual arrangements to the industry. Those proposals took account of the recommendations of the McColl working party, and of the concerns which the companies have expressed about the arrangements. They were based on separate contracts for the manufacture and fitting of artificial legs. The proposals are intended to lead to greater decentralisation—where desirable—and to a quicker and more flexible service to patients. They will make it possible to introduce competition into the business, either in the manufacture or fitting of artificial legs, and thus ensure that we give value for the taxpayers' money that is spent on those services.

There have been extensive discussions with the industry since we put forward the proposals. I have been deeply disappointed that its initial reaction was not more constructive and that it has not yet been possible to reach agreement on the way forward. But I have no doubt that the objectives that we have set are right and that they provide a sound basis for improving the service in the future and we shall pursue them. *[Interuption.]* Let me interrupt the no doubt exceedingly interesting conversation that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras is having because I am delighted to be able to tell him that a reply to his letter of 8 October was dispatched on 30 October and is no doubt somewhere in his files.

One aspect of the new contract proposals will be to enhance the role and status of prosthetists who fit artificial limbs. That is clearly important—I am glad that I carry the hon. Gentleman with me on that—because many of the difficulties experienced by patients arise from the difficulty of getting the artificial limb to fit correctly. For that reason, we have initiated discussions about the future training of prosthetists and are considering jointly with the Prosthetics Training and Education Council and the artificial limb industry how we might develop a centre for prosthetic training in England which has some of the good features apparent at the Scottish national centre at Strathclyde.

One consequence of our contract proposals should be to improve delivery times for artificial limbs, but we are also taking immediate action on that. Discussions with the industry have led to agreement to start a pilot project at Nottingham centre to test a system where delivery times and patient appointments are fixed flexibly in relation to the individual patient's needs. I hope and expect that that project will start in January and that it will lead to major improvements.

Another area where I see room for improvement lies in the range of artificial limbs available from the service. That range is already considerable and many of the systems developed in Britain are world leaders, such as the Endolite and Ultra-Roelite modern modular limb systems and Steeper's remarkable powered arm equipment. However, we remain anxious to improve the range of limbs available to patients and so have decided to introduce a lightweight plastic version of the patella tendon bearing conventional limb which is already available in Scotland, and was proposed in the McColl report. We are also testing the range of lightweight modular limbs manufactured by Otto Bock to establish whether they offer a useful addition to the range of limbs available to our patients.

A few days ago I took the opportunity to visit one of our regional limb centres to meet and talk to the staff and patients and to see at first hand the work that is being done there. Much of it is excellent and I came away impressed by the dedication and concern of the staff. It was clear at that limb centre, as I believe it is at others, that the distressing dispute at Roehampton has not generally

affected the work done elsewhere, and that is entirely welcome. I hope that that remains the case in the future and that a satisfactory settlement at Roehampton can speedily be achieved.

I have no doubt that the dispute at Roehampton is causing distress, although thus far we have been able to minimise that. I hope that soon we shall have a settlement and will be able to eliminate the distress. But while it continues our central and prime objective will be to protect patient care.

It was precisely for that reason that I asked, as the House well knows, for daily reports on the situation at Roehampton and throughout the limb centre. It is precisely for that reason that I saw the management of J. E. Hanger this morning and, if necessary, I shall see them again if matters deteriorate. It was for that reason that we established the special arrangements that I have set out to deal with difficult cases and it is for that reason that I once again urge the company and the unions to reach a swift settlement. Nothing less will be acceptable. We wish to see a swift settlement. I hope that the two competing sides in the dispute want a swift settlement. Above all, the patients need a swift settlement. The two sides to the dispute have an obligation to meet and to talk until they have reached that settlement.

7.53 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The Minister has just accused my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) of being interested in causing the maximum difficulty. That is an absurd charge, because my hon. Friend made a constructive speech. The Minister is rather confused. He told the House that this is a matter primarily for the trade unions and management concerned and that the Government have no real role in it, yet he spent half his speech boasting about what the Government have done. He cannot have it both ways. He cannot try to shrug off responsibility on to workers and management, and at the same time boast about the Government's accomplishments in the dispute.

This is a deplorable dispute. It is one of the saddest disputes that I have ever known, not only because of the intransigence of the mangement, but because of its terrible impact on disabled people. It is clear that the pressures resulting from the McColl report are having their effect on the firm. This report has played a major role, if not in causing the dispute, at least in sparking it off.

I hope that the management is listening when I say that sacking workers for going on strike is outrageous. It is becoming a common managerial tactic, and it will rebound on management. There is one lesson that all managements should learn, and this management in particular. It is that sacking a work force and agreeing only to reinstate a proportion of them before negotiations take place is a recipe for prolonged industrial misery. It simply will not work. Apart from the selective unfairness of that tactic, there is a basic trade union principle of no victimisation. That is something that management must never forget. When that tactic is tried, there is always the suspicion, to put it no higher, that active trade unionists will be victimised and excluded. I had personal experience of that when, years ago, I participated in strikes and the workers always stood together. The management in this case is making a grave error of judgment and the sooner it changes its tactics, the better for all concerned. That is one way forward.

The Minister was putting forward a naive and misleading argument when he said that this was a matter for the workers and management alone. That is not the case, because the firm's major customer is the Government. Obviously, the Government have a major role. They are not only considering the McColl report, as the Minister has readily acknowledged, but are taking steps, which he has just adumbrated in the Chamber, to do something about the situation. Therefore, the Government have a prime responsibility. Terms of contract are being changed and they directly affect the firm, and many more changes, as the Minister has just said, are in the pipeline.

I hope that when the Under-Secretary of State replies to the debate he will answer a few questions. First, what sort of pressure is the new general manager putting on J. E. Hanger and Co. Ltd.? Secondly, what is the Health Service management board's role in the dispute? Thirdly, why are Hanger and Vassa suing the Government?

There is a rather murky whirlpool behind the bland statement by Ministers and others that this is just another industrial dispute,. This is a Government-related dispute, and the Government cannot shuffle off their responsibility. The House has a right to know what sort of pressures are being exerted by whom, and on behalf of whom, and whether by the Government and on behalf of the Government.

I want to make it clear that I do not object to the Government intervening. It is important that they should intervene in the system for providing artificial limbs. However, I am worried about the purpose of the intervention. If its purpose is to reduce the profit margins of this firm or to increase its efficiency, that is fine. The case for that is indisputable, and we have to thank Professor McColl for it. He has revealed excess profits and the need for increased efficiency. However, if the purpose of the intervention is to cut Government resources and to lower the standards of this vital service for disabled people, it will be bitterly opposed.

This industry has rendered a great service to disabled people. I echo Professor McColl's tribute to the dedication of the staff involved. They have been marvellous. Also, I pay tribute to Professor McColl for highlighting some of the weaknesses and for offering suggestions for change.

Let me describe to the House what I have done. I read the McColl report in detail, and the all-party disablement group discussed it with Professor McColl. We were very impressed by the report. Therefore, I tabled an early-day motion calling for the immediate implementation of the McColl report. It received wide support in the House. However, after visiting Roehampton, at the invitation of the trade unionists there, to meet them and the management, I suggested to the Secretary of State on 30 July that he should delay taking action on the report until the views of the trade unionists and the management and any other interested parties had been discussed and perhaps debated. Four months have passed, and we are now having this parliamentary debate. It is time to end the uncertainty that is unsettling the industry. The case for change has been made and generally accepted. Everybody knows that change is coming, so let it come quickly.

The motive for change is crucial. It must be solely to provide a better and a more efficient service. There must be efficiency, but not cuts masquerading as economy. Improvements must be made in the transport system. I am glad that the Minister for Social Security said that he was

[Mr. Jack Ashley]

attempting to improve it. Improvements must also be made in the appointments system, which is a shambles. People have told me that after waiting all day they have been sent away without satisfaction. We cannot tolerate that for seriously disabled people. The system of delivering limbs is also bad. That too must be improved. Many of the weaknesses have been revealed by Professor McColl.

There is one other problem that extends beyond the confines of this particular debate. Surgeons involved in amputations must take account of the problem for those who are to have limbs fitted. I have been told that some surgery is not attuned to the requirements of a comfortable fit for prosthesis. It is claimed that in as many as 37 per cent. of cases the amputation precludes the fitting of a comfortable limb.

The background of all these changes must be recognition of the fact that artificial limb provision is a bespoke service. The patient must have adequate choice. Specialised provision and individual fittings are vital. We will not accept, under any circumstances, a few standard National Health Service limbs, with the best ones available only for private patients.

It has been demonstrated that it is unsatisfactory to provide only standard hearing aids instead of individual hearing aids. We are also moving rapidly towards a deplorable private sector provision for spectacles. We cannot have private provision for artificial limbs. They are too important to be standard products that are not tailored to the needs of the individual disabled person.

One vital change that would also help is a change in management. At present, civil servants are supposedly in control. I am not blaming civil servants. I am just stating a fact when I say that they have not been in control. In the interim period, we have a Government general manager whose role is far from clear. The question is whether control should be exercised by civil servants or by a management board. Other more wide-ranging alternatives have been suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. I know that the trade unions are not in favour of a management board, but I should prefer a management board in the short term to feeble control by civil servants. In the longer term we must re-jig the whole system and make sure that never again will there be a monopoly by one firm or by a few firms in the provision of limbs for severely handicapped people. That must be done. Then we must move forward and ensure that disabled people have the finest possible artificial limbs. That is their right.

8.6 pm

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley). He made a number of interesting points. I shall refer to some of them during my speech. He asked various questions that were directed at the Government Front Bench to which he wants answers. He will get them from my hon. and learned Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security.

First, let me explain my presence here. As most hon. Members know, when I address the House I usually inhabit the more tranquil area of foreign affairs. I come to this debate from the rural fastness of Leominster because I have an interest to declare. I am the salaried parliamentary adviser to Intermed and therefore to J. E. Hanger and Co. Ltd. [*Interruption.*]. I thought that that would result in a reaction from the Opposition. At least those on the Liberal Bench only smile and do not exclaim. I was appointed last April, though not to be an advocate in this dispute. I was appointed in succession to various hon. Members who had held the appointment before me. Because of the sheer volume of dealings that Intermed and J. E. Hanger and Co. have with Government, Parliament and the Department of Health and Social Security, it is right and proper that they should have an adviser. It is also important that in this debate their case should be stated.

Mr. Skinner: What does the hon. Gentleman get?

Mr. Temple-Morris: I am being paid £5,000 per annum. I am in no way embarrassed by the hon. Gentleman's question. If he asks similar questions, I shall reply to them. If he intends to continue to interrupt me, I hope his interventions will be less personal than his first. But he will get his answers. The atmosphere that he endeavours to create in this kind of debate does not help us to reach a settlement.

I appreciate that I have to be partisan in this debate, but I intend to state in as fair and dispassionate a way as I possibly can the case for Hanger and to suggest a sensible way forward in trying to reach a practical solution. When patients are involved, the last thing that I want to do is to turn this into a hack party dispute.

As for the basic situation, a bitter industrial dispute exists. I do not intend to go into the rights and wrongs on both sides of the dispute. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) referred, quite rightly from his point of view, to the rights and wrongs of the dispute from the trade union point of view. I could provide a great catalogue from the other side. I could refer to the difficulties over co-operation. I could also refer to the efforts over two years to modernise, to the lack of co-operation, to demarcation disputes, even to arguments over the air conditioning system. However, I do not intend to do so.

There have been a large number of dismissals because of the dispute. I hope that all hon. Members agree that the dispute must be solved in the interests not only of the workers—I put them right at the beginning—but of management and, above all, of the patients. We all have a duty to help.

I am delighted to see in his place my hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), the Minister of State. For once in his political life, because of his distinguished ministerial role, he is rendered speechless in this debate, although as the hon. Member for Putney he is probably more anxious about the situation than any other hon. Member. I can say with authority that he has been in constant contact on behalf of all his constituents with the management and work force at Hangers. Officially, the work force is not permitted to come and see my hon. Friend, but I am delighted to know that he maintains contact with that work force and that he has its interests at heart.

Since the start of the dispute my hon. Friend has been in contact with Hangers several times a week trying to get a solution. It is sad that he cannot speak as an hon. Member in the debate and I would certainly not pretend to make a speech for him. If he could speak as an hon. Member he would probably deal even more vigorously

than I can with a somewhat odd publication which I gather has been leafleted around his constituency today. It is a salubrious journal called the *West Putney News*. Apparently, it comes from an organisation called the Putney Labour party. This misleading publication says:

"While Putney MP David Mellor supported the sackings, Peter Hain and local Labour councillors demanded their re-instatement, and pressured both management and the Government to end the conflict and settle the dispute."

I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me for saying that I think I have his agreement when I say that that is absolute and utter rubbish. It is an example of party political means being used in an effort to take advantage of a problem which we should all be trying to solve. There is no question of my hon. Friend supporting any sackings.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea) *rose*——

Mr. Temple-Morris: I shall give way in a moment.

My hon. Friend has made his position clear in the constituency. Obviously, he wants a practical settlement and the best possible offer, in employment or in financial terms, for the work force and for his constituents.

Mr. Dubs: The hon. Gentleman is assiduous in defending the hon. Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor). We understand why the hon. Member for Putney cannot speak for himself, but will the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) comment on an extract from the *Wandsworth Borough News* of 21 November. It says:

"Meanwhile Putney MP David Mellor has urged the sacked workers to adopt a 'more flexible' negotiating position."

Is that a fair quote, and what does it mean?

Mr. Temple-Morris: I cannot carry on a vicarious dialogue for somebody else. If my hon. Friend the Member for Putney said that, he was quite right because we need more flexibility on both sides. In ACAS at the moment — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) hisses. I should have thought he would want flexibility in seeking a solution. I am delighted to say that, whatever he may think, and whatever the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) may think, both sides are beginning to show flexibility. It is not for us to go into the details of negotiation before ACAS, but there seems to be some flexibility, and that is the best way towards a solution.

I shall try to state fairly the main elements of the practical situation. It has hardly been mentioned, let alone stressed, that overall we have a most important classic situation which has, sadly, been repeated in other parts of British industry — new technology and its effect on traditional labour practices. A traditional and distinguished craft has been practised for many years by a distinguished and highly skilled work force, but now, sadly, the role of that work force is diminishing, although it will not end.

Some three quarters of current demand is for new modular limbs and not for the old type of traditional and conventional limbs. I am not an expert in this field, but I know that machines and computers are required to make those limbs and their manufacture does not require as many craftsmen as the old type. Therefore, there are fewer jobs.

Mr. Carter-Jones: It was said in an intervention that at one moment people were sacked for not working overtime and the next moment they were sacked because the company did not want as large a work force. That seems to be a contradiction in terms. The hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) would be well advised to look at the causes of this dispute and at the point that the contract has not been signed or agreed. He should look at those issues when examining the matter of employment.

Mr. Temple-Morris: I shall certainly look at the issue to which the hon. Gentleman directs my attention. I know that he has followed closely the history of this dispute and that we are in his area of interest, but from whatever side one looks at this matter one sees that there is a certain, almost awful, inevitability about what has happened and about the clash that has taken place. It is not just a matter of dismissals because problems were building up for some time. It is important to take the situation as it stands. There is no point in harking back and going into great catalogues of calamity perpetrated by one side or the other.

I have dealt with the technological and practical aspect of the matter and I now want to speak about the reaction of Government to this problem. It has been a gradual build-up and the reaction is that, dare I say it, of any Government, because in the use of resources we must have the best value for money. I say somewhat critically that the old cost-plus system that existed under successive Governments between the DHSS and management and workers was somewhat cosy. As a result of a number of factors, including especially the policy of Government, the McColl report and management, that sort of relationship is finished and the pressure is on for a new and better system.

That has led to several things happening during the build-up to the dispute. The first was price negotiations in December 1985, and it is fair to say that in some quarters the Government's proposals at that time were called somewhat severe. However, in the circumstances, they were necessary in the drive away from cosiness and towards efficiency. There were abrasive negotiations, and objectively it is fair to say that my hon. Friend the Member for Putney played a large part in them. Indeed, it was thanks more to him than to anyone else that the basic settlement was considerably improved with price increases of between 6 and 8 per cent.

Parallel with the price increase and following shortly after it, we had the McColl report and its implications. The terms of reference for the people who prepared that report were to examine and look at ways to bring about better quality and better management, and to promote efficiency and cost effectiveness. Subject to Government reaction to that report, many hon. Members want it to be examined in more detail in the House. Its recommendations stress competition and—this is relevant to Roehampton—the report stresses decentralisation.

Following the publication of the McColl report, and rightly linked to it, new DHSS contract proposals appeared on 15 April. I shall not enumerate them, but their effect upon Hangers and upon any management was considerable. Those completely new contract proposals were aimed at getting the best deal for the patient and greater efficiency. They were to be implemented by the end of this year, and that is highly relevant for Hangers. Because of what has happened, it is now likely that they will not be implemented until the middle of next year.

[Mr. Temple-Morris]

The pressure was on management and union alike and the management had no option but to try to modernise because such changes must come eventually. As hon. Members have said, the management started consultations with the work force. The consultations went on between April and September 1986, which was after the introduction of the new proposals. The work force had all the natural fears of job losses and technological changes and those fears came to the fore, the work force dug in and no progress was made in the consultations. We then get the sequence leading to the dismissals and the situation that we face today.

I wish to stress—and it would be a good thing if it sank home — that there are no longer 300 jobs at Roehampton. It is all very well to say, "Let us go back, boys, and then we will talk", but the 300 jobs are no longer there. As part of the original proposals to settle this matter there would have been more than 80 jobs, but the extra jobs that could have existed over and above the 80 have dispersed around the country in order to deal with the dispute. Incidentally, the way in which Hangers has dealt with it nationally has been very creditable indeed — *[Interruption.]* It is all very well for Members on the Opposition Front Bench to laugh, aided and abetted by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). That does not surprise me.

The Minister of State referred to some detailed figures, and I compliment him on doing so. I concede straight away that obviously there is potential suffering—I dare say actual suffering — and difficulty as a result of a situation such as this. There is no way in which anyone can pretend that everybody is as well as if nothing had happened, but so far that suffering has been very limited. It was indicative that on the "Today" programme this morning the best that could be done in terms of producing a patient was to get someone whose two legs had been made into one and who at least was mobile. Indeed, everyone's mobility has been maintained by Hangers.

Hangers is supplying 80 per cent. of the service, and that proportion is increasing. We are therefore dealing with the remaining 20 per cent. which is delayed. However, it is moving. As the Minister said, there are 3,000 appointments a week throughout the country, but only about 70 deferred appointments. That is not at all bad.

There are three kinds of limb — the modular, the conventional and the complex to deal with congenital deformity. The latter is a problem area, and in that respect Roehampton is much more necessary than any other part of the country. The modular limb accounts for 75 per cent. of the current trade. There is no reason for delay. Such limbs are easy to produce, and they can be produced elsewhere. The difficulty can therefore be narrowed down to the conventional and special limbs, in respect of which great care is taken over priority for children and the extremely disabled. There is spare capacity throughout the country which increasingly is being used.

I appreciate that the situation is difficult and that I cannot provide an ultimate answer. However, Hangers is doing its best. It has dealt with all communicated emergencies. It knows of no patient who is immobile. Anyone who is immobile need only get in contact with Hangers or the local limb centre, and action will be taken. I give the Minister and the House an undertaking on behalf of Hangers that it will do all it can to maintain the service, and it will co-operate in any way in respect of any individual case.

As for the work force, the official line is, "All back to work and we will talk about it." We are deluding ourselves if we think that that is practical. The fact that the ACAS talks are going on is an indication of that. My hon. Friend the Member for Putney has made it clear that, while all the work force cannot necessarily be reinstated, we must go for a practical solution and the best possible deal for the work force.

That brings me to ACAS. There is no option but to work within ACAS, and the fact that that is being done is good news. There was an introductory meeting on 3 November followed by two substantial meetings on 18 November and 25 November. I believe that yesterday's meeting went on for two and a half hours. Both sides have made proposals to each other, and both sides are considering them. The next meeting is scheduled for next Wednesday 3 December.

The main thing is that the parties are talking. It is important that no hon. Member should exacerbate the conflict so that either side might be tempted to think that it can get a better deal than is possible in all the circumstances. The people represented on the management side are quite prepared to do all that they can to achieve a settlement. They realise the importance of it, but we must bear in mind the practical situation that I have outlined. It must be a realistic settlement, but a settlement is perfectly possible.

8.25 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I am not sure whether the debate will improve the prospects of settling this dispute or whether it shows the House at its best. The speech of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) was way over the top and will do nothing but exacerbate the difficulty that we face. The Minister may have been lured into it, but at times he responded in like manner, and that again does not help to deal with the dispute. I also wonder whether the discussion of an industrial dispute across the Floor of the House is the right way to assist in the process of conciliation that must follow in any kind of dispute.

A particularly nasty part of the motion refers to "the crude intimidatory tactics of the owners of the company".
It may be that those words are true——

Mr. Dobson: Has the hon. Gentleman ever been sacked?

Mr. Meadowcroft: Twice, actually. If the hon. Gentleman will interrupt from a sedentary position, he should beware of the reply that he might receive.

Even if the words that I have quoted are true, it does not help to solve a dispute by referring to events that are history. The question in any dispute is how to solve it, rather than to refer back to the very things that are part and parcel of the problems that the company faces.

The Minister said that the Government were on the side of the patients. Everyone is. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras is, and I accept his bona fides. That is why he has tabled the motion. I disagree with its terms and with the way in which he introduced it, but nevertheless he is on the side of the patients.

It is also crucial that we should be on the side of ACAS. If we are to have a body such as ACAS in industrial

relations, and if we are to rely on it for the kind of action that we now expect to be taken, it is vital to support that body in its work rather than make its job more difficult. I do not see how some of the comments made tonight have assisted the cause of ACAS.

As the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) said, the debate falls between two crucial meetings—one yesterday and the other next Wednesday. I do not understand how it can be suggested that some of the comments that we have heard will assist ACAS in its work. We should recognise that it is nonsense to suppose that after reading *Hansard* one side or the other will capitulate and say, "Now that we read it in *Hansard*, of course we were wrong. Of course we will give way."

This debate is important, not because of the vote or the wording of the motion, but because of the signals that it will give to the participants in the dispute. Even if the company has behaved as badly as has been suggested, the crucial question is whether this debate adds to the bitterness that is part and parcel of the dispute. There is clearly a lot of confusion within the company, the work force, the management and, it would appear, the Government about what is happening in the dispute and the means of settling it. For example, there is a crucial distinction between whether the company and the Government are relying on market forces as the way forward, or whether they are relying on Government direction of the company via the NHS. That is the crux of the dispute.

The personnel manager of Hangers wrote to the work force on 24 October and said:

"in order to re-establish a viable business and restore consumer satisfaction, it is essential to reorganise the company".

The personnel manager was talking about market forces. However, unfortunately for that point of view the *Wandsworth Borough News* on Friday 21 November reported the managing director of Hangers, Dr. James Hiddleston, as saying:

"the DHSS now wanted the majority of limbs to be produced at Hanger's branches and not the central Roehampton factory and had changed contract procedures.

As a result the Roehampton factory can no longer support a workforce of 300 people."

If that is true, it has nothing to do with market forces. Rather, it is related to the NHS and the Government's decision about the future structure of the industry—and therein lies the Minister's problem. He may say that he is not part of the dispute—and that is perfectly true—but he has a part to play. The clue to the problem lies in the words of the managing director.

The Minister referred to the McColl report and its contents. It is important that we consider that report and the way in which it has an impact on the dispute. The key phrase in that report occurs in paragraph 54:

"We were surprised to find no evidence of competition on price between the companies, and when we attempted to inquire further into the so-called cost-plus contracts we found it impossible to compare costs per item supplied between one company and another."

There we have it. Hon. Members find themselves in difficulty when discussing the dispute. They must decide where the balance of interest lies—between sorting out the problem and assisting the work force, which is part and parcel of that decision, or solely behind finding the best solution for the client, the patient, wherever that can be met.

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) said that he had enjoyed meeting Dr. McColl, and had enjoyed reading the report and thought it very valuable. Does he accept the problem faced by the staff at Hanger? If the implications of reorganisation that arise as a result of the report mean that the work force of 300 cannot be sustained, it is crucial to recognise that that leads to the problem of the industrial dispute that we face. It is difficult to say on the one hand that McColl is right and good, and on the other that the work force is right and deserves to have its case made. It is impossible to have both.

Mr. Ashley: As the hon. Gentleman is playing a good tune at the moment, I must tell him that, when I said that I agreed with some of the points in the McColl report, that did not mean an overall endorsement of the report. I do not want to be placed in the false position of accepting parts of the McColl report and thereby being blamed for its being instrumental in the dispute.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman made that distinction, which is important to the debate. If he is drawing attention to the splendid work set out in the report in the types of provision, but distancing himself from its commercial aspects, that is a useful contribution to the debate.

The Minister has a role to play in the dispute over the question whether he has been dilatory in his response to the McColl report. If it had been possible for the Minister to respond earlier, it is conceivable that we might not have been here this evening discussing the matter. In reply to a private notice question on 27 October the Minister said:

"I am urgently studying its recommendations together with the comments made on it, not least by the Royal College of Physicians in its report on physical disability. I shall endeavour to produce conclusions and proposals for action as soon as possible and shall naturally keep the House informed as soon as conclusions are reached."—[*Official Report*, 27 October 1986; Vol. 103, c. 24.]

That is fine as far as it goes. However, in the light of the problems, and in light also of the distress that has been caused, it is strange that the Minister has not come forward sooner with his comments on whether the restructuring of the commercial implications set out by McColl will happen. It is impossible to settle the dispute at Roehampton without the context of the dispute being settled by the Minister. Will a solution lie in market forces, through the DHSS, or through some way in which direction will come from outside the company and the work force?

Originally the Government made no commitment to take up any of the report's 49 recommendations and referred it instead to the National Health Service management board for comment. However, on 11 April this year the then Minister with responsibility for the disabled, now the Minister for Health, announced the Department's plan to deal with some of the problems identified in the report through the appointment of a civil servant—Mr. Ian Burns—as general manager of the DHSS disablement services. On subsequent questioning of the Department's real intentions behind that appointment, and its general position with regard to the McColl report, the Minister has been somewhat evasive. Sadly, the Minister did not today deal with that aspect of his involvement with the problem.

Mr. Carter-Jones: The hon. Gentleman has made an extremely valid point. We are all talking about

[Mr. Carter-Jones]

implementing McColl, but in some respects the decision to establish this other Civil Service committee to a large extent sabotaged the McColl report.

Mr. Meadowcroft: That adds to the point and increases the problem. Given that we must accept the bona fides of hon. Members on both sides of the House that they want the dispute settled, and to improve the supply of appliances to the unfortunate people who need them, we must consider the ways and means of achieving that.

In conclusion, the Minister must act to clarify the future of the industry and its structure and establish where the NHS imperative lies in relation to the industry's structure. Although it is a pity that he did not do that this evening, the Minister must come forward as quickly as possible and make conclusions about McColl and its implications for the structure of the industry, because that is of great significance to the dispute. If the Minister were to do that quickly, it would assist ACAS, the work force and the management to produce a conclusion to the dispute in the best interests of all, and in particular of patients.

8.36 pm

Mr. John Whitfield (Dewsbury): The dispute at and the circumstances surrounding the business of J. E. Hanger and Co. Ltd. contain all the ingredients that explain what has been so wrong with Britain in the post-war era which this Government, since 1979, have done so much to correct. The description of the position at Hangers that we have heard tonight reveals that there is still much work to be done to change the attitudes of managers and work forces in some parts of British industry. It also shows how important it is that a Conservative Government be returned at the next general election. The position at Hangers provides support for the argument that the Government should make maximum use of their time in office and not go rushing off to the polls before they need to do so. We need all the time that the electorate has made available to change the sort of attitudes of which the dispute at Hangers is a sorry example.

In this debate we are concerned about attitudes with regard to the way the DHSS should be managed as well as the attitudes of trade unionists and of contractors to the DHSS. The McColl report revealed that there was a great deal wrong with the artificial limb services. A damning indictment is contained in the second paragraph of the summary of the main findings and recommendations. Professor McColl and his working party discovered that as

"inquiries continued we became increasingly conscious of the large numbers of customers who were not satisfactorily served, of the dignity and patience with which many of them endured unnecessary pain and discomfort and of the apparent complacency with which this situation was regarded by many, but not all, of those supplying these services. Although we were told at the outset that there was a great degree of satisfaction with the supply of artificial limbs, a recent survey showed that 23 per cent. of amputees complained of uncomfortable limbs. We were told there was no need to consider foreign limbs because the British limbs supplied to our patients were unequalled. Evidence we received showed that this was far from the case in terms of making comfortable sockets to fit amputation stumps and aligning the limbs correctly . . . British amputees are restricted not only to limbs made in this country but often to only one of three suppliers; and to make matters worse 50 per cent. of new limbs are delivered late."

Professor McColl further found:

"After careful examination of the contracts which the limb manufacturers have with the DHSS, we came to the conclusion that they—

the DHSS itself—

"are not capable of controlling the costs, prices or profits of the companies."

That view was confirmed by Coopers and Lybrand, which added that

"in many areas the system appears to reward inefficiency and delay while providing no incentive for suppliers to make improvements."

The working party further considered the position of the companies supplying the artificial limbs and concluded that there was virtually no competition between them. Faced with those widespread deficiencies, the working party unanimously concluded that

"only a total break with the current organisation and its historic evolution could jolt these services into the state of caring efficiency which is required and which we are sure that the taxpayer, who funds them would demand."

One would have assumed that the Opposition would be as concerned as the Government about the findings of the report and would urge the earliest implementation of the recommendations of Professor McColl and his working party for the benefit of the 63,000 amputees in the community. But not a bit of it. We have on the Order Paper in the name of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) early-day motion 43, principally concerned with the 300 sacked workers at Hangers as opposed to the many thousands of long-suffering amputee customers. In the motion that we are now debating in the name of the Leader of the Opposition there is a suggestion that the Government should intervene and require Hangers to reinstate the whole of its work force to resolve the current so-called crisis.

I have no doubt that the 63,000 amputees will find it incredibly uncaring of the Opposition not to have referred to the McColl report in either of those motions. Professor McColl and his colleagues discovered about the limb makers — J. E. Hanger is the principal one — the following matters. In its detailed recommendation No. 25, the committee recommended:

"The suppliers and manufacturers . . . should be responsible for their products' fitness."

To a lawyer such as myself, it seems a fairytale world where a manufacturer is not responsible for the fitness of his product, particularly when that manufacturer's own technicians, the prosthetists, are involved in designing and fitting the limbs for their individual amputee patients.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): It is clear that the hon. Gentleman does not know how the industry works. Does he not know that there is an individual relationship between the fitter and the person who receives the limb, on a weekly and daily basis? Does the hon. Gentleman understand how the industry works?

Mr. Whitfield: That is exactly what I was saying. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman could have been listening to me. I said that, because of that personal, daily relationship, it is extraordinary that so many of the limbs do not fit the patient.

The second point that the McColl report made about the limb makers related to customer service. At paragraph 34, McColl found that the manufacturers themselves admitted that 50 per cent. of all limbs were being delivered late, and 40 per cent. of major repairs and 25 per cent. of

general repairs were behind schedule. There was evidence that those figures understated the position. The report went on to say:

"Within the average, however, are concealed some shocking delivery delays. We were moved by the distressing evidence of individual cases of delay and the modest and self-effacing way they were put to us. These delays are not just exasperating. They can of themselves cause further delay in rehabilitation, because stumps can and do change over time and a cast taken 6-8 weeks before delivery of the socket may well not fit at all so that the process has to start all over again."

The Committee found:

"The companies are failing to deliver many limbs within the times specified in their contract. They are therefore in breach of contract . . . even the agreed delivery times are too long. The major cause of the delays arises from the central fabrication of sockets and limbs in the contractors' main factories."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) said, that is the central cause of the dispute.

Mr. Carter-Jones: I should like to tell the hon. Gentleman, who is labouring a little, that it was his hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) who realised that that was happening and over four years ago invited Professor McColl to lead the committee. That was the causal factor. Those worries were there all the time. The report has vindicated the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green.

Mr. Whitfield: I am not sure how the hon. Gentleman's point relates to my speech. I would go along with what he says. The point that I am trying to make is that little emphasis has been placed on the recommendations and findings of the McColl report and far too much on the labour relations side of the dispute. No detailed analysis has beeen made by the Opposition of the reasons behind that difficulty.

The committee's harsh criticism hardly fits in with early-day motion 43, urging the House to recognise that the work force, including the managers at Hangers, have "always shown outstanding devotion to the care of disabled people."

Before anyone says that the criticisms that Professor McColl has made do not apply to Hangers, let me remind the House that the latest recorded figures show that Hangers and its closely associated company, Vessa Ltd, supplied 78 per cent. of all lower limb patients, 69 per cent. of new lower limb patients, and took 73 per cent. of total orders for new and replacement limbs and 79 per cent. of total orders for repairs. Not surprisingly, McColl found that market concentration to be unhealthy and recommended that the market should be opened up to new entrants by encouraging new companies and their different limb systems and by actively encouraging individual prosthetists to set up business independently. McColl further found that there was no evidence of competition on price between the four—or really three—companies that supply limbs and that it was impossible to compare costs per item supplied between one company and another.

It is instructive to note the enormous gap between the industry's perception of itself and the findings of Professor McColl. In its evidence to McColl, the industry claimed a competitive entrepreneurial spirit that in no way conflicted with service to the patient.

Therefore, the situation as McColl found it was pretty unsatisfactory. First, the artificial limb and appliance centre services were not efficiently managed. Secondly, the limb manufacturers, particularly Hangers, were enjoying a cosy and profitable monopoly, and had done for many years. Thirdly, the monopoly was not in the interest of the taxpayer, but, more importantly, it was certainly not in the interest of the 63,000 long-suffering amputees. The monopoly was and is being enjoyed at their expense.

Amputees have made several representations to me in my constituency, and I have received some from representatives of the British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association. Like Professor McColl, I have found them to be long-suffering, self-effacing, good people, not wanting to make a fuss. But many of those amputees have endured a service for years that has supplied them with ill-fitting limbs—limbs the basic design of which has not altered for over 50 years, limbs that break down and disappear for weeks while they go away for repairs. They are denied access to the far more modern and aesthetically attractive artificial limbs available abroad, principally in Germany, Japan and the United States, while British manufacturers, especially Hanger and Vessa, through their tight monopoly, prevent new entrants from coming into the industry and have done little, if anything, to improve their own products, at any rate until now.

The motion effectively says that the Labour party wishes that situation to continue. The party which claims a monopoly of care in fact cares only about the few hundred jobs which for years have benefited from a most unfair monopoly and about the preservation of restrictive working practices which directly result in discomfort, delay and despair among 63,000 severely disabled people. Not infrequently, amputees have to undergo further operations because of the inadequacies of their appliances. Unfortunately, the Labour party has a vested interest in delay, discomfort and despair because those conditions provide their only firm recruiting ground. Such modern-day Socialism is a despicable philosophy which Conservative Members utterly reject. The 63,000 amputees also utterly reject it. Like me, they look forward to the earliest implementation of the McColl recommendations.

We greatly regret the minor interruptions in service to severely disabled people caused by the dispute at J. E. Hanger and Co. Ltd. which, in the terms of the motion, seems to have the support of the Labour party, and we congratulate the Government and my hon. Friend the Minister on the steps that have been taken to protect amputees from what might otherwise have been most damaging effects.

8.51 pm

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): I have to declare an interest as parliamentary adviser to the British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association for the past 18 years. The majority of the association's members are in my age group. It is, incidentally, an unpaid job. I am also probably the only Member of the House to have given evidence to the McColl inquiry, a task for which I was volunteered by the all-party disablement group. I gave evidence on two occasions. I am very proud of the McColl working party, which was well led and questioned us extremely closely.

On the first occasion the all-party group asked me to give evidence on the limb service. I had access to the submissions made by the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation and BLESMA. I also had access to civilian amputees. On that occasion, my brief was prepared by Mary Holland, researcher for MENCAP and

[Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones]

an upper limb amputee. We were well received by Professor McColl and his well-informed associates and he probed the matter in great depth.

On the second occasion, again volunteered by the all-party group, I was asked to give evidence about wheelchairs, as cases had been brought to us by women from the north-east. On that occasion, my brief was prepared by Fidelity Simpson, secretary of the all-party disablement group, who also joined me, and I had a second opportunity to appreciate how thoroughly the working group operated.

Having said that, I should make it clear that people were worried about the amount of money being spent on the limb service and the kind of service being provided to both upper and lower limb amputees as well as to users of cosmetic arms and glass eyes. There was so much concern that I am baffled as to why the companies do not admit that there were so many complaints. At Easter, the Minister will be invited to the BLESMA annual conference, at which, as I know from 18 years' experience, a whole range of motions will be discussed and resolutions drafted, copies of which will be sent to the Department, to receive, in the fulness of time, a reply from the Minister. So people cannot pretend that they did not know that there were problems with the limb service.

My next comment will upset some hon. Members. I believe that the Minister is being used as a fall guy. I believe that he is being pressured by Hanger through the work force. This incident has not just begun. It had been building up for a long time. It can easily be pinpointed at the time when Professor McColl was asked to form his working party, which was well before the last general election, and the invitation was sent out by one of the Minister's predecessors. So there had been concern about this for a long time.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mr. Whitfield) pinpointed some of the problems and read eloquently from the McColl report, but his speech became rather weak when he departed from the text to try to make party political points. He should have stuck to the script because McColl has lessons for us all. No one is innocent in this. The Minister mentioned new developments in upper limb prosthesis. As long ago as 1977, my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) brought the myoelectric arm from Sweden to be tried out in this country, so let us not have any party political accusations about this. There is a major problem relating to upper and lower limb prostheses. There have been changes in structure and materials.

The BLESMA group, who are my age, may be dying out—there have not been many new war amputees—but the number of civil amputees has grown. The prosthetists' job is also made more difficult as the population grows older and they have the problem of fitting limbs to stumps for people suffering from age-related cardiovascular diseases. There is thus a massive problem to be faced.

The structure set up by the Minister's predecessor—a friend of mine, although he is a Tory—in my view thwarted the proper implementation of the McColl proposals. To put it kindly to the present Minister, I think that it will be extremely difficult to marry the McColl concept of an independent management committee reporting to the Minister, which I thought was a good structure, into a committee of civil servants which has been set up within the Department to report to the Minister. No doubt some of those civil servants are present today. They may be very genuine and just the right kind of people, but one cannot marry the major concept of McColl into that structure. The Minister may have to come up with a compromise, but it will be difficult because it looks as though the main McColl recommendation was sabotaged when that committee of civil servants was established. I do not know how he will overcome that. It will be a major problem for him as it would provide some independence.

I can understand why skilled limb fitters worry about their future. J. E. Hanger and Co. Ltd. should not have gone down the path that it pursued, because it has so many inconsistencies. I believe that the company is trying to get at the Minister and his Department and McColl through the work force. I believe that honestly and sincerely.

I am an old hand. I shall say something to the Minister that I shall not be saying after the next election, so he need not worry about that. Whatever the Minister does in future on this matter, for God's sake will he consult the amputees, who could give him much advice? That was writ large into McColl. Tiny Bunch, Duke Hussey and Liz Fanshaw from the Disabled Living Foundation served on the McColl committee. They are disabled. One is a double lower limb amputee and the other is a wheelchair bound, experienced occupational therapist. Those people could give the Minister positive help and advice. Who better to give the House advice on the problems of the deaf than my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley)? Who knows more about the problems of stump difficulties? It has been said that one recommendation made by the experienced people on the McColl committee was that consideration should always be given to the nature, shape and size of the stump because that must bear the limb. When surgeons amputate, it is final. If a surgeon fouls that up in the first instance, he has fouled up the life of the individual who has lost a limb.

All those matters are before the Minister. Through no fault of his own, he is faced with an industrial dispute. However, he has a major responsibility. He is the "target for tonight" from outside the House. He should go to J. E. Hanger and Co. Ltd. and say, "Do not take it out on the employees because you are dissatisfied with me or because you are dissatisfied with McColl. We have tried to produce a contract for you". That is possibly ultimately a subject of litigation. The possibility is there all the time. In that respect, the Minister has my deepest sympathy.

The Minister has a clear bounden duty, possibly with the Minister of State, Home Office—the constituency Member who is statute-barred from speaking tonight—to go to J. E. Hanger and Co. Ltd. together and say, "Enough of this messing. You should not have called in ACAS on this matter. You know the difficulties that you are creating for people in need."

The Minister can take care of himself. It is not so easy for a person who has lost a limb or two limbs. We should not be taking it out on them. Will the Minister please take my advice and ask for a return match with the managing director of J. E. Hanger and Co. Ltd. and say, "Enough of this nonsense. Get back to the original position. Do not make people suffer because of your problems and the fact that you have a dispute with my Department." I hope that the Minister will resolve the problem by that method. I am sure that it can be done and that many more people will be happy and satisfied.

9.2 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): The hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) pointed us towards an interesting possibility as to why the dispute at J. E. Hanger and Co. Ltd. came about. What is certain from what the hon. Gentleman said is that the problem did not arise suddenly. Behind it was something that had been going on for some time. That is typical of confrontations that result from problems that appear to have arisen from a relatively short discussion period, but have been dragging on for some considerable time. It is no compliment to the work force or the management that we have reached this position. As the Minister rightly said, the patient is all-important in such circumstances, and an early resolution of the problem is imperative.

It is wrong for the Opposition and the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) to put it all down to a one-sided approach and to suggest that it was a simple matter and that everything had been done badly by management during the latter period. As the hon. Member for Eccles said, the McColl report was behind what happened, although it did not intend to create the problem.

The report accepted that many of the people involved in providing a service to the limbless and to others have the right motivation and intend to do good, but it queried strongly the effectiveness and suitability of those services. That should have provoked the response that there was something decidedly wrong. My hon. Friend the Minister said that the report highlighted much that was not good enough about the service and that could be improved. That included the cost of the services. The figures quoted in the McColl report were £38 million being spent on the provision of artificial limbs and £32 million on wheelchairs, and it suggested that as much as £11 million could be saved and used elsewhere. I hope that it would be used for the benefit of the limbless, but such a reduction in cost would be bound to affect the companies which produce the limbs.

This may have been partly an attempt to frighten the work force, but when significant changes in productivity are wanted, if the matter is not handled well and there is no genuine consultation, all that will happen is this great punch-up, which often results in neither side being prepared to give way, and eventually there are sackings, and so on.

It is to the great credit of my hon. Friend the Minister that he pressurised the management to use ACAS to try to resolve the problem. That is the right way to go. It is not suitable for Governments to start meddling in industrial relations. Some Opposition Members believe that it is a good idea, but almost inevitably it brings the wrong results and little satisfaction to anyone. The Government's policy is not to meddle, and that is right. I hope that the procedure which has been encouraged by the Minister will bring an early resolution of the problem.

I was pleased to hear the Minister say that some computerisation had been introduced. The McColl report also recommended the appointment of a manager. I accept the point made by the hon. Member for Eccles that it might be difficult to impose a different structure later, but with care it is possible. I accept that, having done one thing, a second change could be a little more difficult to achieve, but I hope that the Minister will seriously consider introducing the management board that was proposed by McColl. It must also be encouraging for limbless people that the Government and the service have started to consider more widely the supply of limbs to the disabled. McColl made it clear that the provision of limbs and the service given to the limbless were inadequate, so the Government's action in this area is encouraging.

Other matters mentioned in the report have not yet been tackled. They include the upgrading of the professional training of prosthetists, and the combination of surgeons, prosthetists and others in the Department to provide the best service and the rehabilitation of limbless people. We need a more strongly co-ordinated effort. McColl was not satisfied with the apparent fragmentation of some of the help that was being given. The Government have made a start on the placing of contracts. If the service is to become more accessible, the various specialists who are involved must be integrated at some speed.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider closely when the House can receive a full report on the conclusions that have been reached. The report was produced in January, nearly 12 months ago, and I am pleased that there has been some movement — it is excellent that things are happening—but it is important that the House should receive at the earliest moment the Government's conclusions and intentions following the McColl report. The report has long-term implications, and it is recognised in the report that some of them will take a long time to work through. That makes it even more urgent that we know about the Government's conclusions in the near future.

9.10 pm

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): When the Minister addressed the House he said that he was not taking sides on this issue. Having said that, he and his Back-Bench collegues took the part of the bosses in the Hanger dispute. It will not escape the attention of workers who are listening to the debate, or who read about it, that trade union disputes that are discussed in the House invariably result—it could be said that this result is 100 per cent. assured—in Labour Members standing up for the workers against the bosses while Conservative Members support the bosses.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Fields: No; I do not have time.

Conservative Members have introduced a mire of distortion and many contradictions. We know that the 300 employees at the Hanger factory are involved in the fitting of 500 limbs a week and that when overtime was offered to them they refused to work it. It was that which led to the strike. The management is now talking about reducing the work force from 300 to 80. That is ludicrous. Such a proposal does not make sense and lacks all reason.

When we try to ascertain the effect that the strike is having, we find that it is having only a

"minimal effect on a small percentage of patients".

We know, however, that the 300 workers were dealing with 500 limbs a week, which means that over 10 weeks they handled 5,000 patients. We know also that the strike has been running for 10 weeks. If we listen to Conservative Members, however, we are given to understand that the strike is having only a "minimal effect". No information on this score is available at the limb centres that I have

[Mr. Fields]

contacted. That is not surprising if the Minister has been trotting around trying to keep the lid on the effect that the strike is having on those in need.

It is important to remember that the firm makes bespoke limbs. It goes beyond some firms which make only small, medium and large limbs. We are talking about a firm which makes limbs to fit the needs of particular individuals. Other firms supply stump stockings for ill-fitting limbs, or alternatively patients are sent to Hanger to have their needs met.

Unlike the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris), who has received £5,000 from the bosses, I have been on the Hanger picket line. I met Hanger workers at the Labour party conference and I give total support to them and to any other workers who are involved in industrial disputes against managements of the sort that prevails at Hanger and the backer of Hanger, which is BTR. Morale on the picket line and among the workers generally is extremely high. Despite having been 10 weeks on strike, the pickets have the support of the majority of the work force. As late as 13 October a mandate was given to the union's negotiators to act as observers at ACAS and to bring any decisions back to the work force so that it can decide what is to happen.

Conservative Members have made great play about ACAS, and they should realise that the Hanger management is making a mockery of conciliation in this dispute. Initial offers of redundancy pay of £130 for every year of service have since been forgotten or withdrawn by the management. We can hope only that the representative of J. E. Hanger on the Conservative Benches will be able to influence the management. I hope that he will insist that when discussions take place with ACAS next week the management will have some concrete proposals for the resolution of the dispute.

Since the dispute started, 23 people have left the factory but only six of them have found jobs. That blows sky high the Tory myth that the unemployed in the north-west should come south to look for jobs. There are no jobs, particularly around Roehampton, where workers have been seeking jobs since being kicked out of work. I have spoken to those involved, and they are not the mindless militants that reactionaries in the Tory party like to think. They are just decent workers, who are dedicated to providing a service for the disabled. The average age of those whom I have seen is between 40 and 50, and many of them have given a lifetime of service to the industry.

Hon. Members talk about flexibility in negotiations, but the bosses have already said that no one aged over 50 will be given his job back. Although they have a wealth of experience and have given a lifetime to the industry, those people are being treated like that. Incidentally, two of the workers recently received trade union badges to commemorate 40 years of union membership, and most of that time was spent working in the industry.

Tory Members talk about terrible workers who make too many demands, want restrictive practices, and so on, but they should look behind the scenes and at who is pulling J. E. Hanger's strings. The hon. Member for Leominster is getting £5,000 for it, but the parent company, BTR, should be given even greater scrutiny. It is the key to the whole affair.

In the year ending June 1985, BTR made a profit of £151 million through its investment and involvement in industry round the world. For the most part, that profit was made by paying poverty wages to South African workers in breach of the EEC code, to which Great Britain is a signatory. It is an absolute scandal that that should be allowed to happen, and that we should have contracts with industries that have such records. The majority of black workers employed by BTR are in receipt of about 385 rand per month, which is eqivalent to about £100 per month. The starting rate for the majority of black workers is 40 per cent. below the South African poverty level, and it only just about keeps them alive. The profits made by that man and by the subsidiary companies should be contrasted with the standards of living experienced by those whom they employ. For example, the salary of the managing director of BTR, Sir Owen Green, increased from £97,000 a year in 1984 to £147,000. His attitude towards industrial relations is well documented. For him, profits reign supreme and his relationship with the personnel is non-existent. That of course permeates British management. His ideology is to treat British workers similarly.

Prior to the dispute, the unions allowed the introduction of new technology, withdrew demarcation lines, and were seen by the company to be bending over backwards to accommodate management. Of course, that was also seen by the company as a sign of weakness, and there were further attacks on conditions. Perhaps I have a vested interest, as I have a comrade in Liverpool, Cathy Wilson, who is disabled and who has a limb made by Hanger. She fears that the sackings may be part of a rationalisation plan to cut the number of factories in the limb-making business. The McColl report revealed that, although six firms are contracted to the DHSS for artificial limbs, there are in reality only two, and they are both owned by the BTR subsidiary, which is also the main contractor for wheelchairs for the DHSS.

In our motion, we demand that the Government should stop hiding behind Hanger's mangement—which is, of course, BTR — and should accept that they have a responsibility for the patients who so desperately need attention and limbs fitted through the DHSS. Sole responsibility for the dispute lies with Hanger's management. The Tory Government, by their inactivity in an area where they clearly have a locus, are abrogating their responsibilities. The disabled should be made aware of that.

The caring face of the Tory party is betrayed by the fact that, although letters have been written by the striking workers to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), and to the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), no response to date has been given.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): Rubbish.

Mr. Fields: If that is rubbish, the Minister, whom I saw being carried around the Strangers' Lobby by Hanger's workers, will no doubt take it up with them. My information, as late as this evening, is that he has refused to reply to letters. If he wants to make anything of it, we shall talk to the workers. I have nothing to hide, even if he has.

To compound the complicity in this affair, since the workers have been sacked, the Government have turned down applications for unemployment benefit and other

social security benefits. The excuse is that the workers are on strike and are not unemployed. All the dismissed workers at J. E. Hanger are in receipt of P45 forms. If that is the case, clearly they come under the provisions of the Act.

In the interim, the workers demand a flexible approach, reinstatement and negotiation. It is a moderate demand, given the high-handed attitude of the management, who want to sack 300 workers and then redeploy 80 of them.

I should go further than the Labour party's motion on the Order Paper. In the long term, the only security for these and other workers, who are only pawns in the profit game being played by the Tory party backers, is for the total takeover of the Health Service and ancillary service industries, under democratic worker control and management, as part of a national plan, to cater for the desperate needs of ordinary people, not the greedy and acquisitive few who exploit workers for the sake of profits in the way they exploited the workers previously employed by J. E. Hanger & Co. Ltd.

Mr. Speaker: It may be for the convenience of the House if I say that I understand that the Opposition Front Bench spokesman will seek to reply at half-past nine.

9.23 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): The loss of a leg, an arm, a foot or a hand is a severe form of disablement and is also a great hardship. It can be a tremendous misfortune and disabled people require the utmost compassion and support from Parliament, the Government and the public. Some of those who have lost limbs have risked their lives so that others may live in freedom and peace. They may have lost limbs in the second world war, in the Falklands, in Northern Ireland, or in other places where secondary wars have taken place. We do not always show enough honour and respect to these people. The French, for example, have special seats on buses for those who were mutilated in time of war. People with other ailments take second priority.

We must show concern to anyone who, through illness, has lost a limb or part of a limb. Often, their employment prospects are damaged. It can be difficult, with missing limbs, to enjoy the enforced leisure that may ensue. It is a tragedy that such people have been caught in the crossfire of this foolish dispute. The work force, in most cases consisting of excellent people, are some of my constituents, because Twickenham is not far from Roehampton.

My hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), whom I see on the Front Bench tonight, also has many constituents among that work force. It is a pity that this matter has become so politicised. I hold no brief for either side. From what I have heard tonight, the management is unimpressive. They have shown poor leadership qualities.

I was glad to hear my hon. Friend the Minister say that he hoped for a swift settlement. He said that there were 62,000 amputee patients in this country and that every week 2,500 or 3,000 appointments are made for limb fitting or repair. At present, 58 patients have not been treated. As there are about 150,000 appointments a year, they represent about one patient in 2,500, but even that is one person in 2,500 too many, and I wish that there were none.

I should like to tell my hon. and learned Friend the Minister about a constituent who needed an artificial leg replaced and was suffering because the previous one did not fit well. She wrote to me and I telephoned the manager of the Richmond, Twickenham, and Roehampton health authority. Within a matter of days the lady, who is a lecturer at Richmond upon Thames tertiary college, had a new limb supplied. That is consistent with what the Minister said at the beginning of the debate, that if hon. Members get in touch with the health authorities about particular cases of hardship, action will be taken and the hardship dealt with, albeit in difficult circumstances.

This tragic strike is undoubtedly all the more noticeable because these days there are few strikes compared with 10 years ago. I am glad to support the amendment, which is couched in a balanced way, contrasting with the somewhat intemperate language of the motion, which I hope will be defeated.

9.26 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Earlier in the debate my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) pointed out that the real patsy in the dispute was the Government. He said that the antecedents of the strike lay in the McColl report. If I could bring the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State more up to date, on 9 January 1986 the Hanger management made it clear who was to blame and made clear the type of Russian roulette that it was playing both with its work force and with the people to whom it is responsible—those to whom it supplies limbs.

The following notice appeared on the notice board at Hanger, Vessa and Kellie, which is in my constituency:

"As you will know, the Companies were threatened with nationalisation at the end of last year and only on the intervention of our local MP, David Mellor, with the Minister, Tony Newton, was this set aside.

Following that, we found that the DHSS would not agree to any price increase for the Companies and refused to conduct business on the basis that we have done for the last 30 years.

"Instead, they offered a contract more than halving profit levels, increasing bureaucratic control of 30 per cent. of our orders and imposing swingeing penalties for failure to deliver on time . . .

This meeting was arranged to apprise you of these facts and to give you"—

that is the work force through its representatives—

"90-day notice of redundancies as a consequence of the closure of the Companies."

The notice went on to say that there had been four hours of negotiations in which the Ministers participated. Only then did the Secretary of State intervene and the DHSS pull back.

The notice continued:

"The problem is by no means resolved because, in agreeing to this interim arrangement, we have been forced to accept immediate discussions aimed at introducing a commercially-based contract which will mean substantial changes in methods of conducting our business and in the conduct of working practices. In addition to other changes, this will mean output per man must go up and delivery times must come down.

No doubt it is the DHSS's intention to have in place a commercially-based contract."

Then a company notice went up, advising the work force to get its finger out. If the workers have to get their fingers out, the managers can pay for it. Contrast that with the efforts of the work force to supply limbs to those who require them and who, through the negotiating and disciplinary procedures, agreed to pursue the dispute reasonably to a successful conclusion. Clearly, the patsy is the Government.

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

The Government are absolutely responsible and the Hanger management has made that clear to the work force. It is the Government's decision to change the method of awarding contracts that has led Hanger to take this action against its work force. That has precipitated the strike. It is trying to induce the work force to accept unreasonable terms. Given the record of the work force, it is unreasonable to ask it to accept those terms. The management is suggesting, not only that those terms be accepted in the meantime, but in the future. It is against that background that the debate is taking place tonight.

We need to hear from the Minister that he will tell the company that it cannot be allowed to use the work force to settle the dispute. The dispute is between the Government and J. E. Hanger. The Government have a responsibility. The Minister knows that if the company decided to pull out or cease trading, the contracts awarded historically

"contained a clause which gave the Department the right, under certain conditions, to take over the Company at an agreed evaluation."

There can be no doubt that the Government have an overriding responsibility to those who require the limbs and to the dedicated work force to intervene and ensure that J. E. Hanger starts negotiating with the people concerned, who for the past few years have been providing a very good service to patients.

9.31 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): No industrial dispute can be judged as to its importance by the number of people directly involved; there are also the tests of the principle or principles at stake and the effects of the dispute on others. This melancholy, bitter and protracted dispute is about deeply important issues of principle. It is a dispute that affects many thousands of severely disabled people. They include young mothers, anxious parents of disabled children and, among others, people with severe war disabilities. The work people at Roehampton, whose skills have helped them, have a prescriptive right to the attention of the House, and it is much to the credit of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition that it was he, not the Government, who provided the parliamentary time to debate the dispute.

There have been many notable contributions to the debate, not least those of my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones). As the House knows, both are tireless friends of disabled people and all who work to help them. Other Members speaking from this side of the House informed the debate with speeches that wholly vindicated the parliamentary time that we have provided. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) fully documented our concern about the dispute when he opened the debate. He pressed the Minister to act purposefully to help bring the dispute to an end on terms that will meet the legitimate claims of the work people involved, many of whom are themselves disabled. Their devoted service to amputees has so very often, in my experience, gone far beyond the calls of duty.

A ballot of the work force at Roehampton endorsed with virtual unanimity the call for reinstatement of all—I stress all—who have lost their livelihood. The case put by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras was well argued and compelling. Anyone who thinks otherwise should reflect on the statement of the hon. Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), who described the lock-out of the 300 workers in his constituency as

"a gross over-reaction to a minor dispute."

The hon. Gentleman is, of course, not only the hon. Member for Putney but a Minister.

If the Minister responsible for the disabled feels that he has no direct role in ending the dispute, what contact has he had with his right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment about trying to have it resolved? What steps, if any, did he or his right hon. and noble Friend take to bring the parties together? The impression of many of us is that Employment Ministers are too busy trying to massage the employment statistics to help resolve disputes of this kind. They have now performed the trick 18 times. In fact, nowadays, Whitehall seems to have been turned into one huge statistical massage parlour. We now know that people who work with the Prime Minister at 10 Downing street can be "economical with the truth." Many Whitehall watchers are convinced that the masseurs at the Department of Employment and the DHSS are becoming not just economical but even parsimonious, at least with statistical truth.

For the purposes of this debate, however, my concern is to emphasise that DHSS Ministers could and should have found time to do much more to end this dispute. What is incontrovertible is that if, when we were in power and I was the Minister, there had been a dispute of this length affecting the special interest and well-being of severely disabled people, Conservative Members would have been up in arms and screaming with charges of ministerial indifference, inactivity and incompetence.

Baroness Trumpington said in the other place many weeks ago that the dispute is a matter for the company and its employees and that it would be inappropriate for Her Majesty's Government to intervene. She went on to say:

"My Lords, our main responsibility is to make sure that the effects of the dispute at Hanger's Roehampton factory on the service to patients in the country as a whole is minimal with a relatively small number of appointments being cancelled. We do not envisage any amputee being left immobile as a result of the J. E. Hanger dispute." —[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 17 October 1986; Vol. 480, c. 1024.]

Within days of that statement, the DHSS press office was acknowledging that more than 50 severely disabled people had already been left immobile as a result of the dispute. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House with knowledge of cases of extreme hardship in their constituencies would have regarded that as a conservative estimate.

The House has heard, among others, of the distressing case of a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras who was found unconscious after extensive bleeding from his stump and extreme discomfort. Ought we not now be told just how many people, at the latest date for which figures are available, have been made immobile as a result of the dispute?

The Minister for the Disabled has tonight taken much the same stance as his noble Friend in regard to the Government's responsibilities and priorities in their approach to the dispute at J. E. Hanger. I must, therefore, very strongly stress that any case of an appointment being cancelled is a serious matter for the disabled person left

waiting for help. To talk about "a relatively small number" of appointments being cancelled, as the Government have done, can mask unmerited suffering on a disturbing scale.

On 27 October I raised with the Minister, at the request of the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, the case of a disabled young mother who had visited an artificial limb and appliance centre no fewer than 23 times without her problem being solved. She had damaged her artificial leg after falling in a shopping centre while carrying her baby son earlier this year and wrote to RADAR on 23 October. I was authorised to pass on her letter of complaint to the Minister, and, in pressing him to give it his immediate attention, I asked on 27 October when and how the Government would act to resolve the case. From that day to this I have had no response. It is for that reason that I baulk when I read that the Government's main concern is with service to patients.

Again, take the case of 22-month old Kris Aston of Plymouth who was born with no legs and the use of only one arm. He can only walk with artificial legs. I quote from the *Western Morning News* after a visit by Kris and his parents to Roehampton. It says:

"Kris is already outgrowing his present set of legs, but the company which makes them has just shut down and sacked its 300-strong work force. His mother has been told that Kris may not be able to have a new pair of legs.

Without them Kris will be totally immobile. He has already been forced to cut down on the number of hours he spends wearing his present set of legs each day because they are causing him pain . . . He cries every time we try to put on the old legs, but nobody seems to care."

That is another of the many cases that are causing deep concern. It is one that affects a grievously disabled child in pain and calls very much into question the Government's claim that service to patients is their paramount concern.

When he replies, I hope that the Minister will tell us how many of the disabled people affected by the dispute are being allocated to other centres for the provision of limbs. Will he also inform the House how the waiting lists have been affected by the dispute? Will he give the numbers of people waiting for artificial limbs, one year ago and six months ago, and the length of the waiting lists at both the Hanger factory in Roehampton and at Blatchfords in Northern Ireland?

The dispute at Roehampton cannot be meaningfully considered in isolation from the McColl report and, more particularly, from the Government's piecemeal approach to its recommendations. The importance of the recommendations to the dispute was readily conceded in the House of Lords on 17 October and the Government's inordinate delay in making a definitive statement about them is highly culpable. In one parliamentary question after another I and other right hon. and hon. Members have pressed for a full and definitive response from the Government. That is much more than we have had from the Minister for the Disabled in this debate.

In a written answer on 17 June, the former Minister for the Disabled, the hon. Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton), said that he hoped to announce the Government's decisions on the report before the summer recess. That announcement was not made, and even now, in late November, we are still awaiting a definitive statement a year after the McColl report was presented to Ministers.

The McColl report was published in January 1986, yet there is still no public indication of how the Government will respond to many of its most important recommendations. That has created both anguish and uncertainty among the organisations of and for disabled people, among the companies involved in the production of artificial limbs and their workers, among the approved repairers and, most importantly, among disabled people themselves. They were and are entitled to much more consideration from the Government.

The Minister should now tell us to what extent his Department's contracts with Hanger—unreported in the House — were themselves a factor in provoking the dispute. The *Wandsworth Borough News* on 21 September reported:

"Dr. Hiddleston"—

the managing director of Hangers—

"claimed unions at Roehampton had been kept 'fully informed' of the new DHSS requirements but 'attempts to change Roehampton to meet the new situation were unsuccessful'."

The Minister owes it to the House to spell out the "new requirements" and to say to what extent they were a factor in causing the dispute. What in detail were the "new requirements" and how do they relate to the McColl report?

Whatever else the Minister might argue about Dr. Hiddleston's statement, he cannot possibly now deny that the DHSS has had a direct role in the dispute and that it was involved from the outset. The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) and my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) touched on that important point. We are entitled now to an unambiguous response from the Government.

It is central to our case in the debate that the DHSS, like the Department of Employment, could and should have done much more to end the dispute. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who is with me on the Opposition Front Bench tonight, in a speech at Roehampton on 30 October, charted the way to the settlement of a dispute which is damaging both to a work force which has given front-line service in patient care over many years and to the disabled people whom it serves. The work people merit much more consideration than they have received so far and deserve well of this House as a whole.

9.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Lyell): We are debating an industrial dispute which, albeit to a small extent, is affecting patients and which ought to be resolved. The debate is timely for several reasons and it has covered several important aspects. Those aspects are, first, the crucial matter of maintaining services to the patients; secondly, the need for the company and the trade unions who represent the work force to get together to resolve their difficulties, using the good offices of ACAS; and, thirdly, the wider issue of the future of the artificial limb and appliance centres and the service to patients as a whole, including the wheelchair service.

Despite the somewhat choppy tone of the early stages of the debate, there have been valuable contributions from both sides of the House. The need to resolve the dispute, which must be one of the first matters of concern, and the need to involve ACAS has been stressed by the hon. Members for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) and for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones), who made a most distinguished

[Mr. Nicholas Lyell]

speech, and also by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel). Although he was unable to take part in the debate, I think that it will be recognised by the whole House that nobody has played a greater part in seeking to bring this dispute to an end and to resolve it constructively than my hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), in whose constituency Roehampton is situated and who has been present in the Chamber throughout the debate.

Emphasis has been placed by a number of hon. Members upon the action that the Department should take to meet the needs of patients during the dispute. They have emphasised the importance of bringing ACAS into the dispute. I was glad and not at all surprised that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) raised the absolutely crucial matter of the future of patient care as his first concern. It is common ground that it should be the concern of us all.

I shall deal in a moment with the way ahead for the service, with the significance of the McColl report and with the action that we are taking. This matter was referred to in particular by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley). He made a distinguished and constructive contribution, to which I shall refer in some detail. It was taken up by my hon. Friends the Members for Dewsbury (Mr. Whitfield) and for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens), and by my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) who, in a most constructive contribution on behalf of the company, clearly recognised that the McColl report shows the way ahead.

I return to the matter that concerns us most of all: the way in which the dispute might be affecting patients. I shall try to meet at once the anxieties that were expressed by the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe, and I shall also try to correct some of the misunderstandings.

The Government are in no sense complacent. In a dispute of this nature there is always a danger that patients may be adversely affected. We have taken a number of steps to try to avert that danger. It is not correct to suggest that 50 people have been left immobile. I suspect that that might have been a slip of the tongue by the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe. It was said at the time that 50 appointments had been postponed.

It is important to emphasise that Mr. Baller, who works at Gatwick airport and who had a jury rig repair made to two artificial limbs, has been able to remain at work. His concern, rightly but moderately expressed this morning on radio, is that he should have his proper artificial limb repaired, in case anything should happen to the jury rig. That repair is in hand. In fact the repair had been in hand for some time before he spoke on radio. The limb ought to be completely repaired by 5 December and we hope to be able to make an appointment for him on 8 December.

We are taking further specific action concerning a small child Kris Aston. Despite the difficulties, the case was brought to light and action was taken. New limbs are being manufactured and should be ready next week. The finishing work will be carried out in Exeter and the case will be dealt with at Exeter, mainly to avoid the journey to London which is no fun for a small child or for any disabled person. The family has said that it is very satisfied so far. We take the point about "so far" because our duty is to see that patients are not inconvenienced and are not made to suffer and that any problems caused by the dispute are kept to an absolute minimum. We have taken a number of steps to seek to protect patients as far as possible from the effects of the dispute. First, our attention has been focused on the vulnerable patients. These are of course Hanger's patients whose care is based on its Roehampton premises or whose limbs must come directly or indirectly from Roehampton. I should like to indicate the scale of the problem, in part to keep it in perspective, and to reiterate what we are doing.

On the matter of scale, it is important to stress that of our 53,000 lower limb patients—and we are talking here entirely about lower limb patients — 29,000 are J.E. Hanger patients. The 9,000 upper limb patients are wholly supplied with those limbs by Hugh Steeper Limited, a quite separate firm. The great majority of them look not to Roehampton, but to the 18 ALACs and nine satellite centres countrywide. It is on the 3,000 patients who look to Hanger at Roehampton that our attention is focused. Of these—and every case had been checked—315 appear to have been affected in some way by the dispute and of those 315 we have identified 116 priority cases, including 13 children. Every case has been looked at with great care. The process is one of identifying potential problems and taking action to overcome those problems.

Without in any way implying complacency, I can say that so far we have managed to succeed in keeping people mobile or in keeping problems to a minimum. We have received fewer than 10 complaints and on each of them action has been taken. I must repeat, and I hope that it will go far and wide, that any patient listening to this debate or any patient who has been in touch with any hon. Member because he is experiencing difficulty should get in touch at once with his nearest ALAC or with the Department of Health and Social Security and he will be attended to at the earliest possible date.

I should stress two points. First, we have instructed all 19 ALACs to maintain contact with local Hanger staff on a continual basis. This procedure was established very early in the dispute and it has been extended where necessary. Additionally, we have been examining all outstanding files to try to tell whether an individual patient may be in trouble. For example, a patient may have visited his or her ALAC many weeks ago but has not returned to the centre despite an expected further visit; or a patient with a specific order for a limb may still be waiting with the limb overdue.

It will be recognised that the ALAC service is essentially reactive. It is part of its pride that there are no waiting lists. As far as possible, it provides an on-demand service for repairs and fittings. It has about 150,000 contacts a year with its 62,000 patients. That is 3,000 contacts a week, and of these a high proportion of problems, whether for repair or replacement or for some fitting attention, will be resolved immediately. Because the service is reactive, we must rely on patients to tell us if they are in difficulty, and that is why I repeat what my hon. Friend the Minister has said, that if anyone is in trouble as a result of the dispute or for any other reason or is known to be in trouble he or someone else should contact his nearest ALAC or the Department.

Before I discuss the need for the company and the work force to get together to resolve their dispute, I want to answer the specific points that were put to me by the right

hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South. These specific points will, I think, be of interest to the whole House, as is the concern for patients.

The right hon. Gentleman asked what pressure the general manager was putting on Hangers. The simple answer is that he is pressing Hangers to talk to the unions through ACAS to resolve the dispute and—to be fair, we have received a response to the request—to minimise the disruption to patients. The right hon. Gentleman also asked about the role of the NHS management board. The role of the general manager is to report — not to implement but to anticipate—on some of the views of McColl and the benefit of management expertise that that will help to bring to bear.

He also asked why Hangers and Vessa were suing the Government. The answer seems to be because the Government are seeking, as McColl recommended, to improve the contractual position in order to get a better service for patients. Of course we regret that, but we do not intend to be deflected. Nevertheless, that seems to be the reason.

I, like other hon. Members, was encouraged to hear the constructive remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster. I hope that we shall see a change of heart and movement across a broad front with the assistance of the company.

I acknowledge the tribute of the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South to Professor McColl and his working party and the support given to it by the all-party disablement group. I thank the right hon. Gentleman for recognising that these issues are complex. I emphasise that in no sense are we seeking to make changes to implement cuts. In fact, far from there being cuts, our intention is to use all the resources better, against a background of help for the long-term sick and disabled which is now £1·9 billion higher than when the Labour Government had control of these matters. That £1·9 billion, with £400 million in real rises in the value of individual benefits, is a significant sum that ought to be of interest to the whole House. It is, rightly, a matter of pride to the Government in their help for the long-term sick and disabled.

Having answered the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, and having welcomed his constructive support for McColl, I now turn to the duty to look to the future and the Government's approach. Following the recommendations of the McColl working party, which this Government set up—tributes have been properly paid to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) who anticipated it—we have done a number of things. Despite the fact that the company may not like it, we are pressing for separate contracts for the provision of limbs and appliances and for the provision of prosthetic services. These provide an opportunity for wider competition.

We wish to see a less privileged and protected position for any individual supplier, major or minor. It is fair to say that there is much that is good in the equipment of our existing suppliers, but let them retain their pre-eminence by their ability to compete rather than by a form of annual contract which chokes competition from others. We wish to see an improvement in the quality of prosthetic services. A key aspect—here I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Eccles and all the work that BLESMA is doing and which the hon. Gentleman so ably represents—is better training for prosthetists. We have initiated discussions with their training body and the industry about this. Our contract proposals will also make it possible for prosthetic firms or independent self-employed prosthetists to work at centres.

In summary, we have dealt with three aspects, but our primary concern is care of patients. The care of patients is——

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 167, Noes 246.

Division No. 10] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Cleiland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon

O'Brien, William
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Coombs, Simon
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Hayes, J.
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments)*:—

The House divided: Ayes 210, Noes 21.

Division No. 11] **[10.12 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Crouch, David
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Hayes, J.
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Michael Portillo.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Freud, Clement
Hancock, Michael
Howells, Geraint
Kirkwood, Archy
Livsey, Richard
Madden, Max
Maynard, Miss Joan
Mikardo, Ian
Nellist, David
Pike, Peter
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Alton and
Mr. Michael Meadowcroft.

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House regrets the interruption of service to severely disabled people caused by the dispute at J. E. Hanger & Co. Ltd.; urges the management and workforce to resolve this dispute without delay; notes with approval the Government's initiatives to minimise inconvenience to patients; and congratulates the Government on the action it is taking to secure long term improvements in the standards of artificial limb services.

Terrorism

10.25 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): I beg to move,

That the draft Suppression of Terrorism 1978 (Application of Provisions) (United States of America) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 20th November, be approved.

As the House will be aware, the purpose of the order is to enable the United Kingdom to ratify the supplementary extradition treaty with the United States. The text of the supplementary treaty, as amended, is set out in schedule 1 to the draft order. Its principal effect will be to prevent those accused or convicted of certain serious crimes of violence from avoiding extradition by claiming that their offences are political. The background to the supplementary treaty is, of course, events in Northern Ireland, and the fact that people accused of serious crime associated with the situation there have fled to the United States to seek haven and have been able to avoid extradition.

The present extradition treaty with the United States will remain in effect in conjunction with the supplementary treaty. The treaty sets out in the normal way a list of crimes for which extradition may take place. This is a requirement of our Extradition Act 1870. The treaty incorporates a further requirement of that Act, which is the political offence exception. This requirement is a standard feature of extradition treaties. Thus, the United States treaty prevents extradition

"if the offence for which extradition is requested is regarded by the requested party as one of a political character."

This concept is not defined in either the 1870 Act or in the treaty. In the United States a body of case law has arisen concerning the interpretation of this exception. The effect of this has been that the United Kingdom has failed to extradite people accused or even convicted of serious offences on the ground that the United States court had to accept that their political motives prevented extradition.

I believe that all civilised people regard this situation as intolerable. It is deeply offensive to any law-abiding person to see people accused of vicious offences find haven in another country, especially one with which we have such close and friendly relations. It was clear both to the United States Administration and to the United Kingdom that what we had seen was not a proper use of the political offence exception.

The proper purpose of this safeguard must surely relate to asylum. It is to cover the situation in which the requesting state is after the fugitive for reasons other than the enforcement of the ordinary criminal law. This position does not and cannot arise between two liberal democracies, such as the United States and the United Kingdom. In our two countries a person may be sought only in relation to criminal conduct. The courts and the prosecution authorities do not act on the whim of Government, and the Government stand apart from the case. In our country the fugitive, when returned, is tried in the ordinary way according to rigorous standards of justice.

Both Governments considered that it was invidious for terrorist fugitives to escape jurisdiction and to have their conduct dignified by the word "political". In a democracy, the gun and the bomb are the tools of the crook, the thug and the enemy of law-abiding society. They cannot in any circumstances be regarded as the tools of political activity. Neither is it legitimate to draw a distinction between what goes on in Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. The assertions by lobbyists in the United States about standards of justice and democracy in Northern Ireland have little or no relationship to reality, and no one knows that better than my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, who I am glad to see in his place this evening. The truth is that the character and courage shown by the people of Northern Ireland has meant that democracy and justice have survived the onslaught of terrorist horror, and will continue to do so.

The draft order before the House is intended to deliver our side of the bargain. The supplementary treaty, like any extradition arrangement, is reciprocal. The draft order, therefore, applies to extradition requests made by the United States to the United Kingdom. As I have indicated, the draft order delivers, in effect, the United Kingdom's side of the treaty. Before ratification can take place, it is necessary for our statutory provisions to be applied in respect of the supplementary treaty. The House is asked, therefore, to approve the draft order, the effect of which will be to apply to the United States certain provisions of the Suppression of Terrorism Act 1978. That Act was the means by which the United Kingdom ratified the European convention on the supression of terrorism. The Act is applied by order to other states which have ratified that convention. It has been applied over the years to all the European countries which have ratified the convention.

The United States is the first country outside the Council of Europe to be designated. The draft order, in schedule 2, identifies the various provisions in the 1978 Act which give effect to the provisions of the supplementary treaty which is before us. In particular, paragraph 5 of schedule 2 sets out the list of offences which are not to be regarded as offences of a political character in relation to a request for the extradition of a person to the United States. This is not the only order which must be made before the supplementary treaty may be ratified. An Order in Council has been made which applies the Extradition Act 1870. A further negative resolution order under the Suppression of Terrorism Act will be laid, the effect of which will be to apply these arrangements to the dependencies.

I hope that the House will agree that the supplementary treaty is a most welcome development. It will send a clear message to terrorists: that neither the United Kingdom nor the United States will provide a haven for those who use violence to further their political ambitions. On that basis, I commend this draft order to the House.

10.31 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): It is right that the House should respond to the threat of terrorism that has grown in the last couple of decades, particularly in view of the easier transport around the world, which enables terrorist activity to be carried out at short notice and in different parts of the globe. It is also important that we recognise that there is an underlying cause to terrorism, whether it is in the middle east or Northern Ireland. We have to face those political problems and sooner or later we have to resolve them. We must recognise and have a

concern for the underlying basic rights – the democratic and judicial rights which, over the years, liberal democracies have defended.

It is also right that we should be aware of the danger of what has been called victors' justice – the idea that a person should be returned to a state in order to face the victorious people of the time. We must bear in mind that the United Kingdom has an impressive history on this. In the last century we gave succour to people who may now be described as terrorists. They certainly were terrorists at the time. They included Garibaldi, French aristocrats, and, following that, some of those who escaped from Napoleon, Mr. Bolivar, who escaped from Venezuela and Spanish justice, and many others.

I read article 1 *(d)* as perhaps excluding certain offences which do not involve a direct risk to life, but might involve the use of explosives. The article refers to bombs, grenades, rockets, firearms, and so on, and says:

"if this use endangers any person".

What is the situation if the person who has fled to the United States, or elsewhere for that matter, has blown up an electricity pylon, perhaps in an isolated spot and perhaps with no arguable immediate risk to life? Will we be able to apply to the United States for that person's extradition or does this article apply only to loss of life or threat to life?

Mr. Mellor: This is a supplementary treaty. Certain offences are being put into the supplementary treaty. They are already in the original treaty. It is said within that supplementary treaty that they shall not be subject to the political exception. All other offences that are common criminal offences between the United Kingdom and the United States, such as the offence that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, will continue to be covered by the existing treaty. It was our wish that all offences involving the application of bombs and similar terrorist equipment should be covered within the supplementary treaty. Alas, that wish did not survive the proper scrutiny which, under the American constitution, it was given by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. That is why the article is as it is.

Mr. Soley: I am grateful for that explanation. I shall have to look again at the original treaty. Perhaps the House will refer to it again on another occasion.

It may be useful if I explore some of the other thoughts mentioned by a number of us who have discussed this matter. I recognise the force of the argument about victors' justice and the importance of the sections in the earlier Acts. I also bear in mind some of the recent debates about race, religion, nationality or political opinion being exclusions for a treaty of this type. I have always had some anxiety about the use of the definition of "political". All offences are political, inasmuch as laws are made and enforced by the state. Taken to its logical conclusion, the anarchist will say, "All these laws are imposed on me as I am in a minority. They are political laws and I do not wish to to respond to them."

I have come across some specific cases. A young black, who had been subjected to several attacks to which the police had not responded immediately, was charged with carrying an offensive weapon. He said, "Well, what else can I do to defend myself?" In a way he was making a political statement, although he was not arguing that it was one. Then there is the rather devious, opportunistic behaviour, often of middle class young people, who, after being caught shoplifting, claim that all property is theft, therefore their action is political. Usually such people end up in the Conservative party or in business. They make good managers because they are so good at changing the argument as they go along.

That alerted me to the danger of having actions defined as political for extradition or imprisonment. I took a strong line against political status for people in Northern Ireland and elsewhere precisely because of that definition. If one states that a person who has been locked up should be treated differently, one must ask why. Whether the treatment is better or worse makes no difference.

Under the Geneva convention an exception is made for acts of war. That makes a real difference, but political effects as such can be defined in any country. The Soviet Union would argue that it has no political offences, simply criminal offences, and it would define them in its way. We would say that we had no political offences and define them in our way.

Many of those in Northern Ireland prisons are there because of their political belief, which has led them to carry out certain actions which we, rightly define as criminal, but both Unionists and Republicans believe strongly that they committed those acts for political reasons. A reason why I was strongly opposed to political status was that people in breach of the law should not be treated differently in prison.

In recent years I have looked at possible alternatives, and tonight I want only to float them as such. I do not pretend to have an answer to this profoundly difficult problem. First, we should consider the prima facie case being made in an extradition treaty. I am worried that the Secretary of State intends, in certain circumstances, to drop the prima facie rule in the Criminal Justice Bill, which will be debated on Second Reading tomorrow. I cannot think of any good reason for that, especially if one has any doubts about the political clauses in existing treaties.

There is a strong case for saying that the criteria that we use should be a combination of the prima facie case —that is, the country seeking an extradition must make out a case in the criminal law for a person to be extradited; the offence being an offence in the host country where the person is living as well as in the country seeking the extradition; a reasonable expectation of a fair trial; and consideration of whether it would be an unacceptable punishment in the other country. If we decide that the death penalty is unacceptable, for example, I am not sure that we should return a person to face it.

For some time I considered the possibility of arguing the basis of the democratic system. We come under criticism in Northern Ireland about the fair trial, and I shall return to that shortly.

Mr. Mellor: I do not mean to keep interrupting the hon. Gentleman, who is making a most interesting speech, but it may help him if I comment on one of his points. The removal of the prima facie case requirement, which was called for in an editorial in *The Guardian*, so it is not a narrowly based argument, is in respect of countries which for the most part have civil law systems and find it invidious to bring their procedures, which are different from ours, but not necessarily worse because of that, into line with ours by having a prima facie case. The prima facie case requirement will, of course, remain for those countries covered by the Commonwealth extradition arrangements in the separate Act of Parliament that governs those. The

[Mr. Mellor]

prima facie case requirement is not invidious there because it relates to a jurisdiction with a common legal background where the prima facie case is commonly understood.

I take no issue with the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised about conditions. That is why we are asserting that the Home Secretary retains a total discretion and will withold his discretion, whatever the courts may have determined about the legal appropriateness, in cases where he has any doubt about the quality of justice. In the past few months we have done that in relation to an African country and would not hesitate to do it again.

Mr. Soley: I am grateful for that explanation. I promise that we shall look at it carefully. I was aware that there were other arguments, but I had not looked at them in detail.

One of the other criticisms is about how democratic the system is. This is an important point. We might well think before returning a person to the Soviet Union or South Africa that the democratic system in those countries does not function in a way that we would consider acceptable. The South African example is sometimes compared, outside and inside the House, to Northern Ireland. It is not comparable to Northern Ireland, for the very good reason that blacks do not have the vote in South Africa, but they do in Northern Ireland.

We know that Sinn Fein at its maximum received 14·8 per cent. of the vote in Northern Ireland, and rose to a maximum of a mere 3 per cent. in the South of Ireland. I am talking about the post-war period. One can see clearly that the people of Ireland, North and South, do not give voting support to Sinn Fein. That is an important part of the argument. One cannot say that about South Africa. There is no way in which black people can measure their opposition to the Government through the democratic process by voting or publishing their own paper. As the Minister of State will know, Sinn Fein publishes a newspaper in Northern Ireland which gets far wider circulation on a weekly basis than any other paper in Northern Ireland. There is a real difference.

Northern Ireland is the problem that has brought this statutory instrument before us tonight. The Government have to face the fact that we are vulnerable overseas on the arguments of the lack of a jury trial, the relaxed rules of evidence required in Northern Ireland, the length of remand in Northern Ireland and the wide powers of arrest. We are also vulnerable on the fact that emergency legislation has been practised in Northern Ireland since 1922. That must signal to the outside world that there is something odd about the way in which Northern Ireland is being governed. That is something that I argued on many occasions when I was a spokesman on Northern Ireland. The other issue, on which the Government must act quickly, is supergrass trials — convictions on the uncorroborated evidence of one person.

Those things make countries overseas, whether Holland or the United States, very worried about returning a person to Britain to face charges arising out of the Northern Ireland system. Whether we finally change the system and go for the political system as it is now, with some changes, or whether we go over to the alternative, which I have suggested is one possibility — I would not put it any higher than that at the moment — we have to recognise that there is serious concern overseas and in this country about the system of justice in Northern Ireland. In my view, that concern is justified. If we do not change that, we will always lose that part of the propaganda battle and that, to my mind, is extremely serious.

Obviously we will not be opposing the legislation tonight. It is appropriate, right and proper. However, it is time that we exercised those arguments a little further and recognised that the nature of terrorism in the modern world is different from what it used to be. Perhaps it is time we took a long hard look at what sort of situations we want extradition to relate to. Do we want to do it on a political basis, or on a more judicial basis, or is there some other model to which we could turn? I do not pretend to have any argument. I have not laid down any hard and fast party policy tonight, and I do not wish to. I simply wish to express considerable anxiety about the way in which we have allowed some of our judicial and democratic safeguards to slip in recent years to the extent that we have been found guilty before the European Court of Human Rights more often than has any other country in western Europe. In previous centuries we led the world; we now, sadly, follow. That is profoundly sad and something to which we should look very carefully, in order to try to right the situation.

10.45 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I do not intend to take up the interesting discourse of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). However, I must put two points very directly to him. First, I do not accept, nor will many hon. Members, his proposition that whereas once we led the world in our concern for liberty, now we follow. That is a wholly offensive and inaccurate statement. This country can still hold its head very high in the defence of liberty. Secondly, his endorsement of the order would be a little more convincing if the Labour party, with his enthusiastic support, had not consistently voted, on three-line Whips, against the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976. That Act is essential if we are to hope to contain terrorism in this country and, indeed, in Northern Ireland.

I want to make two propositions at the outset. First, it is a matter of the highest priority that terrorism shall be more effectively contained and, if possible, suppressed. Secondly, the only way to do that is by international collaboration.

A series of meetings in Europe and elsewhere have proclaimed the intention of Governments to collaborate more effectively. I acknowledge freely that during the past 18 months to two years there has been some evidence of improved international working together to contain this scourge. However, the practical co-operation that is required — and the order brings us directly to it — is, first, that there should be a much more effective exchange of intelligence between the security services of the various countries concerned; secondly, that there must be more effective working together of the police and security services and the provision to those services — if possible in a standardised form — of the most modern technology that is available to counter terrorism; thirdly, that each country must provide a body of law that makes it possible for its security services not merely to respond to terrorist actions but to pre-empt them. It is because the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act to some extent assists in pre-emption that I have always found it so surprising that the Labour party opposes it. The fourth

practical aspect must, of course, be a more effective way of achieving extradition. For that last reason, I welcome the order.

The order, and its effect, is limited and overdue. We should be unwise to expect too much of it. It contains far too many let-outs, to which I shall turn in a moment. For all that, it is an important and welcome step forward and I am sure that the House will accept it.

I want to make three points only about the order. Before doing so, will my hon. Friend the Minister of State tell the House what "plagium" is? I refer him to schedule 2, article 3. In paragraph 5(4) there is the phrase "kidnapping, abduction or plagium." My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) asked me what "plagium" was and I said that I would find out. Perhaps my hon. Friend would care to enlighten us.

Mr. Mellor: I do not know, but I have had thrust into my hot little hand a piece of paper that has on it the words "Scottish kidnapping."

Sir Eldon Griffiths: One lives and learns. The origin of that noun must be extraordinary.

My first point is that it took far too long to get this arrangement through the United States Congress. I recognise the sterling work carried out in the United States by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and others, including hon. Members in all parts of the House. However, it took too long for Congress to agree to the changes that we required.

In the end we got the changes for two almost adventitious reasons. The first was the support by the President for the request by our Government. At a time when it is fashionable to knock President Reagan, it is right to record that his consistent support for the British position was of enormous help in Congress. I am quite sure that the measures would not have gone through Congress if it had not been for the raid on Libya. That raid remains a contentious matter, but I am quite sure that overall it was the most effective step against international terrorism that has yet been taken. I am sure that we would have found it difficult to achieve the amendment to American law if Congress had not been impressed by the Prime Minister's support for the United States when it launched the raid against terrorism in Libya.

My second point concerns the various let-outs, about which the Minister has fairly spoken. In article 3, in order to counterbalance the removal of the political offence exception, the Senate has put in what is described as the humanitarian safeguard. Extradition will, therefore, be prevented where the request is made for the purpose of trying or punishing a person

"on account of his race, religion, nationality, or political opinions, or that he would, if surrendered, be prejudiced at his trial or punished, detained or restricted in his personal liberty by reason of his race, religion, nationality or political opinions."

I have no doubt that between two liberal democracies like the United States and Britain it is perfectly proper that these matters should be safeguarded. No one who comes to this country need fear that he would be prejudiced on grounds of race, religion, nationality or political opinion. What matters is not the objective fact of the situation in the United Kingdom, but how an American court might perceive it.

Perhaps when the Minister replies to the debate he will say how he hopes to get over the possibility of American courts — perhaps I should speak delicately — in those parts of the United States where the pressure of the Irish is greatest, making use of the political opinion let-out to prevent terrorists being returned to justice in the United Kingdom?

I recognise that the burden of proof is placed on the defendant who has to show that he would be at risk because of his political opinions. My hon. Friend will know that there is a good deal of case history in the United States to show that some courts are more inclined than others — if I may put it that way — to bend over in the direction of those who allege that people would not get a fair trial if they were returned to the United Kingdom. The hon. Member for Hammersmith has helped people who hold that view.

Mr. Mellor: It may be of assistance if I reply now so that my hon. Friend may have a chance to comment. It was not our original intention that the humanitarian safeguard should be in the supplementary treaty. It was placed there during its passage through the Senate. Having said that, I must add that it is found in the Suppression of Terrorism Act 1978 which my hon. Friend has rightly commended. It applies automatically to countries which are signatories to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism and it is also found in the Fugitive Offenders Act 1967 which governs all our extradition arrangements with Commonwealth countries. As my hon. knows, it is very different from the political safeguards as was, because it relates to a fair trial, and, as he says, the burden of proof is on the defendant. I personally would take comfort from the case of Doherty — one of the notorious cases where we failed to get an IRA offender extradited in 1984 — when the judge, refusing our extradition request under the political safeguard, specifically said that the 1981 trial of Doherty was a fair trial, suggesting that had these arrangements been in force the result would have been different. However, who can say?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I do not wish to detain the House by going into detail about the Doherty case. I am aware of that judgment and the weight that British Ministers have put upon it in their discussions with the United States. I very much hope that my anxieties will not be realised.

I just want to leave one thought with my hon. Friend. Accepting the force of the Doherty point, perhaps some means ought to be found of ensuring that a certificate be produced in some circumstances — for example, by the United States Attorney-General — to any court in the United States so that, if the United States Government were willing, he could certify that in all respects he was satisfied that a fair trial could and would be achieved. I mention that simply because there was only one point on which I had some measure of agreement with what the hon. Member for Hammersmith said.

I have a connection with Northern Ireland through the RUC. I am a supporter of the Diplock courts. In the circumstances of Northern Ireland, I do not think it is possible at present to have juries. Equally, given all the safeguards that our judiciary has insisted upon, I think it is necessary to continue to use supergrasses in certain limited cases. But I am bound to accept that, as perceived from the United States, the combination of single judge courts and supergrasses may from time to time lead to difficulties.

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

Along with some of my hon. Friends, I had the pleasure the other day of hearing the Solicitor-General make a most admirable statement about the difficulties of changing the present arrangements in Northern Ireland. I well understand what he said, but it is right to leave the thought with the House that we have achieved an important step forward. It does not go anywhere near as far as I would have liked or, to be fair, as the Government would have liked. My view, having lived and worked in the United States for many years, is that there will continue to be some difficulty in this area. The prime difficulty may turn on the matter of the Diplock courts and the use of supergrasses. Therefore, it may be important to reinforce the Doherty safeguard with some further arrangements that British Ministers might wish to suggest to the United States in the months to come.

That opportunity could well arise when, after the passage of the new Criminal Justice Bill, which deals with the additional arrangements for extradition in this country, it will probably be necessary to add to this arrangement with the United States. When that comes about, I hope that my hon. Friend and the Foreign Secretary will seek ways and means of reinforcing the Doherty arrangement in order to avoid the anxieties which, frankly, I still have about this matter.

10.58 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Like the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), I do not intend to follow the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) in his ruminations, many of which could properly be dealt with only in a debate specifically devoted to considering circumstances in Northern Ireland.

This order deals with extradition from the United Kingdom, but, in so far as it is necessary to enable the supplementary treaty to be ratified, it is to be welcomed, even though much of the examination that we give to it is related to the reverse process of extradition from the United States to the United Kingdom.

There are a number of points upon which I should be grateful if the Minister would give further elucidation to the House. He might begin by confirming that there is a mistake in the order as laid before the House in schedule 2, in that the reference in paragraph 1 of schedule 2 to "paragraph 3" is clearly a misprint for "paragraph 5". No doubt, if the Minister is in need of assistance, he will be able to have that confirmed from the proper quarter in time.

More substantially, I should be grateful if the Minister would say something about the status of schedule to the order. Schedule 1 is not enacted by the terms of the order but is simply referred to in the preamble to the order. I take it therefore that, whereas schedule 2 becomes part of the law of the land, schedule 1, strictly speaking, does not. That may have a practical consequence when we read articles 3 and 4 of the treaty provisions set out in schedule 1.

It may be that article 3*(b)* is intended to apply wholly and exclusively to the United States, although in terms it does not. However, there is no such limitation in article 4. Article 4 provides:

"A person arrested ... shall be set at liberty upon the expiration of sixty days"

I take it that, that being part of the reciprocal conditions in the supplementary treaty, it is incumbent on us in this country to implement it. Perhaps the Minister will say exactly how it will be implemented if the first schedule is not being enacted by the order. Is it to be implemented merely administratively? In that case, it may be argued that, in the United States, they are making legislative provision to which no legislative provision will correspond on this side of the Atlantic.

It would be helpful in this connection if the Minister would confirm that the reciprocity established between the two countries as a result of the order and the supplementary treaty is complete and entire reciprocity —that is, that there is no respect in which obligations have been undertaken in one direction to which no obligations in the opposite direction correspond.

With regard to the contents of schedule 2, I was somewhat puzzled not only, like the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, by the word "plagium"—though I admit that the Oxford English dictionary did not enable me to recognise it as a Scotticism — but also by the omission of items 3 and 6. Item 3 is "rape". I do not know of any reason why, when we were about the business, we should not have included the offence of rape among those to which the provisions of the order apply. There may be some reason for that, but I am not clear what it can be. *[Interruption.]* The Minister has been good enough to conduct a running tutorial, but I shall understand if he does not wish to intervene at this stage.

The other offence that has been omitted is "assault causing actual bodily harm or injury". I find that difficult to construe in connection with article 1 of the treaty provisions and the remainder of paragraph 5 of schedule 2. Article 1*(d)*, to which the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds specifically referred, rehearses a whole series of offences involving the use of various explosive and other devices which appear to go well beyond firearms offences.

Comparing that article with the provisions of paragraph 5 of schedule 2, there appears to be a gap— for instance, as to whether offences committed by means of a weapon other than an explosive or firearm are fully covered. If they are—and I suspect that it is intended that they should be—what was the point of article 1*(d)* specifically listing various forms of explosive and other offensive materials and weapons? It is difficult for the layman to construe that article in a way that brings out its importance and intention. I hope that the Minister will clarify those points when he replies to the debate.

11.5 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I, too, welcome the order, as far as it goes. However, I believe that it increases the complexity of the whole subject of extradition law. For that reason, it is understandable that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) showed a somewhat incomplete grasp of it. After all, under the Extradition Act 1870 there are some 44 treaties, each containing separate provisions directed to the countries concerned. That Act is about to be amended by the Criminal Justice Bill. It is a great pity that we did not have a separate extradition Act for that purpose and that we have now to lose that name in the Criminal Justice Bill.

There are 49 Commonwealth states that arrange extradition with us through reciprocal legislation. We do not need a treaty with any individual country in the

Commonwealth, but simply apply our own Fugitive Offenders Act 1967. There is also the Backing of Warrants (Republic of Ireland) Act 1965 applying to the Republic of Ireland alone. In addition, there are six multilateral treaties in which several countries have joined together

The Hague convention, the Tokyo convention, the Ottawa convention and one or two others, including the genocide convention—which have their own provisions regarding political offences. There is also the suppression of terrorism convention of the Council of Europe, which is strictly limited to its members and cannot therefore be applied to the United States of America.

This provision is an extension of the existing treaty of extradition between us and the United States. It was necessary to have schedule 2 in the order simply because the provisions of the supplementary treaty do not correspond, on all fours, with the provisions of the suppression of terrorism convention itself. When I first saw the heading of this Order in Council, I thought it inappropriate to link it to the legislation and treaty that we have signed with other members of the Council of Europe. However, I note that the power for applying some of these provisions lies in the Act that we passed to enforce the convention. That leads to a certain amount of difficulty in understanding the whole matter.

This order raises a number of questions. Assuming that the Criminal Justice Bill reaches the statute book, presumably it will be necessary to amend the principal treaty with the United States and all the other 43 treaties that we have concluded with foreign states.

A small point—why do we spell "offense" with an "s" in the order? It is not spelt that way in any other of our legislation, treaty or even in the principal treaty. Can a spelling correction be made? I hope that we do not adopt American spelling when dealing with matters that apply to British courts.

One notable omission from the supplementary treaty is conspiracy. In the context of Northern Ireland and the need for us to get at the godfathers of violence in Northern Ireland, that may prove to be a fatal omission in the effectiveness of the treaty itself because, very often, the people whom we really want are the godfathers, the instigators, the inciters and the conspirators — not necessarily those who are direct participants in the offences. That is a notable weakness of the supplementary treaty. I accept what has been said about the omission of certain offences that are contained in other treaties. Rape is not a terrorist offence as far as one knows, although it is always possible that it will be so treated——

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: It is in the Act.

Mr. Stanbrook: Indeed, it is in the Act, as the right hon. Gentleman says, but I understand that the explanation, in this case, is that when applied to the United States in a separate series of bilateral negotiations it has been omitted at the instances of the other party. That is another example of why the order is not on all fours with the original Act.

There is the possibility of reservations being made. Has the supplementary treaty been ratified by the United States of America yet? If not, is there not a possibility that there will be reservations of some substance before it is ratified? Let us hope not. But we know that the council of Europe convention on the suppression of terrorism has been ratified with reservations in many cases by European states, which are of fundamental importance and which, in effect, make the provisions of the convention nugatory because they exclude offences of a political character. So I hope that we shall not have to suffer such an exception in any reservation that may be imposed by the United States.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): I also recall that a certain member of the Council of Europe, the Irish Republic, has still not ratified the European convention itself, despite all the fine words in the communiqué attached to the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Stanbrook: Indeed. Now we know why that promise is included in the communiqué, and not in the Anglo-Irish agreement itself, because it seems that we are not able to enforce it against the Republic of Ireland, although it has had 12 months in which to ratify it. It is supposed to be subject to legislation before the Irish Parliament, and even that has not yet been introduced. So that that calls into question the good faith of the Government of the Irish Republic.

With regard to the reservations in the supplementary treaty, I accept that the reservations about race, religion, nationality, political opinions and so on are now a fairly standard phrase, which applies to other such treaties. One cannot raise any objection about that.

The main reason why one should not be too critical is that in the end all these things are political, whether they are the reason for the decisions by some politically motivated judges, not just in the Republic of Ireland, but in the Netherlands recently, for example, and certainly in the United States, or whether it is that the extradition process, however judicial it is supposed to be in form, is ultimately a political decision by the Executive. In all our extradition law, we make the Executive ultimately responsible for extradition, and no one may be extradited against the will of the Minister concerned. I suppose that in the end that is a great safeguard and meets many of the points raised by the hon. Member for Hammersmith. After all, when the whole thing is subject to political decision and to the discretion of the Minister concerned, all the political points that he raised may be applied to act as safeguards.

However, as the Minister said, as between democracies, it is disgraceful that we should insist upon all these provisions and safeguards for accused criminals when we know that they provide fair trial and are themselves democracies. It is just another survival of the old chauvinistic nationalism of European countries which, in spite of their economic integration, and to some extent their political integration, are still not able to trust each other to try persons extradited from one country to the other without a whole series of safeguards when, if we were honest and willing to put the public interest of the whole of Europe to the test, we should not apply any restrictions whatsoever.

We should all have arrangements of the kind that we have with the Republic of Ireland with the backing of a warrants system whereby a warrant validly issued in one European Community country simply needs to be endorsed on the back by the country in which it is received and in which the criminal is thought to be hiding. That would be an example of trust in our European partners and one that is long overdue.

11.15 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The alliance welcomes the order and shares the determination expressed in many parts of the House that people who commit terrorist crimes should be brought to justice and that arrangements between countries should make that possible.

The fact that Congress has eventually enabled these reciprocal arrangements, of which the order is but half, to be brought into effect is the result of a changed and more realistic climate of opinion in the United States and the recognition, even among those with emotional and historical links with Ireland, that terrorism is an evil wherever it is practised and that political motives provide no excuse for murderous acts and no basis for the avoidance of justice.

A number of people have helped in that process. British Ministers have worked hard to explain the Government's postion. Politicians from the Irish Republic have done the same and have faced hostile demonstrations in Boston and other North American cities. There has been a determined attempt by a number of people to make clear the real dangers of armchair republicanism when it condones or gives succour to murderous terrorism which is costing innocent lives on both sides of the community in Northern Ireland. We must all welcome the success of those efforts, to which many other people have contributed. Our diplomats in the United States have also worked hard at this task and their efforts, too, must be appreciated.

I have long since rejected the old concept of the "political offence" as a cover for all kinds of violence and terrorism. Adducing a political motive is not sufficient to protect someone from a court of justice. Other protections must therefore be provided, and it is perfectly reasonable that the order should contain a definition of the defence that a person should not be extradited if he can prove that there is reason to fear that his trial might be prejudiced or that he might be punished, detained or restricted merely on account of his race, religion, nationality or political opinions.

That may be thought unnecessary when both countries are democracies subject to the rule of law and with fair systems of justice, but there is no harm in reiterating that commitment and asserting that it is the basis of our extradition arrangements with any country in the world. We should not wish to make extradition arrangements other than on the basis of ensuring that no one was extradited and brought to trial merely on the basis of the opinions that he held or the group from which he came. Because the offence itself must be the basis of the trial, it must also be an offence in the country from which extradition is sought, and not peculiar to the country seeking extradition.

In any extradition treaty, each side must also be satisfied that the person extradited will have a fair trial. We know that the system operated within the constraints of Northern Ireland still provides a fair trial, but it is understandable that, sensing our concern that we still have in Northern Ireland a system different from that prevailing in England, Scotland and Wales, some people in the United States may argue that there is thus no basis for extradition. I wonder how confident the Minister is that United States courts will interpret this legislation on a basis that will ensure that a person who has committed an offence in Northern Ireland is extradited for trial in Northern Ireland.

Clearly we must continue to strive to restore in Northern Ireland the patterns of judicial operation with which we are familiar in England, Scotland and Wales. I hope that that is an objective on both sides of the House and that we can move as quickly as possible in that direction. Anything which might even give a pretext for full-scale extradition not to operate is clearly something we would want to remove, quite apart from the other arguments which would lead us to want the system of justice in all parts of the United Kingdom to be on the same footing.

That is only part of the battle against terrorism. All the other measures that we have to take — security of airports, attempts to trace and track down and have advance warning of the activities of terrorists, denying to terrorists the means to carry out their terrorism, including arms—are vital to this.

We are bound to be concerned in this context if a country with which we have satisfactorily secured this agreement should find that its Administration, contrary to their own policy, are capable of supplying arms to a country which is supporting terrorism, only to see the proceeds of those deals used to support another group of people carrying out a guerilla war in yet a third country. As has been pointed out, the achievement of this vote in Congress may have owed something to our Prime Minister's support of President Reagan in his bombing of Libya. I think that our Prime Minister will find that she does not enjoy the same support of Congress in her backing of President Reagan over the whole Iranian arms issue. Indeed, many of the same Congress men who supported us on this issue in the crucial vote on this treaty are now voicing criticisms of their own Administration for taking actions which are not consistent with maintaining the battle against terrorism. Americans recognise that the integrity of the Government in the battle against terrorism must be maintained. Extradition treaties are only part of the process by which we can defeat terrorism—one of the worst evils that confronts our generation.

11.22 pm

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful to the House for the warm welcome that it has given to these arrangements and the tributes that have been paid to the very hard work that went into negotiating them. The obvious care and attention that hon. Members who have contributed to the debate have paid to the supplementary treaty has been evidenced by the quality of the contributions that have been made and the detailed points that have been raised.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) ranged fairly widely over the extradition territory, and we shall return to that on the Criminal Justice Bill. I hope that I was of assistance to him during the course of his speech with a number of points. Apropos the prima facie case requirement, I hope very much that before giving notice that the Opposition might oppose that particular part of the arrangement he will consider the points that have been raised, particularly the widespread recognition evidenced by *The Guardian* leader, that we have to deal with the very real problems posed by the feelings of a number of friendly countries whose criminal justice system is different from ours. They are asked to perform the unwieldy contortions, as they see it, of having to bring a case, perfectly acceptable

in their courts, into a quite different form from our system. If we make it too difficult for them to extradite people from our country, they will lose interest in helping us. That is why we lost the Spanish extradition arrangements in 1977 and why it took us 10 years to get them back again, Marbella now being the largest open prison that we have.

Crime is now such an international phenomenon, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) is constantly reminding us, that we cannot afford to allow these things to get rusty, but where we are dealing with common law jurisdictions within the Commonwealth a prima facie case remains under the 1967 Act.

I appreciate the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds. Of course, all of us would have preferred it if the treaty that I am commending to the House tonight was the one originally initialled by the two Governments, not the one that came from the Senate. But, that having been said, this supplementary treaty from the Senate is still a worth while document, although it is not ideal.

I place some reliance — this is relevant to the interesting speech of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) — on the thought processes of the judge in the Doherty case, who drew a distinction between the political safeguard that he applied against us and the requirements of a fair trial—the humanitarian safeguard —by saying tht he was satisfied that Doherty's trial in 1981 in Northern Ireland, under the arrangements that prevail there, was fair.

But who can give guarantees—I am sure that no one is seeking a guarantee from the Dispatch Box—about what a judge in a foreign jurisdiction will think in any case which he considers? The scope for a perverse decision is much more limited than it was when the political safeguard, as broadly and consistently defined by the American courts, was in operation. At least we have dealt with that.

It is always a pleasure to participate in a debate with the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), who referred to my attempts to assist other hon. Members. I assure him that I would never try to give a master class in his presence, but I shall try—inadequately—to answer some of his points, I hope to his satisfaction. Those points reflect an intricate and detailed consideration of the measure. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for spotting the error. I am sorry that my well-paid staff, who will be deducted a month's wages, failed to do so. As I understand it, schedule 1 is incorporated into our extradition law by a combination of the Suppression of Terrorism Act 1978 and the extradition orders which will be laid by the Foreign Secretary.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned items 3 and 6 in the suppression of terrorism list. Item 3—rape—was left out because of our wish to cleave as closely as possible to the treaty, which omits rape, and because no English court would consider rape as being subject to political considerations. As for assault, grievous bodily harm and upwards are included, but the Americans took the view that assaults below that were potentially too trivial to be included in the arrangements.

The firearms and explosives listed in article 1*(d)*, led to difficulty, because the American attitude to firearms is different from ours, and their rules about the possession of firearms are markedly different from ours. The result is that article 1*(d)* reflected the wide range of weaponry which our laws agreed were unlawful. We cannot push the United States further than the list in 1*(d)*, although it is fair to say—the right hon. Gentleman pertinently asked whether there was complete mutuality of obligation—that we are probably giving the Americans, although since the law is not in precisely the same form the parameters cannot be rigidly defined, more than they are giving us, because some of our firearms offences are more widely drawn than theirs. We have very different cultural attitudes to the possession of firearms, but that is the only material difference in the points of mutuality that I would wish to draw to the attention of the House.

In reply to the interesting speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), I should say that the Americans have done their part to ensure that the arrangements are carried into force. I can cast the blame for the word "offense" on to another Department. We queried this before it was queried in the House, and were informed by the Foreign and Commonwealth office, whose word is its bond and which we always accept, that the authentic text is the exchange of Notes and that the exchange of Notes was cast in American rather than English. So there we are. The impact of these arrangements on the Criminal Justice Bill is something that we would be able to take up with the United States, but we are under no obligation to do so. We could do so when the time comes.

The offence of conspiracy is absent because it falls foul of some of the mutuality provisions, and not only in the context of the United States. For that and other reasons, that offence is not generally extraditable, as we have found to our cost in a number of cases.

I am advised that the Irish Government have introduced legislation to ratify the European convention on the suppression of terrorism. It is still proceeding through the Dail. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office indicates that that is the position.

I hope that I have done justice to the careful debate that we have had by responding with equal care to the detailed matters that have been raised. I am grateful to the House for the warm welcome that it has given to these treaty arrangements, which I hope can now speedily complete their passage through Parliament.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Suppression of Terrorism Act 1978 (Application of Provisions) (United States of America) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 20th November, be approved.

Tourism

11.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier) *rose*—

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, Slough): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to draw the attention of the House to the documentation that is available on this matter. The report of the Scrutiny Committee dated 18 June 1986 has been available for some time, and it has been added to by a further report of the Scrutiny Committee, which was laid in the Vote Office at about 5 pm today. The later report is available to hon. Members if they have not already seen it.

There is a difficulty, because the motion refers to the

"explanatory memorandum . . . dated 24th November 1986".

By definition, that was not made available to hon. Members until that day, which was two days ago, and the Scrutiny Committee considered it only today. The matters that arise from that do not come strictly within a point of order, and I recognise that the Minister may have taken this course to assist the House. I shall not pursue the matter further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, other than to say that I shall seek to catch your eye at a later stage if that is appropriate.

Mr. Trippier: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for his courtesy in taking the time and trouble to write to me about the matter that he has raised. It may assist the hon. Gentleman, members of the Select Committee and, indeed, the whole House, if I make one or two remarks that may clear up the issue.

An explanatory memorandum was submitted to the House on 13 March and the Scrutiny Committee reported on 18 June that the proposal raised questions of political importance and recommended further consideration by the House. At that time we expected one of the proposals to be adopted at the June Internal Market Council, and we were grateful for the Committee's agreement that such consideration need not delay adoption. Adoption, however, did not occur in June, and it now seems likely that two of the proposals will be adopted in December.

I felt it desirable to allow the House to debate the document in advance of adoption, and tonight's debate was arranged accordingly. To ensure that Parliament had the fullest and most recent information available, the latest text of one of the proposals was received in French on Thursday 20 November and the memorandum was submitted to the House on Monday 24 November, which was more than 48 hours before the debate. I apologise to the House for there not being more time for the memorandum to be considered before the debate, but I felt it desirable that it should reflect in the most accurate manner the latest stage of discussions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I think that it is clear to the House, as the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has said, that these are not matters for the Chair and cannot really be raised on a point of order. They concern the business of the House, which is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope you will agree that documentation and adequacy of notice are matters for the House and come within the narrow limits of points of order.

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4761/86 of 6th February 1986, a proposal for Community action in the field of tourism, and the supplementary explanatory memorandum from the Department of Employment dated 24th November 1986; welcomes tourism's contribution to economic growth in the Community; and endorses the Government's efforts to ensure that Community instruments on tourism accord with that objective.

Tourism is a very important economic activity for the United Kingdom and a major source of employment. About 1·2 million people are currently employed in the industry and it offers tremendous prospects for job growth in the future. The Government are determined to do all that they can to encourage the industry's development.

At a time when this Government are giving tourism greater recognition than at any time in the past, it is particularly apt that the European Community is now taking a much greater interest. It is good to see that others are recognising the economic importance of tourism, and I very much welcome the Community's involvement.

Whilst it is true that in one sense other member states could be regarded as our competitors in international tourism, there is also considerable scope for co-operation between member states for their mutual benefit. In many other areas of the world Europe is regarded as a single tourist destination by prospective visitors, and if people can be encouraged to visit Europe we have a good chance of persuading them to come to Britain during their trip. Closer co-operation can also enable countries, including the United Kingdom, to learn from others' experiences —from both successes and mistakes.

The Commission's document, which is the subject of tonight's debate, explains the Community's interest in tourism, its growing economic importance to member states and its importance to employment. The Commission is concerned that action should be taken to facilitate tourism within the Community, improve the seasonal and geographical distribution of tourism, make better use of Community funds, give better information and protection to toursits, improve working conditions in the tourist industry and increase awareness of the problems of tourism and organise consultations and co-operation. I am sure that the House will agree that these are all desirable objectives.

There is clearly a role for the Community as a whole if these objectives are to be achieved, but it is also important to bear in mind the different circumstances which may prevail in individual member states and the need for national priorities to be taken into account. The industry itself, throughout the Community, has a major part to play and its views must also be taken into consideration. I can assure the House that we shall continue to make these points quite clear in negotiations.

As a first step the Commission has put forward three legislative proposals and I would like to explain to the House their purpose and effect. All have undergone some changes already during negotiations in Brussels to meet concerns of member states.

The first is for a resolution on seasonal and geographical distribution of tourism. This seeks to extend both the tourist season and the distribution of tourist

traffic around individual countries and so reduce congestion and environmental stress at peak periods. Member states would encourage tourism in areas with surplus capacity, alternative types of holidays and holidays out of season. I stress that it is not the intention of this measure to redistribute tourist traffic between member states.

This resolution deals expressly with matters of great concern to the United Kingdom and we must welcome this timely and sensible proposal from the Commission. It is entirely consistent with the Government's policy of encouraging the dispersal of visitors from London and developing tourism facilities in the regions, with particular emphasis on areas of high unemployment and potential for increased tourism. It also accords with the Government's objective of extending the tourism season so as to provide better utilisation of investment in tourism facilities and retain seasonal jobs for a longer period. In 1986-87 we have provided the British Tourist Authority and the English Tourist Board with additional funds of over £6 million, 20 per cent. more than in 1985-86, to pursue these objectives.

I welcome the fact that earlier references in this proposal to discouraging tourism to saturated areas have now been removed. Whilst it is our concern to increase traffic to the regions, we would not wish actively to discourage visitors from any location. It must be remembered that London is a major draw for many overseas visitors and if they do not come to London they may not come to Britain at all. We must continue to exploit the attractions of London as a gateway to the rest of the country.

The second proposed measure is for a recommendation on standardised information for hotels. It will clearly be helpful for travellers within the Community to have available in a common format objective information about the facilities provided in particular establishments. I am pleased to see that the recommendation now calls on the industry itself to implement the proposed system. Greater flexibility has been provided as to the information to be given, and the symbols to be used have been agreed with industry representatives throughout the community.

The United Kingdom has recently made good progress in this direction domestically with the voluntary classification scheme for accomodation operated by the national tourist boards. It is envisaged that the commission's proposal will be implemented through this scheme in the United Kingdom, and I see it as a useful development of the scheme rather than as a replacement.

Although, in a number of other member states, there are a variety of compulsory hotel registration schemes, the United Kingdom Government are not convinced that the introduction of such arrangements in this country would be justified. We are anxious to remove unnecessary legislative burdens on industry wherever possible and to seek to encourage the industry itself to agree steps to improve standards. The recommendation is consistent with these aims.

We have some doubts about whether a community-wide grading system — that is, subjective rather than objective assessment — is ultimately achievable. At present, the proposed recommendation merely invites the commission to study with the industry the possibilities for action in this area. We would have no objections to that being done.

The third proposed measure is for a decision establishing a consultative and co-ordination procedure for tourism. All member states have welcomed the idea of setting up a framework in which individual experiences and problems can be discussed and scope for mutual co-operation explored. The present proposals are less widely drawn than originally, reflecting concerns expressed by member states. They would establish an advisory committee on tourism to facilitate consultation between member states and the Commission and, where appropriate, co-operation in the provision of services for tourists.

It is our intention that the proposed resolution and recommendation be put forward to the Council for adoption before the end of the United Kingdom Presidency. There remain a number of difficulties over the proposed decision, and it is now doubtful whether they can be satisfactorily resolved in time for Council consideration before the end of the year. As I mentioned earlier, these three proposals are only a first step. There are a number of other areas in which Community action is being considered and in which it is desirable. I should like to touch briefly on some of those.

Although tourism is widely recognised as an important sector of economic activity, there is a shortage of reliable indicators at Community level. Existing statistics are not comprehensive, and differing methodologies make proper analysis and comparison of performance difficult. It is proposed to study the possibilities of producing harmonised statistics on tourism throughout the Community. Within the United Kingdom, concern was previously expressed at the adequacy of statistical data on tourism in the Government document entitled "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs". A review has since been carried out and a number of improvements are already in hand. We shall be happy to work with the Community with a view to achieving further improvements.

In a number of other member states, those working in the tourism industry regrettably encounter certain obstacles. Tourist guides, tour managers and couriers are sometimes hindered in their activities by protectionist measures favouring nationals of the country concerned. The Government are committed to a policy of free trade and welcome the Commission's investigations into these matters.

We also welcome the moves under way within the Community to liberalise air travel between member states. The United Kingdom Government are opposed to restrictive practices which keep fares unnecessarily high. It has already been demonstrated that lower fares and greater freedom to start new services stimulate traffic and, consequently, the development of tourism in member states.

Those are but examples of useful assistance to the development of tourism which do not involve substantial public expenditure by either the Community or individual member states. The Commission proposes to consider whether Community funds could be more effectively deployed for tourism development. We certainly wish to see the tourism industry receiving a fair share of Community funds, but we could not support a substantial increase in Community expenditure. The Government believe that the main responsibility for tourism investment must rest with the private sector.

Nevertheless, it can be expedient to use Community funds for the promotion of the Community as a

[Mr. Trippier]

destination to prospective visitors from third countries to supplement national promotion efforts. I understand that assistance was made available this year to the European Travel Commission for that purpose.

I hope that I have illustrated the potential benefits to the United Kingdom tourism industry which stem from the Commission's proposals, and I therefore commend them to the House.

11.44 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Although we in the Labour party do not wish to divide the House, we wish to take issue with some of the points that the Minister made in his brief remarks.

A problem with the order is its distinct strands. The European Commission, to its credit, appreciates that a sensible, well thought through policy on tourism must be given a high priority in the European Community. It is an important industry. Indeed, within 18 months it will be the largest single employer in the United Kingdom. The Commission is aware of the numbers of people employed in the industry and the amount of revenue that member states gain from it.

Unfortunately, it seems from the Minister's remarks and the Government's response to the Select Committee's report that in the past few months the Government have not learnt anything about the necessity of having a positive policy on tourism. Regrettably, not only are the Government behind and reluctant to move in the direction of the all-party Select Committee's report and recommendations, but they are unwilling to take on board many of the more interesting and exciting proposals emanating from the European Commission.

Some of those include facilitating tourism and improving the seasonal and geographical distribution of tourism. The Minister said that the Government accept and applaud those proposals, but if one is to make an impact on these matters, one must do something about it. The Select Committee gave sound advice about how Governments extend the season — they subsidise the wage bills of companies which keep tourist attractions open for much of the season. It is a case of the chicken and the egg. If one relies on market forces, one never breaks through the traditional season. One must encourage a longer season. The sensible proposals of the Select Committee have still not been acted on.

The Minister mentioned improving working conditions in the tourist industry, but skated quickly over them. Let us not talk of the myth of the tourist industry. We recognise that it is a good employer for a high percentage of those working in it in full-time, well-paid jobs and enjoying its prosperity. However, about 20 per cent. of the industry involves seasonal, short-term low-paid jobs. People in them are vulnerable and need protection and help. None of the Government's employment strategies and proposals has done anything to help those exploited people, many of whom are women.

The Government missed a tremendous opportunity to give better information and protection to tourists. The Select Committee clearly stated that it was time that British people on holiday in Britain and foreign visitors to Britain should be able to find out what standard of hotel they would stay in. They pay their money, but they must have some criteria on which to judge whether they get value for money. Other countries started to do that a long time ago, but the Minister still says that it must be up to voluntaryism. The industry may be asked to act on the grading of hotels, but we know that it does not operate in over half the hotels in our country. It is time that British tourists going on holiday in their own country and foreign visitors had some guarantee of value for money. It is time that we acted in that area. Surely it can only be good for our visitors and expand the number of people wanting to come to our country if they know that they will have some benchmark by which to judge what they will get.

I do not think that voluntaryism works. The European Commission suggests that it does not work, as does the Select Committee. It is about time that a Government with a positive policy towards tourism introduced a system that made sense. I suspect that we will not get that because the Minister and the Government cannot listen and learn from the Select Committee or from the Commission as they still worship at the temple of market forces.

The Minister says that he welcomes the proposals to broaden tourism to the regions and to places where there is high unemployment. There could be no more heartfelt agreement from someone from my part of the country, indeed from the Minister's part of the country or from my hon. Friends, about the potential for expanding tourism and bringing tourists to the delights of other parts of the country they do not normally visit. It is important to realise that market forces will not bring them. The great canal system of our country will not be developed and exploited in the best way by private enterprise. The best sort of relationship, is a harmonious and creative relationship between the public and private sectors and national Government and local government.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border) *rose*——

Mr. Sheerman: I have never seen private enterprise taking on the great capital expenditure, for example, of opening up a whole reach of the canal system of our country. Once it is done by a progressive local authority, private capital will come in and provide the hotels, pubs and boating facilities and all the attractions for tourists. However, it needs a planned partnership——

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Has not the hon. Gentleman heard of the canal societies up and down this country that are doing that very thing by voluntary labour, not through the local authorities? I can take the hon. Gentleman to canals where that is being done.

Mr. Sheerman: If the hon. Gentleman can give me any example of canal societies that are doing the massive task of capital reconstruction of our canal systems without Government money, I should like to hear about it. I should be interested to hear of an example not using money from the Manpower Services Commission. That is Government money, too. The hon. Gentleman is shaking his head and now thinks that perhaps I am right. A creative and planned partnership between the public and private sectors is the way to get our tourist industry booming.

If the Government want to bring tourism as a major industry to those parts of our country not yet visited by many tourists, they must invest and allow local government to invest in the infrastructure that will make those parts of the country attractive. That will mean providing more than £6 million to the British Tourist

Authority. Local government must be liberated to do that job. The private sector must also be allowed to work within a planned policy framework.

The Minister's speech demonstrated that the Government have missed a number of opportunities. The last missed opportunity is referred to in the memorandum: a guarantee for those who go on package holidays. The Government ought vigorously to be trying to ensure—in the European Community, in the Commission and in the Council of Ministers—that those who go on package holidays to other member states are not profoundly disappointed by what they have bought. The package holiday is a unique consumer product. The consumer pays in advance for his holiday. According to the memorandum, 25 to 35 per cent. of consumers of package holidays are profoundly disappointed by the product that they buy—many of them dramatically so. They are re-routed to accommodation in resorts to which they do not want to go. The Government have failed to push hard enough for a recommendation that would improve the position for British consumers of package holidays.

The Opposition do not intend to divide the House. However, the tourist industry needs to move forward a great deal faster than it is moving now. Faster movement calls for a partnership between the public and the private sector. The Government must not leave a major industry at the mercy of the vagaries of market forces.

11.56 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Tourism is a vitally important industry in the EEC, earning some £32 billion each year from overseas sources. Of course, in the United Kingdom tourism is our fastest growth industry. The British Tourist Authority forecasts that by 1988 Britain will be receiving 16 million overseas visitors who will spend £7·5 billion. In addition, the industry will see the expenditure of £7 billion by our citizens in the home market.

I welcome this debate—it is only the fifth debate on tourism since the general election—and the opportunity to discuss key EEC issues that are raised by European Community Document 4761/86. I declare an interest. I am the parliamentary consultant to Consort Hotels, the largest consortium of independent hoteliers in the United Kingdom, each of whose properties contributes substantially to the local community.

York is a leading tourism venue, where the industry now employs about 6,200 people. However, if the multiplier effect were applied in economic terms, one could see how dependent are so many related, or quasi-related, firms to tourism—from the laundries and bakers to the printers and language schools. In microcosm, it epitomises many of the problems relating to the development of tourism that are highlighted in the Commission's communication. May I be permitted, however, to return to some illustrations from York later in the debate and to dwell now on the general principles?

This Government, more than any other, have recognised the significance of tourism, and especially its place in terms of employment. It is right, therefore, that tourism should be further developed in the Community during the British Presidency. We must recognise that the visitor industry is a relatively new policy area for the EEC. It was only four years ago that the Commission produced its

"initial guidelines for a Community policy for tourism"

that identified areas where better co-ordination between member states would be beneficial.

Two related proposals have already been submitted to the Council. I refer to the draft recommendation on fire safety in hotels and to the draft recommendation on easing controls when crossing intra-Community borders. I urge my hon. Friend to examine the working of those controls. Often, British customs officers and regulations make life for tourists quite unreasonable. For example, senior citizens on a coach are required to get out and manhandle their luggage without trolleys and present each item to customs before re-presenting it to the driver and reboarding the vehicle. If that is not enough to turn off American visitors, I do not know what is.

The draft resolution which seeks a better seasonal and geographical distribution of tourism is to be welcomed if those initiatives reduce the surplus occupancy and ensure permanent rather than cyclical employment. Hoteliers and other providers of leisure facilities have been enterprising in promoting out-of-season holidays. Indeed, the mini-break is the fastest growth sector of the holiday industry. Increasingly, people are taking two or three short holidays.

After housing and food, holidays form the largest single item of family expenditure. This provides solid work. The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) did not call them jobs for ice cream salesmen, as his predecessors on the Opposition Front Bench have done, nor did he call them Mickey Mouse jobs as he has done before. I am pleased to see that change of emphasis by the Opposition and glad to note that the hon. Gentleman did not denigrate this key sector of the industry. It is quite erroneous to equate service with servility. Service jobs are permanent jobs in an exciting field.

The action points identified in the Government paper "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs" and pursued in the "Action for Jobs in Tourism" report have been taken up by the national boards. I was pleased to see the pilot scheme undertaken by the English Tourist Board with the north-west and south-east regional tourist boards. That will encourage tourist information centres to work in closer co-operation with tourist companies. It should enable the tourist information centres to provide more information and advice and, therefore, to give a better service. There is certainly scope for closer dialogue between the tourist information centres and the providers of mass transport.

Why do we not see more illustrated boards at train and coach stations showing the accommodation that is available and other facilities and a freefone link? West Germany has good examples of such displays. It is a development worthy of promotion and joint study in Europe.

The English Tourist Board's "Let's Go" campaign is specifically designed to promote awareness of the attractiveness of off-season breaks. I applaud its "Off Peak Value" logo. My hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, has not spoken about that, so I shall leave him a little fresh ammunition for his wind-up speech. That logo is designed to promote the theme of off-season holidays. I applaud also the initiatives of the awards to be made for off-peak promotions. They are sponsored by the Council for Travel and Tourism, the British Airport Authority, the British Incoming Tour Operators Association and the British Resorts Association.

A radical solution that could help all European countries would be to standardise the Easter holiday.

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

There is no doubt that when Easter falls in mid April the tourist season starts in earnest. When it is at the end of March there is often a hiccup in trading in April. The spread and distribution of bank holidays is similar.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): Does my hon. Friend think that the Easter holiday should be standardised regardless of the views of the Christian church? Would that be advantageous for tourism?

Mr. Gregory: I am speaking about the instability in the tourist industry caused by the constant movement of the date of Easter. As my hon. Friend will know, there is within the Christian churches a variety of different Easter dates. The spread of those dates has a bad effect on tourism.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am not clear about my hon. Friend's point. Is he saying that there should be a fixed Easter date?

Mr. Gregory: I am, and I am further suggesting that it should be a common date in the Christian churches.

I should like to develop the theme of the spread of holidays. Bank holidays are certainly within the purview of the Government, even if the Christian churches are not. The distribution of bank holidays so that they were on dates similar to the rest of the EEC would benefit the United Kingdom. We had two bank holidays 21 days apart in May and that was nonsensical. We should consider one at the end of October or the beginning of November, because that would create a mini boom for tourism.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield referred to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, which recommended that for two years the Government should provide a grant of 30 per cent. of the labour cost of tourist facilities remaining open for one month additional to the period which the enterprise concerned was open in the previous year. Britain rightly attaches importance to promoting our islands as a year-round destination choice, but there was not a fulsome response to the Select Committee's initiative. It said that

"a combination of creative marketing with selected project development is the most effective way of dealing with the problem of seasonality".

What have the studies revealed, should the Select Committee's advice be taken, and how does Britain compare with other states?

As I referred to under-occupancy, it is fair to refer to the peak times for tourism. What work are the Government doing to promote local authorities each to produce visitor strategies which examine such questions as adequate car parking? For example, the labour-controlled city council in York refuses to acknowledge the importance of tourism to the economy by not having a chief officer designated with the responsibility, by not filling vacancies for, for example, a conference officer and by deliberately ignoring the chief mode of travel, the car. It will not adequately signpost accommodation or facilities and argues that visitors should effectively "park and ride" rather than the council building adequate car parks. Will the Minister review such strategies and give advice to encourage a better distribution?

Statistical information on tourism is not particularly good. Currently, statistics are collated by the World Travel Organisation in Madrid, the OECD in Paris and EuroStat in Luxembourg. Unfortunately, there is no common statistical base. All components of the tourism industry need better information for planning and strategy, and I urge the Government to establish a professional standardised basis throughout Europe.

Does compliance with the resolution on a better visitor distribution require amendment to existing legislation, particularly the Tourism (Sleeping Accommodation Price Display) Order 1977 and the statutory hotel registration scheme in Ulster under the Development of Tourist Traffic Act (Northern Ireland) 1948?

The second policy area under review, which recommends standardised hotel information, will certainly help travellers to break down language barriers. However, several questions arise, and I should be grateful if the Minister would respond to them. Will it be mandatory, and who will take responsibility for collating and checking this information on standardised hotels? As Great Britain —but not Northern Ireland—is out of line with the rest of Europe in not having an official government classification scheme for accommodation, will such information form a valuable introduction? How will a hotel be defined? Will it include premises that advertise accommodation but which do not currently pay commercial rates or VAT?

The interpretation of such facilities is riddled with anomalies at local authority level and urgently requires Government classification. Will the British Government take up the invitation to produce a harmonised hotel classification system for the EEC?

No wonder that the visitor to Britain is confused. Not content with the stars of the AA and the RAC as well as the Michelin and Egon Ronay ratings, he has the national tourist board crowns. There is no consistency, so that the two-star AA or RAC hotel can easily be graded four crown. Unless this is withdrawn and reconsidered in full consultation with the industry—I am sure the Minister will agree that there was a lack of consultation with the industry — Britain is shoring up a time bomb of complaints.

We need a well defined easily understood national grading system that has industry support, will appeal to consumers and have the authority of Government. Northern Ireland had operated a successful scheme since the 1940s, and I see no reason why we should not follow suit.

I believe that greater understanding of facilities will lead to travel beyond the already familiar centres. For example, only 40 per cent. of Americans visiting the United Kingdom move outside the capital. The percentage is better for Europeans in that 46·4 per cent. of French visitors, almost 60 per cent. of West Germans and more than 45 per cent. of Dutch visitors travel beyond London.

The other aspect under consideration tonight — the draft decision to establish a consultation and co-ordination procedure in tourism — is certainly overdue. Even in Whitehall, some 13 Departments have a special interest in tourism. Clearly mutual co-operation is necessary within the Community. It makes no sense for tour managers to be treated inconsistently. In some countries they require special licences and have to take special examinations. There is no harmony on that matter within the EEC. Furthermore, United Kingdom travel agents cannot sell packages in France and Spain.

Tonight's debate coincides with the World Travel Market being held at Olympia this week. We are making good efforts to achieve a free market in air travel, but there has not been an adequate push in Europe to remove the restrictions on accommodation and other leisure facilities. Within the EEC there is the Youth Committee, which includes tourism as that is regarded as part of culture, or "kultur" as the Germans call it, and there is the Inter Group on tourism akin to our Back-Bench Committee. However, there is still no tourism committee for this great growth industry. I hope that during the British Presidency such an initiative will be developed.

This year we have seen the spectre of terrorism undermine this great industry. The fragility caused by the Achille Lauro incident and the bombings in Greece, Italy and France surely must be dealt with by a more permanent structure. I hope that the EEC documents before the House will help the industry along that road.

12.11 am

Mr. Michael Hancock (Portsmouth, South): This is a welcome opportunity to speak on tourism. I declare an interest, as I come from Portsmouth, which, in future, hopes to be the second major tourist attraction outside of London. It is also good to be able to talk to the Minister about something other than mogul foods in Portsmouth and tins of canned curry.

We have all accepted that tourism has enjoyed a rapid and uninterrupted expansion over the past 15 years, and the revenue from the industry has increased in the United Kingdom almost sevenfold in that period. The importance of tourism, as the Minister rightly said, should not go unnoticed in the short term, as it has a long-term role to play in finding worthwhile, lasting jobs for the whole of the Community.

There is justification in claiming that more needs to be done to help tourism, and the action should come not only from the EEC but from the Government as well. The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) was correct to assume that there the Government can play a real role. He suggested that there was a two-part role, but I suggest that there is a three-part role—through local authorities, the Government and private enterprise. Portsmouth is a classic example of how, given the right incentives, initiatives and ideals, the three-pronged co-operation can bear fruitful results.

The Minister recounted the six points upon which the documents are based which would facilitate tourism within the Community. As I represent a constituency which includes the second largest ferry port in the country, I understand that the facilitation of the movement of tourists into and out of this country is of great importance. However, it has taken 10 years to get proper signs erected in Portsmouth directing people out of the ferry port to London. There was resistance to that all along the line from various organisations. Even a "Welcome to Great Britain" sign was a controversial issue when the ferry port was opened. It took us 10 years before we managed to have proper signs in the city, and it has taken 15 years to create an overnight staying spot in Portsmouth for continental visitors arriving in the city with trailers. It has taken 15 years to find the right place and provide a facility that is common in most European towns and cities.

Direction must be given on tourism — there is not enough of that. Certainly the Government do not give enough assistance.

The second point is the improved seasonal and geographical distribution of tourism. Once again this is a laudable sentiment, but what does it really mean? Does it mean that the queues waiting to view the Mary Rose and HMS Victory — and next year HMS Warrior — will continue to stand in the open, when it is raining, in August? Are we seriously suggesting that the tourist season can be prolonged to October in Portsmouth, and yet still not provide shelter? Believe me, the attractions of Nelson's flagship diminish greatly after standing for an hour in the rain with two children who are soaking wet by the time they get on board—and then have to pay to see round the ship.

If the season is to be prolonged—and that can be achieved in many ways — we must consider the cost implications. We must find a means to provide the wherewithal for local authorities and private enterprise. In many instances planning committees are a great obstacle to prolonging the tourist season. They obstruct the entrepreneur who wants to promote a longer season and bring attractions to parts of the country that are innundated with tourists during the summer but see none in the winter.

We must find better ways to achieve that aim—for example, through the better use of Community funds. I defy any hon. Member to say that there is an easy way to obtain Community funds to promote leisure and pleasure activities in this country. They simply are not there. Local authority after local authority is spending great sums of money trying to buy consultants to tell them how to obtain those funds — let alone actually achieve some money from the EEC in the long run. This year, when Britain holds the presidency, it should be trying to find an initiative that allows those funds to be more easily accessible to local authorities and entrepreneurs, who can then get tourism really moving along.

Hon. Members have said that tourism will be the biggest employer in future. It will not be if these obstacles are not removed and if funds from the EEC are not forthcoming. The Government must recognise that they have a role, at least in pump priming in many respects.

Another point is the provision of better protection and information for tourists—once again something that no one would deny. In Portsmouth, hotel after hotel has closed or been converted to a nursing or rest home, even as we try to attract more tourists to the town. There is a real shortage of hotel spaces. We are doing little or nothing to help people modernise their hotels. Many owners simply cannot find the resources to modernise, let alone find a standardised method of advertising. Once again the Government have a role to play if there is to be better protection and information for tourists.

When I took my children to Beaulieu in the summer, as I stood in the queue with several hundred others waiting to pay an exorbitant price to see Lord Montagu's exhibition, an American tourist—who happened to be married to an English woman—told me of his strange experience at the hotel where he was staying in the New Forest. Apparently he was paying twice as much for his accommodation as the person in the next room. When he made inquiries, he was told that the rate that he was paying was applicable to his room. He asked why the person in the next room was paying almost 50 per cent. less, and the manager was reluctant to answer him. That American went away thinking that there was one cost for the local and another for him. How on earth can we hope to attract

[Mr. Michael Hancock]

people when somebody leaves our country with that impression? His wife said that unfortunately that was not an untypical reaction by Americans when they go home. They feel that they have been ripped off.

Mr. Speller: Does the hon. Gentleman have any reason whatsoever for saying that any hotel or hotel company in this country charges a different room rate for a patriot and for an expatriate? If he does, would he care to say where he gets his information from, as opposed to hearsay from the New Forest, or wherever?

Mr. Hancock: I was repeating what was said to me in all innocence. The people did not know that I was a Member of Parliament or had any interest in tourism. It was just a conversation. I asked the chap where he was staying and whether he was enjoying his stay in the New Forest, and he replied, "Yes, but I have had an annoying experience over the cost in the hotel." That reflects badly on our country. Undoubtedly, we need a standardised system of tariffs, and of getting that information around. The hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) hit the nail on the head by saying that it was long overdue. Undoubtedly it is. An initiative from the English Tourist Board, backed by the Government, should bring that about. Many of the hotel chains and individual hotels would welcome that —it is needed.

We would all support improved working conditions in the tourist industry, but sadly it is hit or miss, area by area and job by job. There is still an awful lot to be desired in the conditions in which people have to work and their terms of employment. It is a mistake to kid ourselves that everything in the garden is rosy. That simply is not so. We welcome those jobs, but we must find ways to make sure that there is a proper, firm basis for people wanting to work and to stay in the industry. We have to make the conditions of employment that much better. There must be a twofold approach by the unions and management.

We have to increase awareness of the problems of tourism and organise consultation and co-operation. If anything, the most important thing is to understand the problems of tourism. We have to do that. We have to find ways of consulting within the industry, with each other and with Europe about those very points. Perhaps the document that we are debating is the way forward.

I should like to talk about my area, which stretches from the edge of the New Forest in the west to Chichester in the east, and from the Isle of Wight in the south to Winchester in the north. Portsmouth is at the centre, I am glad to say. We cannot sustain ourselves as a major tourist attraction unless we have many of the things that I have spoken about—better hotels, standardised conditions in hotels, making them attractive, and better signposting so that people can see what we have on offer. We have to consider whether we price ourselves out. Do we have attractions which people will visit only once and not return to because we overcharge them for their enjoyment?

Mr. Butterfill: I am a little puzzled. The hon. Gentleman said that standardised conditions in hotels would make them more attractive. When I, and, I am sure, many of my hon. Friends, go abroad or to a hotel in this country, we find the fact that hotels are different attractive. They differ from each other. Why is the hon. Gentleman so insistent on standardisation?

Mr. Hancock: I am not suggesting for one moment that every hotel should be the same. The basic minimum standards are what we need. Few hotels pride themselves on advertising the fact that they have en suite bathrooms and facilities in the rooms. We are less than pushy, if that is the right word, in trying to advertise what is available. We should look carefully at that matter.

It is interesting to see how easy it is to get facilities abroad. Recently in Brussels, in the hotel in which I was staying with colleagues from the House, it was interesting that we could see what was available not only in our hotels but in other hotels in the centre of Brussels. We could compare what was available. In ferry ports, airports or railway stations in Great Britain, we should have such information and allow visitors to judge.

We need to make better use of our resources. The New Forest is a classic example of an area that is over-used in the summer and has virtually no visitors at all in winter, but which has major attractions which could and should be used to draw people all the year round. The drawback, sadly, is lack of resources in both the public and private sectors. My plea to the Minister is therefore not just to support the proposals before us, but to recognise that we must do a damned sight more if we are really to go places in tourism. If the rise of the past 15 years were to level out it would be a disaster for many reasons, not least the loss of employment prospects. The drive to sell our country and specific areas of it must be pushed harder and harder.

I am sorry to hear of the attitude of the hon. Member for York to his local authority. I hope that that is not common, because many local authorities have realised the enormous potential of their areas. Bradford is a good example. Another is Southampton, where the Labour-controlled authority has gone out of its way to promote the historic points in the area and to draw people to it. It is trying to rejuvenate the dock area and, to its credit, has made enormous progress in the past two or three years. It is not a matter of Labour and Conservative authorities having different opinions. It is a matter of mentality and of ambition for the area. The Government must foster and nuture such developments and encourage other authorities to take note of what can be achieved. Portsmouth, too —a Conservative-controlled authority, but working with the unanimous support of councillors of all parties—has tried to promote co-operation with the Ministry of Defence and private companies in the area, but the vital infrastrucsture of hotels and other facilities is still lacking.

I hope that the Minister will find ways in which the Government can do more in the way of pump priming, because I believe that for a very small investment now an area such as south Hampshire could draw enormous benefits in the next decade or more. I hope that that kind of ambition for tourism and its development will flourish and bring even greater benefit to all of us through the present Minister and his colleagues, but we shall have to see whether their actions are as good as their mouths.

12.27 am

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I must confess that I do not share to the full the enthusiasm for these documents displayed by the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) or by the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock), who apparently spent one night in Brussels. As a Member of the European Parliament I spent

quite a few nights in Brussels and I remember the first meeting of the inter-group on tourism mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory).

I regard the documents as well intentioned but unlikely to achieve very much. They set out generalised views about tourism to which we all subscribe. We all agree that tourism is a most important industry, not least in Cornwall where we have just had two very bad summer seasons. Frankly, I doubt whether implementing everything contained in these documents would have overcome the difficulties that we experienced or added to tourism and the benefits of tourism in that part of the world. I am afraid that if some of the suggestions in the second paper — the Council's recommendation on standardised information on hotels — were carried out in a statutory or mandatory, rather than a voluntary, way, they would hinder the tourist industry.

I looked at some of the proposals and recommendations — put forward, no doubt, by an excellent bureaucrat in Brussels — which will probably be endorsed by the European Parliament. They suggest that inns, hotels and motels with 10 beds should advertise their prices in their brochures and in their premises. That is fair enough, but they should also show them in European units of account. What is more, they should update this information and bring forward proposals for no fewer than 26 standardised symbols for hotels.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend realise that they have to be done in three languages?

Mr. Harris: I was coming to the point that they should be not just in English but in two other languages. These signs portray a baffling variety of services and activities, and I wonder about the physical difficulty of displaying them in a hotel guide—for example, for west Cornwall. It would be very difficult.

More worrying than that, if this were ever put on a mandatory basis, is that all this should be checked regularly by some hotel body. My hon. Friend the Minister—who I thought struck exactly the right note in his opening speech and attitude to this matter—in his explanatory note from the Department rather glossed over the cost and gave the impression that it would be minimal. I do not think it would be minimal to check effectively on this. I am terribly worried that in subscribing to the ideals to which we all subscribe we could somehow go down this road and switch from a voluntary to a mandatory system, with all the bureaucracy that that involves — and to what effect? I suspect very little at the end of the day.

What will extend the season is for individual hoteliers to seize the opportunities that exist now and provide services on attractive terms, not terms subsidised by the Government. They should go out into the market place and provide services. My experience, having studied the tourist industry in the south-west in recent years, is that those hotels or, indeed, other components of the tourist industry — attraction centres and entertainment centres which provide good value for money — succeed at all stages of the industry. That will boost the tourist industry more than a whole of lot of well-meaning directives from Brussels. I am a European and proud of it, but I do not think that this is an answer to the problem. The answer is service, quality and value for money.

I shall give one example to the House of the way in which the tourist industry has been extended to great advantage in one part of my constituency. A few years ago I was very worried about the position with regard to the isles of Scilly. The isles of Scilly tourist industry appeared to be in decline. Certainly it was in difficulties. Parts of that industry joined together and gave it a boost by putting money into it. They did not get great dollops of money from Brussels or anywhere else. They did it themselves. They seized and developed the opportunity to develop the season, and now many thousands of bird watchers visit the isles of Scilly in September and October. That has been a tremendous boost to the season. That could be done by many other groups, although not always with bird watchers. That is a far more valuable way of extending the season than a pious wish in a document from Brussels. I am not hostile to the Commission or to the European Parliament, but I do not believe that this is the way forward. I applaud the Government's attitude to these documents.

12.35 am

Mrs. Elizabeth Shields (Ryedale): As many hon. Members have said, tourism is a matter of national and international importance. If properly promoted it can bring much confidence and hope, especially to areas which suffer from job losses and unemployment. It is a very positive industry, because it enables councils and individuals alike to be creative in a wide variety of ways. Many jobs result from tourism, and they are especially important in rural areas, which have suffered considerably from the loss of work, transport, shops and schools.

With those country towns and villages very much in mind, this summer, Ryedale district council entered on its first full year of marketing tourism. By contrast with the council of the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory), a special tourist officer was appointed by Ryedale district council with responsibility to promote what is in my opinion — perhaps I am biased — one of the loveliest districts in the country. The officer has introduced a series of initiatives, and the result has been a campaign to highlight the village heritage of the area. Among its 156 parishes, Ryedale has many of interest and some of special charm and character.

Local history, architecture and geographical features are included in the promotion, and the publicity of "Ryedale's Quest" has been widespread and successful. Each part of the country, too, must examine its cultural heritage and sites of interest and work on them, especially in our smaller communities.

Tourist attractions should not be tied into the summer months. We must extend the traditional period for tourists, because many people now have leisure time at much less popular periods of the year. Thus, seasonal use can be made of specific associations. As Christmas approaches, we in Ryedale are looking forward to our first Dickens festival to mark the visit of the novelist to Malton in 1843 to his lawyer friend, Charles Smithson. The offices currently used as the local museum, known as "The Dickens House" are thought to have been the inspiration for "A Christmas Carol". Next year, a converted former prisoner-of-war camp at Malton will be opened to the public, reproducing many aspects of life during the 1940s. It will be open all the year round, inviting educational visits from children and adults, and is a constructive and imaginative use of an otherwise derelict site.

Of course, marketing is a priority. It should be developed in a controlled, sensitive manner so that

[Mrs. Elizabeth Shields]

hitherto unspoilt parts of the country will not be harmed or destroyed. There should be free consultancy on marketing, as we have had this year from our district council, for local businesses and firms, because, in the long run, the results of good promotion are beneficial to tourists and residents alike.

12.38 am

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): I welcome this opportunity to debate tourism, because it will draw attention to the fact that it is an important industry. As many hon. Members have said, it is one of the most rapidly growing industries in the United Kingdom and has the potential for the greatest employment. That has happened, not through some great Socialist paradise of planning, but through free and private enterprise. The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), suggested that we needed all these marvellous plans and these tripartite agreements, but that would be the death knell of tourism in Britain.

The Lake District in Cumbria has some of the finest hotels in Britain. The Sharrow Bay hotel, for example, receives the Egon Ronay gold plate award year after year. They have happened, not because of a Government plan in the Socialist years, not because of this Government, and not because local councils have taken the initiative, but because of the enterprise and nous of individuals who got them going.

I am concerned, like my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), about the direction part of the document. I do not like the references to sorting out the geographical distribution. My hon. Friend the Minister has been sound this evening in expressing the Government's reservations. We know that it would be beneficial to extend the season, but that will be done by letting entrepreneurs offer quality and improve their marketing, thereby persuading tourists to come. We shall not overcome the problems of saturation by allowing the EEC to pass regulations or directions. I know that initially there would be guidelines and incentives, but at the end of the day there would be quotas and levies, with tourists being shunted around Europe or being forbidden to enter certain countries because of a massive EEC plan, with the EEC thinking that it knows best. We have seen EEC quotas and levies placed on other products, and the last thing that tourism needs is that sort of centralised direction and guidance from the EEC.

I have no great reservations about standardising some of the information that is offered to tourists, but I oppose the concept of standardised grading across Europe. Tourism in the United Kingdom has expanded at record levels and it is experiencing record growth, and that has been achieved with the present grading system.

It is argued that when tourists come to Britain they have no idea of the quality of accommodation that they book and that they might be ripped off. I cannot imagine that foreigners are that naive. If someone cares to book into a hotel which has no crowns from the tourist boards, No AA or RAC stars, and has not been recommended by Egon Ronay or Ashley Courtenay, he should appreciate that he is taking some risks. If a tourist cares to book into an establishment which has been recommended by all the experts such as Egon Ronay and Ashley Courtenay, private entrepreneurs who are our most respected grading experts, he will know that he is going to high-quality accommodation.

If the EEC is concerned about promoting tourism, it should concentrate its efforts on the marketing of Europe generally in the United States and elsewhere. If it is concerned about tourism, it should concentrate on demolishing the air cartel in Europe, which keeps air fares artificially high. If it is genuinely concerned, it should concentrate on the problem of the free movement of people from countries outside the EEC who cross the EEC barriers and allow free movement, with visas, between them. If it is really concerned about tourism in Europe, it should support the British Government on the stance that they have taken against terrorism in Europe. Other EEC countries should show more guts in taking the Prime Minister's approach, the British approach.

I was in the United States in April after the Libyan bombing had occurred, and I and my colleagues went to great efforts to stress that Britain was the safest country in Europe for tourism. We said that our airports were the safest. The same claim could not be made for the airports of Greece or of other countries in the EEC. If the EEC wishes to take action on tourism, it should concentrate on the features that I have mentioned and leave free enterprise to get on with providing quality and the standards that tourists want. As my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives said, tourists come to Britain for our quality and standards. If the EEC wishes to extend its dead hand into some great programme of Socialist planning and control, with the direction of tourism, it will kill off an industry which is experiencing record growth because it is a private enterprise industry.

12.45 am

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Much of what I intended to say has already been said. The tourist industry is the largest employer, with 4·5 million employees. It is the fastest growing industry. Employment in the industry is increasing by about 50,000 people a year. The private enterprise system is responsible.

Although I applaud some of the Commission's recommendations in the document, some are beyond belief. They are examples of Socialist planning.

I agree that we should be considering reductions in air fares. It is suggested that we might do something about the E111 form by improving the administration of medical facilities for tourists. Why improve the administration? Why not get rid of it altogether and establish that any European citizen has the same right to medical facilities in any Community country?

People talk about establishing the ecu as a popular currency. Who outside Brussels has even heard of the ecu? Certainly the tourists who come to my constituency have not.

It is suggested that we should have a detailed study of integrated passenger flows so that investment planning can be worked out. Investment planning by whom? Are we talking about the bureaucrats in Brussels? That would be better done by the industry which has proved already that it can do it. There is talk about saturation area studies, inventories of pleasure parks, and the establishment of social tourism. Will that create jobs for anyone other than the bureaucrats in Brussels?

There is talk about rural tourism. That is a good idea. It is to be publicised, but will it really be publicised?

Apparently, we are to have standardised accommodation for rural tourism. Perhaps we are to have the standardised Euro-cottage throughout Europe, not French gites or little Greek tavernas, but the standard Euro-cottage with signs in three languages. All this is bureaucratic nonsense.

There is talk about getting rid of visas. We should all be delighted at that. But we can do that only if Europe can be persuaded to adopt a common policy on foreign affairs. We have not yet achieved that.

Let us examine the Greek Government's attitude to terrorism. Can we envisage that those who would be acceptable to the Greek Government for a visa, would also be acceptable to the British Government? There was a sad vote recently in the United Nations about the Falkland Islands. Can we imagine that visas might be given by certain European countries to Argentine nationals who might not—at present at least—be acceptable in Britain?

All this is Euro pie in the sky. If the bureaucrats in Brussels really want to do something for British tourism, they should follow the Secretary of State's example and examine how to reduce regulations. They should encourage other European countries to follow our example and get rid of all the regulations. Then they could, like Britain, achieve a massive increase in tourism. The European increase in tourism has been sixfold over the last 40 years; ours has been sevenfold. That is the example that the Commission should follow.

12.49 am

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): I am the only qualified caterer in the House, but my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) has qualifications connected with wine, which may not go down well with many Methodist voters.

Colleagues have spoken exclusively about domestic problems without realising that we are talking about "Platitudes Incorporated." We are asked to accept a document, but it is hard at 12.50 am to raise any passion about it in the Chamber. I suspect it might be better elsewhere. It is strange that the House is asked to approve in principle platitudinous matters. If any hon. Members query that point, I should ask them to refer to the pages before us. We are told that we should entrust our tourist organisations to national tourist bodies. We have the English Tourist Board, the AA and the RAC. We have therefore done that already. It is said that we should have standardised symbols. We have standardised symbols—they are coming out of our ears. In essence, this is a vast amount of paper. It is not as vast as usual. It weighs less than 1 kg, which is good business for the EC paper makers.

As the only qualified, ex-professional caterer in the House — I stopped working for a living upon being elected to the House — I suggest that we should do certain basic things. Let us first ensure that we have plenty of high quality, properly trained and properly equipped students. One of the daftest things in the world is that the staff—excellent or otherwise—of any hotel in this city are not from this country. The reason is simple. Our young people do not have the required qualifications. They are not properly trained or properly equipped. That is not the result of any Government's policies. It has been happening for many years.

I am happy to say that the national advisory body on staffing and higher education will find us more young people to train in higher levels of catering. But we have not applied the capital, the area or the equipment. We must go begging to industry, saying, "Please give us some cookers, fridges and freezers so that we can train our young people." How illogical we are. We will quite happily accept the documents tonight without willing, let alone paying for, the necessary equipment.

Standards and signing are mentioned in these papers. But what standards? Frankly, in this country, it is difficult to know what standard to follow. There are certain standards in the area of my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris).

The hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) spoke about the New Forest. Nothing will extend the New Forest tourist season into November, December, January or February. If we think that we can extend the tourist season by pouring money into the New Forest, we are wrong. We have to make the best of our natural attributes. Frankly, those attributes are the young people coming into the catering industry.

I pay credit to my hon. Friend the Minister who is responsible for small business. He has tried to get youngsters into various training schemes. Let us train and properly equip young people, then we can compete with the rest of the world. Let us not have acres of paper saying, "Let us have a common standard." Some of the pictures are fun, and some are daft. None of them is worth a penny compared with training.

We offer all the things that the rest of the world wants to see. We have the antiquity, the good things of nature, and the excellence. Our problem is a lack of confidence and the tremendous slating of the people who provide the service. We talk down our catering ability. The Americans talk up their catering ability. The French are naturally proud. The Dutch are naturally good caterers. The British always talk themselves down. If we gave our youngsters the chance, the equipment, and the training — to paraphrase the late Sir Winston Churchill—we can do the job in catering. It is the biggest employer in the country. Tourism is part of catering. There is nothing wrong with being a service industry. If one turns raw material into food, one is as much part of an industry as if one turned paper and ink into printing, or turned pig iron into machinery. Until we realise that catering is a profession — just as counselling, surveying or architecture are professions—we shall always hide behind bits of paper such as this.

Many of us are perhaps less than enchanted with the EEC, but it is largely our own fault that, when we discuss documents of this sort in the dead of night, we talk of local matters and then go on our way, happily, to bed. We should realise that we have the best raw material in the world. We have some of the best trainers in the world. We are lamentably weak in putting the two together and making our tourist industry the best in the world.

12.53 am

Mr. Trippier: We have had an interesting and wide-ranging debate, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) for making the point that he did in his concluding remarks. It is perhaps the most fundamental and important point. We are talking about investment in our young people who are coming from school and entering what we all agree to be an important, dynamic sector. Without that investment, we are wasting our time.

I particularly welcomed the speech of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). This is the second time

[Mr. Trippier]

that I have had to say that, and I hope that it does not get him into trouble with selection in his constituency. On two occasions he has paid a warm tribute to the sector and recognised that it is growing and dynamic and that the jobs in it are responsible and serious. My only argument with him is that he should exert some influence on the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), and we know that he has considerable influence on his hon. Friend.

I welcome the hon. Gentleman's speech because I am happy to stand at the Dispatch Box and pay credit to Labour, Liberal, SDP as well as Conservative councillors who are playing a significant part on many regional tourist boards and are completley dedicated to the task in hand. What is upsetting is that my only difficulty on the subject is in this House. That is relfected, as it has been in this debate, by the attendance of so many of my hon. Friends and so few Opposition Members. *[Interruption.]* It is not only that. It is a clear recognition——

Mr. Maclean: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. An allegation has come from the Labour Front Bench that all Conservative Members present have a pecuniary interest in tourism. I cannot speak for other hon. Members, but I certainly do not, and I should like that allegation to be withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): First, I did not hear any allegation and, secondly, if it was made, I am not sure whether it was out of order. I think that we should return to the Minister's reply.

Mr. Trippier: Now I have only four minutes left in which to reply and I am afraid that I shall have to write to hon. Members to answer their points. Many good points were made.

Some hon. Members made a number of political points to get them off their chests, but we all agree that in many areas of tourism there is a need for partnership. I agree with that, but I cannot stomach Opposition Members saying that pump priming by the Government is needed. We have substantially increased the specific section 4 grant under the tourism legislation and it is used in many different places as a pump priming mechanism. I accept that it is needed. It has certainly been used in Portsmouth, as the hon. Member for Portsmouth South (Mr. Hancock) knows, and it has been used on many occasions in York.

It is important that Opposition Members remember that the contribution from the private sector is so high that I have never found it so high in any other sector of British industry. That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean). I say that from my experience at both the Department of Employment and the Department of Trade and Industry. As the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South suggested, on the question of pump priming there can be a multiplier effect and the contribution from the private sector can be greater than in any other sector.

I must agree with the vast majority of my hon. Friends, but, sadly, perhaps not with my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory), on the standards of hotel classification. We are all getting a bit carried away, and some people are misunderstanding the fact that we are talking about standardised symbols for hotels only, not about the classification of standards of hotels. It is a pity that the House is not televised so that I could hold this document up and let everyone see it. I have here a number of pictures which do not require any writing beneath them. It would be a good test to see if hon. Members could understand them. The vast majority of people in the United Kingdom and abroad may be able to understand them. They are so simple that it might be an idea to run a competition in *The House Magazine*.

Mr. Speller: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Trippier: I am sorry, but no. We are simply encouraging the insertion of these symbols at this stage and going no further. Nor should we. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) of that and I agree with everything that he said.

All that we are suggesting tonight, as I said in my opening speech, is that there has to be a balance. We have to balance the fact that we are trying to deregulate wherever necessary, so that we do not act as a brake on people's enterprise, with the fact that at the same time we should do all that we can to strenthen and develop this important sector. The most important thing to come out of the debate tonight is that the European commission and the Community overall should do everything possible to promote Europe as a major tourist destination for the rest of the world.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4761/86 of 6th February 1986, a proposal for Community action in the field of tourism, and the supplementary explanatory memorandum from the Department of Employment dated 24th November 1986; welcomes tourism's contribution to economic growth in the Community; and endorses the Government's efforts to ensure that Community instruments on tourism accord with that objective.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

POLICE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments &c.)

That the draft Functions of Traffic Wardens (Scotland) Amendment Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 12th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

NOISE FROM DOMESTIC APPLIANCES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5). (Standing Committees on European Community Documents)

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 4293/82 and 10998/83 on the noise emitted by domestic appliances and the explanatory memoranda submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 15th February 1982, 16th January 1984 and 17th July 1986; and supports the Government's intention to agree to the adoption of this Directive as a step to reducing incipient non-tariff barriers to the export of United Kingdom manufactured appliances.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Question agreed to.

Industry Year 1986

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

I am

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): I shall begin by conveying my thanks for the opportunity of raising this important topic. No one need over-stress the importance of industry to an area such as the one that I represent. Industry Year has been a special event, and I felt that it was time I had an opportunity to bring to the House some of the important achievements that have taken place, especially in my constituency and the north-west. I shall be concentrating my remarks on the north-west.

I should pay an appropriate tribute to the Department of Trade and Industry, represented by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. The Department has offered support in cash and kind to our regional co-ordinating committee in the north-west for Industry Year. It has offered support not only by placing a senior civil servant on the co-ordinating committee and, in the best possible way, by not imposing any particular ideas on the committee, but allowing it to push through its own ideas and spread the message of Industry Year throughout our area. The support of the Department of Trade and Industry has been most welcome.

I should like to couple my thanks to and appreciation of the help of the Department with that of the work of the co-ordinating committee in the north-west. I would like to thank Mr. Jim Kennedy, the full-time regional co-ordinator and the chairman, Con Allday, and his committee who have been responsible for some major achievements throughout the year. It would be appropriate to recap the aims and objectives of Industry Year which have reference not only to the north-west but to the whole country. The aims were to encourage a better understanding of industry, its essential role and its service to the community, to win acceptance for it and ultimately to lay the foundations for a more prosperous economy. Industry Year in the north-west sought, therefore, through action in three specific areas, to underwrite those fundamental aims.

The first thing it sought to do was to link education and industry. Industry Year aimed to accelerate the growth of links between industry and education from primary schools to universities and polytechnics in order to increase the understanding and resources of both. Specific targets existed, such as the linking of all secondary and as many primary schools as possible with local companies and broadening teacher training so that teachers became more aware of the importance of industry and its contribution to the community.

The second type of action envisaged was action by industry itself. Industry Year was designed to encourage industry, and the people involved in it, to communicate more effectively the part industry plays in society and to earn the reputation its importance merits. Companies were encouraged to hold open days, to link with schools, colleges and universities and to strengthen contacts with the media, Members of Parliament and local community groups and to demonstrate an increasing concern for the environment.

The third action task that Industry Year set itself was to increase the general public's awareness of the importance of industry. This was to be by using activities, events and all channels of communication to focus the attention of the general public on industry and to make people more aware of what industry does and why it is important to them.

The co-ordinating committee that is responsible for Industry Year in the north-west claims a great deal of success in each of these three areas for action. First, as regards activity in education, the north-west can claim that 270 secondary schools—50 per cent. of the total in the north-west — are now linked in some way with local companies. That is double the figure in 1985, and it is one of the most important achievements of Industry Year in the north-west. In some areas, all secondary schools have been linked with industry.

Secondly, a growing but smaller number of primary schools are now linked with local companies. It is about 20 per cent. so there is still some way to go.

Thirdly, throughout the area there have been at least 20 industry weeks in schools, involving teachers, parents, pupils and industrialists. Innumerable conferences, workshops and seminars have been devoted to industry and education. There have been many other activities, including work shadowing, schemes involving teachers coming into industry and managers going into schools.

In the case of the second target area—ensuring that industry does a little more to communicate its importance to people—the north-west has also had a tremendous response. Well over 1,000 companies have done something related to Industry Year in the north-west. Over 500 of these companies have linked up with local groups. Companies linked to local groups, or independently, have generated over 1,000 major events to publicise Industry Year's aims and to gain greater understanding of what they do. There have been open days, exhibitions, competitions, conferences, sponsored concerts, workshops, seminars and trade shows. All these events have been publicised, and they have increased the awareness of the general public of what industry does.

As for what has been done to increase the general public's awareness of what industry does, there have been some spectacular events. Even more important has been the sheer number of grass roots events throughout the community in the north-west. All these activities have contributed to the success of Industry Year in the north-west. I pay special tribute to the activities in my constituency. Bury has taken the lead in a number of ways and been responsible for leading the north-west in a number of most important areas.

There are 17 secondary schools in the area covered by my local education authority. In 1986, only one of those schools was linked to an industrial company, but 13 schools are now linked in some way to industry. There is great hope that by the end of this calendar year all 17 schools will be linked. That is a tremendous achievement, and it is largely due to a most active local committee. There is a very good blend of industry, education and local authority personnel. I pay tribute to them for all the work that they have done in their spare time to make Industry Year a success in the town.

One company, Milikens, and one individual, Mr. Clive Jeanes, who led the local group in Bury, went beyond the call of duty in presenting that industry to the town and in rallying support for the cause of Industry Year. I understand that Mr. Jeanes has generated so much interest in the school to which the company is attached that teachers from all the disciplines come regularly to the

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

factory to learn about new ways in which they can make its activities exciting to their pupils. Regular contact between teachers and industrial managers has proved to be most valuable in itself, quite apart from the benefit to the children.

I should like to mention a young lady, Lindsay Pickston. Towards the tail end of 1985 she saw a scheme advertised on television called work shadowing. The purpose of the scheme was to give young girls, in particular, more of an insight into business and industry because of this country's poor record in attracting young ladies into those activities. Lindsay Pickston was not content with just seeing that television programme. She contacted me and asked for my help in setting up a work shadowing scheme in the town. I put this to my local chamber of commerce, and by dint of its efforts a local company called Bibby and Baron agreed to take on Lindsay Pickston. Through her own efforts Lindsay found herself placed with this company and had a most worthwhile week on the work shadowing scheme.

It is people like Lindsay and companies like Bibby and Baron and Milikens and the enthusiasm generated in a town like Bury that has made Industry Year a great success.

I want to speak about more than just bare achievements, for they alone will not tackle our fundamental problem—industrial attitudes. Britain is a curious paradox of an industrialised country with an anti-industrial culture. We know that there is reluctance to engage in trade and we are all aware of the apocryphal stories about youngsters who are persuaded not to go into trade but are told that they should enter the safe professions like the Civil Service—anything other than soil their hands. We know the apocryphal stories about people who are looked down upon because they are in trade until they suddenly make a great deal of money, at which point they suddenly become socially acceptable.

Those attitudes of reluctance have been such that Britain has been deprived of people whose talents, had they been applied in industry, would have made Britain even more prosperous than it is. A whole series of achievements and open days and shows will not change attitudes in Britain. We need a continuing effort by people involved in industry and in the wider community and, above all, by people engaged in education. That will start to change fundamental attitudes towards industry, and that is the point that I want to emphasise.

The activity in the north-west has been designed to change attitudes and that will be one of its lasting effects. There has been a considerable amount of activity in the schools, and the process is beginning to come to fruition because it has changed the attitudes of teachers and educationists towards industry. A growing number of youngsters are beginning to see that industry can offer them a career, no matter what their skills and abilities may be, because business offers opportunity to all. A greater awareness and appreciation of economics is growing in the schools and more schools are taking part in schemes such as Young Enterprise or are setting up companies within the schools enabling pupils to learn what the business world is all about.

We have seen changes in the curricula in schools. That is not necessarily associated with Industry Year, but, added to the effort of Industry Year, schemes such as TVEI are having an even greater impact. A growing enterprise culture has gradually spread throughout our area with the development and further progress of institutions such as Enterprise Agency. All in all, attitudes needed to change. They have been attacked and they are changing because of the variety of activities which the Industry Year co-ordinating committee has organised in the north-west.

Officially, Industry Year will end at the end of this year, but the growing awareness in the north-west that industry matters will not come to an end. I should like to see the continued existence of the regional co-ordinating group. I hope that local commitments to education, openness in industry and the greater public awareness of what goes on will continue. Above all, I hope that the attempts being made to change the attitude of society towards industry will continue.

The north-west had an industrial base for the greater part of the last century. It brought great wealth to our area, but at the turn of the 20th century it also brought great hardship and despair as our former important industries declined for one reason or another. However, our fundamental core of industrial awareness and knowledge has not been lost. The traditional skills need to be applied to new industries, but for some time there has been reluctance to accept this. Industry Year has sought to tackle this basic problem. People have begun to realise that their prosperity lies not in the past but in the future, and that traditional skills can be used to forge new successes and new industries.

The north-west has a proud record in new industries and new technologies, but too often it is linked with the smokestack industries of the past. The classic picture that is sometimes seen from the south of England of the Coronation street terraces and the factory chimneys is no longer truly representative of the north of England. It will certainly not be representative of the north of England's future.

Industry Year has made great strides. The efforts of people throughout the region and in my constituency have all been designed to change fundamental attitudes towards industry and to point the way to the future. I am pleased and delighted that the Department of Trade and Industry has taken such an active interest in the activities of Industry Year 1986 in the north-west. I am convinced that should the north-west decide to continue Industry Year —I am sure that in some way it will continue the activities of 1986 — the Department of Trade and Industry will want to play a part.

Industry Year has been a great success. The future of the north of England—if it is moved by some of the attitudes that have changed in the past year—will be all the more secure, thanks to the efforts of so many people.

1.15 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) for the choice of a timely subject to raise on the Adjournment of the House. I confirm that I shall convey to my officials in the regional office and the north-west his appreciation of the work that they have done. I shall ensure that they get a copy of *Hansard*. I join my hon. Friend in congratulating the north-west regional committee and those who worked so hard in his constituency on making great progress, particularly in the area of school-industry links.

I also suspect that Miss Lindsay Pickston may well have made history, as I am sure that she is the first girl sixth former to be mentioned in the *Official Report* of the proceedings of the House.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving the House the opportunity to look at what has happened in Industry Year and the role that Government have been able to play.

I should perhaps first remind the House that Industry Year is not a Government campaign. It has been organised by the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, more commonly known as the RSA. The aims of Industry Year were set out at the beginning. Industry Year is trying to increase understanding of the role of industry and its services to the community. The year has just been the start of this campaign, and RSA will be announcing next week how it intends to continue after 31 December.

Using a central team under the directorship of Sir Geoffrey Chandler, a network of regional working groups has been built up across the country to take the campaign down to a local level. Much of this effort has been voluntary. I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all those people and to thank them for the hard work that they have put in.

Many companies have provided magnificent support for the campaign, and their contribution has been more than matched by teachers and others in education. In fact, perhaps one of the most notable achievements of Industry Year is that it has enabled people to build on previous industry-education activities, many of them started by my own Department's industry education unit. That is why we have taken the lead in providing Government support for the campaign.

One element of our support is that we have contributed £850,000 towards central running costs. This is over half these costs, and we have also seconded a press officer to the central team. We have done this so that contributions from industry can be concentrated in the local areas where they will have the most impact.

That is by no means the end of our support. Over the lifetime of the campaign we have spent over £1 million on regional Industry Year. This money has been used on a wide variety of projects chosen by the people in the local areas. We have put money towards industry days or weeks, where schools or colleges and local companies get together to see how they can help each other. We have helped fund local newsletters used to alert more people to the need to become involved. We have provided support for conferences, exhibitions, display material, and so on. What is important is that we have listened to what local people have said they wanted. We have joined in the collaboration between industry and education and provided financial help where it was most needed.

I know that the IY team in my hon. Friend's constituency has been extremely active over the past year under the leadership of Mr. Clive Jeanes of Miliken Industries Ltd. They are obviously very good fund raisers in Bury, North, because they have not approached us for money to support any of their activities so far. We would be happy to consider any proposals for part funding activities if they need support from us.

We have also done things for Industry Year nationally. One of the best known is the workshadowing scheme, to which my hon. Friend referred. Like him, I participated in that scheme and can confirm from personal experience that the conclusions gained by the sixth formers in virtually every case have been very vivid and have been reported back to their constituents, namely, their fellow sixth formers, in tangible form. We have recorded 1,500 shadows under our national scheme. The idea has proved so popular that a number of areas have taken it up and run their own schemes, so the total number of shadowings is much higher than this.

A project that was one of our key targets for Industry Year has also been widely welcomed. This is the mini-enterpise in schools project. Here we have got together with the National Westminster Bank in England and Wales and other banks in Scotland and Northern Ireland to offer every middle and secondary school in the country the chance to run at least one mini-enterprise. The schoolchildren themselves set up and run their own operations. They learn about budgeting, marketing, accounting and product design, by becoming involved in these activities. They all learn what is invloved in running a business. We may have planted the seeds of some mighty enterprise here in Industry Year. I understand that over three quarters of our secondary schools will have had experience of mini-enterprise before the school year ends. That is a fine achievement.

To help schools have access to industrially relevant teaching materials, we have provided each middle and secondary school with a modem. Through these modems schools will have access to material on remote databases. We are helping to set up such a database called NERIS —the national education resource information system. From January, schools will have access to considerable resources of up-to-date and relevant teaching materials, particularly in mathematics, physics and technology.

That is all part of another of our IY targets—the introduction by all LEAs of technology as an examinable subject. Through the work of British School Technology, many LEAs now have fully equipped technology buses travelling among schools making maximum use of scarce resources. We have collaborated with industry to buy and equip buses in some areas. We now lead the world in that element of technology teaching.

Another target was to ensure that every LEA has an individual or body with clear responsibility for promoting school—industry links. We have achieved this through the network of school industry liaison officers, the school curriculum industry partnership and the science and technology regional organisations. Of course, the IY network has been working hard to achieve the associated objective of linking schools with local companies and has achieved great success. So far over £5·85 million has been committed to Industry Year by Government agencies of one sort or another either through direct funding or through funding projects and activities in support of the campaign. On top of this we have taken the opportunity to enhance existing or new projects worth over £20 million. This is what we have identified so far. If I were to look at other areas of Government support for industry, all of which contribute to the central aims of IY, the total would be very much higher.

Of course, neither we nor the Industry Year team are going to rest on our laurels. I have already said that next week the team will be announcing how it intends to continue the campaign next year. A small central team will be maintained at the RSA to provide a focal point for future work. I know from my travels around the country that there is an absolute determination among local groups not to lose the momentum generated this year. The

[Mr. John Butcher]

Government, too, will be supporting the continuing campaign, as we have done this year, in whatever ways we can. I can respond positively to my hon. Friend's suggestions and that is why, at the beginning of my speech, I said that his Adjournment debate was timely. I can now state that the RSA, local groups, the Government and institutions will work together under one banner to change attitudes to industry. And what will that banner be? What else but "Industry, Matters." That will continue into 1987.

I again thank my hon. Friend for all the work that he has done and the encouragement that he has given to the magnificent work that has been done on the ground in Bury, North and the north-west. I am sure that we are all delighted that that work will be built on and not simply left as a one-year effort that could not have borne fruit if we had not persisted with it. That is what we shall do.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 27 November 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

EXETER CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*

MID GLAMORGAN COUNTY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*
Read a Second time, and committed.

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Tuesday 2 December.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Advanced Technology

1. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on investment in advanced technology in industry in Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): The Government offer a range of incentives to encourage efficient production. In 1985-86 over £54 million was paid in grants, supporting investment by industry in research, development and re-equipment of £181 million.

Mr. Brown: May I take this opportunity to congratulate my hon. Friend on his appointment to the Northern Ireland Office and to welcome him to his responsibilities at the Dispatch Box? My pleasure is tinged with sadness because I now no longer have the pleasure of sharing an office with him. I wish him well in his duties.

Does my hon. Friend agree that investment in advanced technology in Northern Ireland is the right way forward for industrial success in the Province and that that will generate higher employment there? Will he assure us that the Government will give the highest priority to the matter?

Mr. Viggers: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. It is indeed an honour to serve in the Northern Ireland Office and a pleasure to do so with the present ministerial team.

More companies are accepting change as a way of life in business, and that augers well for the future. The Government provide considerable assistance—up to 50 per cent. or £250,000 for each project—for approved research and development, and 133 companies have taken advantage of that scheme.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

2. **Mr. Peter Archer** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the first year of operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): We have made steady progress. In particular, we have laid the foundation for closer co-operation on cross-border security and extradition arrangements, and we have discussed a number of matters concerned with increasing the confidence of the minority community in the institutions of government in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archer: Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that many on both sides of the water welcome the agreement as a recognition that two Governments in one island necessarily have many interests in common and hope to see real benefits for people in both traditions? Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that they want to applaud the agreement? I note what the right hon. Gentleman said, but when will he be able to point to some demonstrable dividends in the areas of job creation, equal opportunities, accountable local government and civil liberties?

Mr. King: We are seeking to make progress on a range of fronts. I understand the right hon. Gentleman's impatience in a number of areas, but he will know that some of the issues with which we are grappling are extremely complex and controversial, as they have been over the years, and, although many would like to go faster, the foundations have been laid for progress. For example, we have published an important consultation paper on equality of employment opportunities. We now see the setting up of the international fund, and only last night the House approved the amendment to the extradition treaty with the United States, which I am confident would not have gone forward as it has done without the existence of the Anglo-Irish agreement. Only this week we have seen the tabling in the Dail of the proposed Bill to ratify the European convention on the suppression of terrorism. Progress is now being made across a wide range.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Has the penalty of transportation to Australia been revived for Sir Robert Armstrong for his part in the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Is it the case that no Northern Ireland civil servants, as distinct from United Kingdom civil servants, had any part in the drawing up of that agreement?

Mr. King: I had better not tiptoe into the first part of that question, but I am sure that we shall welcome back Sir Robert Armstrong, whenever that may be. The answer to the second part of my hon. Friend's question is no.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Five weeks ago the Secretary of State told the House, in the context of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, that he expected the Irish Republic's ratification of the European convention on the suppression of terrorism to go forward shortly. Has something gone wrong?

Mr. King: No, Sir. The Irish Minister of Justice signed the ratification document some time ago. However, the right hon. Gentleman may not be aware that the Bill was tabled in the Dail, thus commencing its parliamentary procedures, only this week.

Mr. Colvin: The House no doubt welcomes my right hon. Friend's recollection that one of the prime objectives

of the Anglo-Irish Agreement is greater cross-border co-operation on security matters. Will my right hon. Friend therefore get the message through to the Garda that Sundays are work days for the IRA? What was the Garda doing about patrolling the south side of the border last Sunday, at Middletown, when members of my old regiment were mortar bombed by the IRA?

Mr. King: I fully share my hon. Friend's concern about that incident and, indeed, I telephoned the Irish Minister of Justice about it on Sunday, but one must be fair and recognise that we are talking about, as far as I am aware, the first mortar attack to have taken place from the Irish Republic. I know that my hon. Friend would pay tribute to the security forces and to their efforts in Northern Ireland, but despite all our intensive efforts we have not been wholly successful in preventing mortar attacks that have been launched from within Northern Ireland. Obviously the attack mentioned by my hon. Friend was a very serious attack, and I take a very grave view of it. However, everyone in Northern Ireland will be most appreciative of the fact that the Garda only recently discovered two complete and fully-primed mortar sets which might otherwise have caused serious disruption.

Mr. Mason: The right hon. Gentleman must be aware that a continuing improvement in security is a crucial factor if the Anglo-Irish Agreement is to be seen to succeed. Consequently, what improvement has there been in security co-operation between the RUC and the Garda in the past 12 months, particularly in connection with cross-border operations?

Mr. King: There is now a completely agreed detailed threat assessment. There has been agreement between the Garda and the RUC on co-operation on intelligence matters and the methods to be used. A considerable amount of work is going on in connection with organisation, structure and communications. However, I know that the right hon. Gentleman, with his knowledge, will understand when I say that I am not prepared to go into that in detail in public. I am satisfied with the advice that I have received, which is that because of closer co-operation we now have the best prospect of dealing more effectively with cross-border terrorism.

Mr. Gow: Does not the experience of the first 12 months show that instead of peace there has been strife, instead of stability, turmoil, and instead of reconciliation, added sectarian suspicion and division? What progress has my right hon. Friend made in securing from the majority community acceptance of the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Mr. King: Obviously, I fully share the concern felt about the tensions and difficulties that exist within the Province, but my hon. Friend knows the history of Northern Ireland too well to suggest that somehow divisions and strife have suddenly broken out during the past year. We seek to move away from a tragic background that has existed for so many years, for whatever period my hon. Friend may select—say, for the past 17 years. The agreement genuinely offers a way forward, albeit in the face of tensions and deliberate opposition from interests which have never been prepared to accept any compromise or any move forward, whatever the direction. We can at last see a way forward that could work.

I say to those of my hon. Friends who share concerns about this matter that we must seek a positive way forward. My hon. Friend knows that the agreement is not the threat to the Union that some would seek to present it as being. There is no risk of a united Ireland being imposed by force. The reality is that the agreement offers us a way of seeing, with good will and co-operation, a happier future for the people in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Hume: Will the Secretary of State tell the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), who was complaining about imperfect security on the border, that the border is the same length on both sides? Has the right hon. Gentleman taken into account the recommendation made yesterday by the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights, a Government-appointed body, that to improve public perceptions of the administration of justice in Northern Ireland there should be three judges in the Diplock courts instead of one? Will the right hon. Gentleman take that recommendation into account in considering how the administration of justice, which he admits he is trying to improve, can be improved?

Mr. King: I shall certainly take note of the report. The hon. Gentleman will know that it was not a unanimous c[illegible]ere being a note of dissident by two members of the standing advisory committee. The report does not question in any sense the quality of justice in Northern Ireland. Indeed, it points out the real problems that could exist. There is the idea that this is merely a matter of political attitudes, but there are real and practical problems. I can confirm that the matter is likely to be on the agenda for further discussion, and we have made no secret of our concern about the difficulties that exist.

Mr. Stanbrook: Is it not the position that 12 months after the conclusion of the Anglo-Irish Agreement the majority community remains unalterably opposed to it? Does my right hon. Friend not consider that the best way forward is to find an agreement that is acceptable to the majority and in accordance with democratic principles, as well as being fair to the minority?

Mr. King: The objective of successive British Governments has been precisely that, but there has been an unwillingness by one party after another to entertain the proposals of successive Governments. Each party is equally guilty within the Northern Ireland scene of abstaining at one stage or another from the various initiatives that we have taken to try to find some way forward that would offer more positive opportunities. I regret the present attitude of the majority community, but my hon. Friend will recognise that while people may be critical one year about of a lack of achievement, they cannot be ignorant of the fact that many of the allegations, fears and misrepresentations that existed at the start of the agreement have been proved to be manifestly false. I hope that he will give us credit for that.

Local Authorities (Discussions)

3. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has held with representatives of local authorities in Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): Since 1 July Ministers held 16 meetings with groups that have included members of district councils. These meetings have enabled us to discuss a wide range of public service matters. I

greatly regret that Unionist Members have failed to put ther views to me and my colleagues about matters affecting their constituents.

Mr. Maclennan: Is the Minister aware that some Unionist Members have been in the House to report their views to other hon. Members, and that that was a welcome initiative? Is he aware also that there is considerable interest in the possibility of developing local representative democracy, even if there is a stalemate on central institutions of government, to strengthen local control over local decision making?

Mr. Needham: I am glad to confirm that, as part of the devolution package which the Government have long put forward, that would certainly be well worth considering. If only members of the majority coummunity were prepared to come into negotiation with Ministers, including my ministerial colleagues, that is something that we would wish to consider.

Mr. Latham: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the present position is completely unsatisfactory as a long-term objective? In effect, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is acting as viceroy, the local authorities have no powers, and those who are supposed to come to this place to represent their constituents do not come.

Mr. Needham: It is a great pity that local representatives do not come to this place, and responsibilities go considerably wider than I would wish. As I have said before, it is extremely important in negotiating any package of devolution that we do so on the broadest possible scale.

Mr. Bell: We welcome the prospect of devolution in Northern Ireland and any talks to that effect. Will the Minister confirm that any talks held with representatives of the Unionist community in Northern Ireland will not mean the suspension of the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Mr. Needham: I shall speak to anybody who comes to my door. It will be done under the exising framework of government. I only wish that they would try to find a way to my door.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that the time may well be right to consider setting up in Northern Ireland a similar structure of local government to that which obtains in the rest of the United Kingdom, the more so since there is no longer the Assembly?

Mr. Needham: As I said, if it is part of a package of devolution measures, I am sure that it would make sense. I would be only too happy to devolve some of my existing responsibilities, which I am sure many of the people in Northern Ireland think are already too heavy.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

4. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will be in a position to make a statement on the inquiry by Mr. Colin Sampson into matters connected with the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

14. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to make a statement on the Sampson report on the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Tom King: I reported to the House on 23 October the progress being made by Mr. Sampson. I shall at the earliest appropriate time make a statement on any matters arising from the report that fall within my responsibilities.

Mr. Flannery: Does the Minister not realise that the slowness of the Government to react in a democratic manner by clearing the air when there has been wide publicity everywhere leads people to think that their suspicions that the Government are concealing something are very real? Why, in Heaven's name, have the Government subjected the deputy chief constable of Manchester to all that suspicion, and his family and another family and large numbers of people to misery, when they can clear the air by giving a proper report about what has happened so far?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman can ask a question such as that only if he is completely oblivious of my previous answer. He appears to be unaware that Mr. Sampson's report came forward on 22 October. It has been with the Chief Constable. It is now with the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland. The second report will be coming forward shortly. Those are obviously serious matters, which may lead to criminal proceedings. There is no question of the Government jumping in and reaching arbitrary decisions in advance. There are proper procedures which have to be observed. The proper process of law will be carried through. I have made clear my concern that the matter should be proceeded with at the earliest opportunity and that there should be no avoidable delay. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the matter of the deputy chief constable of Manchester is nothing to do with me, but is entirely for the Manchester police authority.

Mr. Lloyd: The Secretary of State must recognise that taking the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester out of that inquiry led to the widespread belief that there was some kind of conspiracy, some attempt to cover up, or some attempt to ensure that the areas he was investigating were not reached. The Secretary of State must recognise the major concern, not just on this side of the water, but in Ireland as well, about those consequences. Can he guarantee that he will be prepared to give the very fullest account of the mechanisms by which John Stalker was taken out of the inquiry and the responsibilities of those involved in Her Majesty's Inspectorate on both sides of the water?

Mr. King: I bitterly regret the fact that the inquiry could not have proceeded much more speedily and that there was this unfortunate interruption. The hon. Gentleman seems equally unaware of the background and procedures. The position simply was that the inquiry was proceeding at the request of the Chief Constable of the RUC, who had appointed Mr. Stalker to head that inquiry. He then received information from the Chief Constable of Manchester that Mr. Stalker was no longer available to continue the inquiry. Against that background, the Chief Constable of the RUC took immediate steps to ensure that the inquiry proceeded by appointing somebody else to continue to conduct it. The question about the suspension of Mr. Stalker was a decision taken in Manchester by the Manchester police authority. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Hawksley: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the inquiry has been carried out thoroughly and professionally?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend will understand that it is not possible at this stage to reach that judgment. The reports have been with the Chief Constable and the Director of Public Prosecutions. I have not yet seen the first report. The second report will be coming forward shortly. I shall want to address a number of matters, if appropriate, and make a statement to the House on them. Obviously, this is part of the background that I shall want to consider.

Mr. Mallon: The Secretary of State will be aware that six people from County Armagh were killed in those incidents in 1982. Does he agree that a four-year lapse before inquests are held would not be tolerated in any other part of this jurisdiction? Does he further agree that until this matter is cleared up in a positive and just way the only losers in this whole saga will have been those people who were killed, their relatives and the RUC?

Mr. King: These incidents, as the hon. Gentleman made clear, relate to matters that took place four years ago. As I made clear earlier, I am most concerned that these matters should be resolved and any appropriate decisions taken at the earliest opportunity. There is no benefit whatsoever in delay.

Divis Housing

5. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to involve the residents of Divis and the local community in decisions on the rehousing of residents following the demolition of the Divis flats.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. However, I have been informed by the chairman that staff from the Housing Executive's Belfast region have already met the Divis Residents Association and other local groups and have arranged for continuing regular meetings to consult on the detailed development of plans for that area.

Mr. Duffy: Lest the punishment regime of the people of the Divis community appears to be unduly prolonged, will the Minister urge on the Housing Executive the need to start the demolition and new building as soon as possible? Will he ensure that there is the earliest possible consultation?

Mr. Needham: Of course, now that the decision has been made, it would be the desire of all of us to see the Divis blocks removed as quickly as possible. However, I must stress that that will take a considerable period of years because of the problems of space and of money. I shall ensure, of course, that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive enters into close consultation. I shall keep a close eye on the matter, but it is the responsibility of the Housing Executive.

Ms. Clare Short: I heard the Minister say "Now that the decision has been made". Is he aware that the residents of the Divis fear that the Housing Executive might go back on its promise to demolish the Divis flats? Will he give an absolute undertaking that that will not happen? Will he consider his Department arranging a grant to the Town and Country Planning Association to continue its work with the Divis residents to come up with plans for rebuilding that are acceptable to the people currently living in the Divis flats?

Mr. Needham: I assure the hon. Lady that I do not think that there is any chance of the Housing Executive going back on its recommendations. I can see no possible reason why it should do that. In relation to the second part of the hon. Lady's question, consultation with the Divis Residents Association is a duty of the Housing Executive. I am sure that it will do that adequately and professionally.

Higher Education

6. **Mr. Bell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what expenditure on university education in Northern Ireland is planned for the financial year 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): The Government will provide £72 million for the two universities and the Open University in 1986-87. Details of provision for 1987-88 are not yet available, but I will ensure that the University Grants Committee, in its advice to the Department of Education on the appropriate grant allocations to the two universities, will take account of the additional resources for universities recently announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Mr. Bell: While the education community in Northern Ireland will welcome the Minister's £72 million forecast of expenditure, what is the Minister to make of the forecast that Queens university is to face cuts in recurrent resources over the next four years of about £5·2 million? Does he agree that the economic and industrial base of Northern Ireland is less than it is in Great Britain, and that research income is not likely to be forthcoming? If monetarism is as dead as a dodo on the mainland, why should it be flourishing in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Mawhinney: I can confirm that the grant to Queens university will increase by some 10 per cent. below the average uplift provided for the system over that period. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the university, as an autonomous institution, has to determine how to match its provision with the resources provided. The hon. Gentleman will be aware—and if not I can give him the information—of the steps that the university is taking to broaden its base as a United Kingdom university and to seek industrial funds to help its research programme.

Mr. Hume: As higher education in Northern Ireland has recently been reorganised and a new university campus established in Derry, does the Minister agree that it would be unfortunate and unfair if, at such an early stage, the new campus were subject to severe cuts which would hinder developments that have been guaranteed? Will he ensure that that does not happen?

Dr. Mawhinney: As I suspect that the hon. Gentleman knows, the increase for the University of Ulster for 1986-87 is 4·9 per cent., which is above the rate of inflation. In the period covered by the main question the increase for the University of Ulster will be 16 per cent. above the average.

Administration of Justice

7. **Mr. Soley** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans exist for changes in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Nicholas Scott): A number of changes in the system have been implemented in the last year or so, including the introduction of measures to eliminate avoidable delays between first remand and trial and the making of an order to increase the Attorney-General's discretion to certify that in particular cases scheduled offences should be tried before juries.

The Government have also announced their intention to introduce legislation in the current parliamentary Session to amend the emergency legislation which applies to Northern Ireland. I am fully seized of the importance of public confidence in the administration of justice, and this is a matter that we keep under constant review.

Mr. Soley: Does the Minister agree that there is something to be said for accepting Sir George Baker's recommendations on restoration of trial by jury, which do not go much further than we have gone already? Is he aware that it would be welcome if he went at least that far, or even, in my view, rather further? Will he also give a commitment that the supergrass trial system will be stopped in the near future, as it is undermining confidence in both the Republican and the Unionist community?

Mr. Scott: Bearing in mind the situation in Northern Ireland, it is important that the Government should seek continuously to ensure that the changes that are necessary in the Province to deal with the administration of justice vary as little as possible from the system in Great Britain. When our Bill on the emergency legislation is introduced, the hon. Gentleman will see that we are going a little further in that direction, and we are continually looking for further improvements.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that recent calls for changes in the nature of the Northern Ireland judiciary have been misguided? Does he agree that it is essential to maitain the Diplock system and that we should pay tribute to the judges in every court in Northern Ireland for the impartial way in which they administer justice in the most difficult circumstances imaginable?

Mr. Scott: I echo wholeheartedly my hon. Friend's tribute to the judges and others involved in the administration of justice in the Province in most difficult and trying circumstances. Nevertheless, we must always look for improvements. As my hon. Friend knows, the administration of justice is on the agenda for the next meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference.

Mr. Mallon: Is the Minister aware of the activities of some Members of this House in strutting along the streets of Northern Ireland in red berets, forming armies and provoking people to further violence? When will positive legislation be introduced to deal with incitement to violence or hatred by the spoken word, by marches or by the use of any emblem?

Mr. Scott: I am certainly concerned about some displays that have taken place in Northern Ireland, but it is very much a matter for the police, the prosecuting authorities and, in due course, the courts to decide whether there has been a breach of the law. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we propose to introduce a public order order covering some of the matters to which he referred. I hope that we shall be able to make an announcement about that in the not too distant future.

Regional Health Boards

8. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has plans to meet the chairmen of the regional health boards in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: I plan to meet the chairmen of health and social services boards early in the new year to discuss the regional strategic plan for the development of services over the next five years.

Mr. Dubs: When the Minister meets the chairman of the boards, will he stop pressing or obliging them to privatise hospital ancillary services? Does he accept that the real problems arise because there is a need for more resources for the Health Service in Northern Ireland? Will he halt attempts by the Government to increase the profits of private suppliers at the expense of patients?

Mr. Needham: There are considerably more resources in the Health Service in Northern Ireland than in the rest of the United Kingdom, and I am delighted that that is so. There has been no sudden change in our policy to increase pressure to privatise. We are continuing with the policy that we introduced two years ago. The requirements are the same as for the rest of the United Kingdom. We are testing the effectiveness of services on the public side of the Health Service against the private sector. Due to the smallness of the private sector in Northern Ireland, there are not that many facilities—unfortunately, in my view—that are likely to be privatised. Nevertheless, as a result of our policies, substantial savings have been made and these have led to an increase in the amount of money available to assist in the care of patients.

Mr. Archer: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he has not noticed all the furore over the past few weeks about privatisation? Is it not the case that any savings from privatisation will come from cutting jobs, squeezing wage rates, reducing the number of hours for which people are paid and sacrificing services? Does he maintain that that is the way to maintain the standards of service to patients?

Mr. Needham: I do not know where the right hon. and learned Gentleman has been in the last few weeks, but I suspect that he has not been very near Northern Ireland, because there has been no furore there about these matters. I have explained to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that we are continuing with the policy that we adopted two years ago, and as a result of that policy we have made substantial and sensible savings that have benefited the patients and clients of the Health Service in Northern Ireland. We shall continue with that policy.

Smaller Businesses

9. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Ssecretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to encourage smaller businesses in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The Government provide a comprehensive range of assistance, training and support to encourage the small business sector. I recently announced an increase in the budget of the Local Enterprise Development Unit from £17 million to £21 million a year in order to enable it to provide further assistance for the development of existing small firms.

Mr. Bellingham: Does the Minister agree that after the devastating announcement by Harland and Wolff it is

more important than ever to encourage indigenous entrepreneurs and community-based small businesses? Will he do what he can to support the enterprise allowance scheme and local enterprise programmes?

Mr. Viggers: In connection with the first point raised by my hon. Friend, I pay tribute to the adaptability of the management and the work force at Harland and Wolff and wish them well in winning further orders, because that is the only way forward for the company. My hon. Friend also spoke about the local enterprise programme and the enterprise allowance scheme. I pay tribute to the large number of business men, academics, trade unionists and others who give their voluntary efforts to a number of groups and schemes to promote enterprise and employment. Their practical assistance and guidance are of special value in encouraging smaller businesses.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Following the 800 redundancies at Harland and Wolff, is there not a great danger that that company will become one of the smaller businesses which the Minister is supposed to be encouraging? Will he give a commitment to continue to provide financial assistance to Harland and Wolff to enable it to get Ministry of Defence work?

Mr. Viggers: The Government have shown their commitment to Harland and Wolff in the announcement made yesterday about the large external financing limit. The way ahead for Harland and Wolff is to win further orders, and the company is very efficient and in a good position to do that.

Mr. Bell: Some 800 men will lose their jobs at Harland and Wolff. Is that not a direct consequence of Tory policies? The Tory onslaught on the Northern Ireland economy is affecting the lives of ordinary men and women there, and that is why 800 men at Harland and Wolff have lost their jobs.

Mr. Viggers: The hon. Gentleman is less than fair. The Government have shown their commitment to Harland and Wolff. We have a high regard for the management of the company and wish it well.

Irish Republican Army

11. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will list the known sources of funding of the Irish Republican Army as communicated to his office.

Mr. Scott: The main sources of finance for the Provisional IRA are believed to be the profits gained from paramilitary-controlled social clubs and gaming machines, extortion and protection rackets, frauds, armed robberies throughout Ireland, commercial enterprises run for the benefit of paramilitaries, and overseas contributions.

The Government are naturally anxious to cut off all potential sources of financial support for terrorism and have introduced a number of measures to this end in recent years. In addition, the Royal Ulster Constabulary has established a special squad to draw together all police activity against organised crime. This has already met with notable success.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why did the Minister not place the proceeds from kidnapping on that list?

Mr. Scott: There is no reason to believe that kidnap payments are a regular or major source of finance for the Provisional IRA.

Viscount Cranborne: Has my hon. Frend had any discussions with the Government of the Republic of Ireland as a result of the Anglo-Irish Agreement to try to control the amount of funds coming to the IRA from south of the border?

Mr. Scott: We are determined to see that, through co-operation with the authorities throughout Ireland, security forces as well as Government Departments, we block off all sources as quickly as possible.

Mr. Mason: Surely the worst culprit in regularly financing the Provisional IRA both with cash and arms is Noraid and its organisations in the United States of America. Will the Minister therefore enlighten the House about the extent to which it is still annually financing the provisional IRA?

Mr. Scott: To far too great an extent. I have to say that we are getting very good co-operation from the American Administration and law enforcement agencies on the other side of the Atlantic, both in controlling Noraid as an organisation, monitoring its accounts, and in ensuring that money is not used to buy arms to murder Irishmen north and south of the border.

Mr. Gow: What evidence does my hon. Friend have to show that the Governments of Syria and Libya are involved in supplying money and arms to the IRA or are conniving to do so?

Mr. Scott: There is clear evidence that over the years Libya has been supplying both money and arms to the IRA. We continue to seek to monitor that and to prevent such arms or such money from reaching the IRA.

Security

13. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: Since I last answered questions in the House on 23 October, one police officer and two civilians have died as a result of the security situation in the Province.

So far this year, 576 people have been charged with serious offences and 197 weapons, 28,000 rounds of ammunition and 4,000 lb of explosives have been recovered.

The security forces displayed great skill, patience and professionalism in dealing with demonstrations in various parts of the Province. Despite disgraceful behaviour by some sections of the crowds, serious disorder was generally averted.

Mr. Spencer: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a mass resignation of councillors will only increase tension and make the job of the security forces more difficult?

Mr. King: I certainly would say that I have never quite understood the point of resigning and allowing the people whom one sought to oppose and stood against at an election to take over one's responsibilities, which otherwise they would not have had a chance to do. I certainly think that there is a valuable role for people to play within the government in Northern Ireland.

Ms. Clare Short: Does the Secretary of State agree that the problem of security in Northern Ireland is not helped when the leader and deputy leader of the Democratic Unionist party openly incite loyalist paramilitary organisations to violence? When will he and the Prime Minister start treating the leadership of that party exactly as they treat Sinn Fein? The only difference is that one takes the money but does not come here, while the other does not take the money and does not come here.

Mr. King: We are absolutely satisfied that the security forces, particularly the RUC, will take appropriate action if offences such as those described by the hon. Lady are committed. It is the duty of all people in constitutional parties within Northern Ireland to support the security forces, and I hope that members of the SDLP will reconsider very directly the comments they have made about support for the RUC, and make absolutely unequivocal their support for it.

15. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many members of the security forces, police and Army, have been *(a)* murdered and *(b)* injured in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: As the answer is in the form of a tabular statement, I shall, with permission, Mr. Speaker, arrange for it to be published in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Bruinvels: Will my hon. Friend look back with regret at the growing number of members of the security forces and others within Northern Ireland who have been tragically murdered in the past five years? Does my hon. Friend agree that the greatest problem with maintaining cross-border security is that many of our security forces have been deterred from preventing incursions breaching cross-border security because of the Ulster Resistance Movement's activities under the leadership of the leader of the Democratic Unionist party? Should we not try to stop the security people from being taken away from the important task of protecting our borders, thus ensuring that the people of Northern Ireland are properly protected? Should we not be prepared to stand up and protect this country and Northern Ireland?

Mr. Scott: I agree totally with my hon. Friend. Those who engage in street disorder and demonstrations divert the RUC from its task of fighting terrorism and are not contributing to the peace and security of the Province.

Following is the table:

The information in respect of members of the security forces killed and injured in Northern Ireland due to civil unrest in each of the past five years is as follows:

	Deaths		*Injuries*	
	RUC	*Army*	*RUC*	*Army*
1982	12	28	99	98
1983	18	15	142	88
1984	9	19	267	86
1985	23	6	415	33
1986[1]	12	12	552	45

[1] To date.

Note: RUC figures include the RUC Reserve and the Army figures include the UDR.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

16. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the working of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to a question by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) earlier today.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Was it at the Intergovernmental Conference that Mr. Peter Barry was helpful enough to recommend enlistment for the RUC? Was it not then deplorable for the SDLP to give contrary advice? Does not the Anglo-Irish Agreement please it, either?

Mr. King: It was in a public broadcast that the Irish Foreign Minister made absolutely clear his support, not only for the Catholic minority community joining the RUC, but for supporting the institutions of government in the Province. I very much welcomed that statement, and, as I made clear in an earlier answer, I very much hope that the SDLP will support it as well.

Mr. Hume: Does the Secretary of State accept that a considerable factor in the violence over the past 12 months has been a deliberate campaign organised by elements of the Loyalist community to blackmail the Government to back down from decisions which have overwhelmingly been endorsed in the House?

Mr. King: I am certainly aware of the attempts of certain people to intimidate the Government and the security forces. I am also aware of the outstanding role that the RUC has played in defending minority communities against violence. It is scant recompense for the RUC not to receive the support and approval of the SDLP.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Heddle: Do not all those who work for British intelligence owe a life-long duty of confidentiality to the Crown? Is it not the duty of the Government of the day and of Opposition parties to uphold that fundamental principle and not to relegate it for party political purposes?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right. Hitherto, Governments of all parties have upheld that fundamental principle. Otherwise, the effectiveness of the security service would be undermined. I pay tribute to the overwhelming majority of those in the security service who recognise their obligations and duty of confidentiality.

Mr. Kinnock: May I warmly endorse both the last question and answer? Will the Prime Minister tell us, whether the decision not to impede publication of Mr.

Pincher's book in 1981 was taken personally by the Attorney-General, whether the decision to put Sir Robert Armstrong in court in Australia, was taken personally by the Attorney-General?

The Prime Minister: As I said to the House last Thursday, it would be inappropriate for me — [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] — to comment on matters which may arise in the proceedings concerning the Peter Wright case in Australia while those proceedings continue. On the general question of security matters, I shall follow the precedent set by previous Prime Ministers and, I understand, set out in "Erskine May", of not commenting on security matters.

Mr. Kinnock: This is a specific question about the decisions and responsibilities inside the Government that has no implication whatsoever for matters of national security. Although it does not raise questions about national security, it raises questions about the competence and integrity of the Government. Will the Prime Minister give a straight answer to a straight question? Did the Attorney-General personally take either or both of those decisions? In these matters, has the Attorney-General been a fool or a fall guy?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman's question is totally unworthy. [HON MEMBERS: "Answer."] On the general question of security, I shall follow the precedent set by previous Prime Ministers and, I understand, upheld in "Erskine May", of not commenting on security matters.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister must, then, now explain what is the implication for national security of telling us whether it was an individual member of her Government who personally — not nominally and formally, but personally — took a decision that has a direct effect on the integrity of national security in this country.

The Prime Minister: The Government, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, are indivisible. *[Interruption.]* The decisions are decisions of the Government and not of particular Ministers. If he wishes to table a motion of censure, he is fully entitled to do so.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my right hon. Friend aware, when she is today considering some of the nonsense on security matters appearing on the Order Paper, that one of the names on the Order Paper is that of Sir Arthur Franks, who is a most distinguished public servant with a gallant war record? Any innuendoes against such persons under the cloak of parliamentary privilege are disgraceful.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. How the Order Paper is treated is a matter for the House of Commons.

Dr. Owen: As it was the Prime Minister who broke the precedent of all previous Prime Ministers when she answered questions on the Floor of the House on security issues, will she now reconsider the necessity for the House to have a better way of scrutinising the security services than using the Order Paper or the Floor of the House of Commons? The right hon. Lady has been offered the opportunity to move this issue away from partisanship and to put it into a Select Committee made up of right hon. and hon. Members of both parties. In that way, the sort of exchange to which the Prime Minister has objected could be overcome.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman often proposes in Opposition what he did not have in office. We understand why he is doing it for party political reasons. I repeat: the practice and custom of all Prime Ministers of all parties is to adhere to the normal rule of not commenting on security matters. That practice is upheld in "Erskine May", and I shall follow it.

Mr. Aitken: In view of the increasing difficulties created by the judge's rulings in the Supreme Court of New South Wales, will my right hon. Friend consider whether the time has come for the Government to impose a moratorium on all legal activities relevant to historical matters concerned with the late Sir Roger Hollis? Instead, will she consider asking the Security Commission to review any continuing security problems from that era and make recommendations to Parliament, first, on how best to preserve the duty of confidentiality among retired security officers who live overseas and, secondly, on how best to install some form of permanent oversight body which might stop this type of nonsense from ever happening again?

The Prime Minister: I think that the practice has been the right one. The Government are concerned with upholding the principle of confidentiality and the obligations of staff, without which there can be no effective security service. We are discussing the need to have a continuing, effective security service. Those who wish to continue to have an effective security service understand the need not to discuss these matters in the House of Commons. Other people have secret services. It is a difficult problem, but I believe that the path taken by previous Prime Ministers and Home Secretaries and, indeed, previous Foreign Secretaries, while they have been in office has been the correct one.

Q2. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wardell: Did the Prime Minister discuss in 1980 or 1981 the likely contents of Peter Wright's book, or any allegations being made by him, with Lord Rothschild?

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add— *[Interruption.]* — to the replies which I have previously given. If the hon. Gentleman looks in "Erskine May", he will see that my reply is upheld there.

Q3. **Mr. Colin Shepherd** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Shepherd: During her busy day, will the Prime Minister consider the £1 million war chest set up by Flexilink to seek to undermine investor confidence in the Channel tunnel? Does she agree that the £700 million worth of manufacturing equipment which will be needed for that project and which is capable of being supplied by areas of traditionally high employment — traditional heavy industry—is a far greater prize for the nation?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the Channel tunnel offers very exciting employment possibilities. It is a billion pound project which, if it goes ahead, will be financed

totally by the private sector. It offers the prospect of many jobs and of better access to continental markets for many of our industries.

Mr. Carter-Jones: May I ask the Prime Minister a question that may unite the House? May I ask the Prime Minister whether she will look at the legislation with regard to attendance allowances and invalidity care allowances as it affects terminal cases? When it passed the legislation, the House did not intend the six-month rule to deny terminal patients their rights, and the rights of the carers and of the organisations that care for them. Will the right hon. Lady give an undertaking that, during her busy schedule today, she will have words with the appropriate Department to get that matter put right?

The Prime Minister: I cannot undertake to do what the hon. Gentleman asks me, to get the matter put right, because I am not quite certain what is the other side of the story. I know, as he knows, that our record on disabled — *[Interruption.]* — Yes. Our record of spending on benefits for the long-term sick — *[Interruption.]* Our record on spending on benefits for the long-term sick and disabled people is up by 55 per cent. in real terms. That is an excellent record of which we are proud, and obviously Opposition Members are trying to shout so that it is not heard where it should be. I shall, of course, put the specific point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Q4. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hayes: Will my right hon. Friend join me and some Labour Members in condemning the hijacking of some unemployment centres by Left-wing militants who have turned those centres into hotbeds of political campaigning? Will she undertake to investigate those matters and oust those red riff-raff so that the centres can be used for their proper purpose—to help the unemployed and their families?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It is unfortunate that a project funded under the community programme should break clear and sensible rules under which it has accepted funding. I know that Manpower Services Commission officials are currently considering what further steps to take in that matter. I join my hon. Friend in his censure.

Q5. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Davies: Why does the Prime Minister refuse to close the loopholes that allow unlimited supplies of firearms and ammunition to circulate in this country without restriction? Does she not realise that increasing penalties, as in the Criminal Justice Bill, which is to be debated today, are only part of the answer, and that her response to rising crime will never be adequate until she pays due regard to the causes of crime?

The Prime Minister: By the time one sorted out the causes of crime, one could sort out the fundamental nature of human nature itself. The view that we have taken is that it is the Government's duty to provide the extra resources. Consequently, we have provided the extra police and the extra equipment on a scale that has never been seen before. With regard to firearms, as the hon. Gentleman says, the Criminal Justice Bill contains provision to increase to life imprisonment the maximum sentence for carrying a firearm in the furtherance of crime.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: During the course of her official duties, will my right hon. Friend consider the date for the next general election? In doing so, will she bear in mind that the former alliance Member of Parliament, Neville Sandelson, has said in *The Sunday Times* that in every constituency that Labour might conceivably win, alliance supporters should now attune themselves to voting Conservative?

The Prime Minister: The advice is excellent and I should like to endorse it.

Q6. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lofthouse: Will the Prime Minister inform the House what authority the Attorney-General had to give confidential information from his Department to a Fleet street journalist, Mr. Chapman Pincher? Is she aware that if she fails to answer this question, as she has failed to answer the others, this House and the nation will consider that she has something to hide and that she is frightened?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that he can ask me any questions. I am constrained by a court case in which the Government are appearing — *[Interruption.]* He can ask me any questions and is not constrained, but he knows that I am constrained by the court case in Australia in which the Government are appearing. Therefore, I cannot go any further than I have gone. I notice that he reflects severely on the Attorney-General: a reflection which I totally and utterly condemn.

Mr. Robert Atkins *rose*——

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton *rose*——

Mr. Faulds *rose*——

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take points of order if they relate directly to questions.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. I will take points of order if they relate directly to Question Time. We have two statements: a statement from the Secretary of State for Education and Science and a Business statement. I will take points of order in their normal place after that time, unless they refer directly to questions today.

Mr. Shore: On a point of order arising out of questions. My right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) asked the Prime Minister a direct question about the role of the Attorney-General in dealing with the Chapman Pincher memoirs——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to the House that before we start continuing Question Time through points of order, the points made must be something on which I can personally rule.

Mr. Shore: The Prime Minister replied to my right hon. Friend's question by saying that according to "Erskine May" the question fell within a security classification and, therefore, she was entitled not to reply to it. There is an entire list of precedents, a file of precedents, on which such claims can be made according to "Erskine May". I would be grateful, Mr. Speaker, if you would help the House by checking the file and reporting back to us whether the matter comes under the classification of security, under which the Prime Minister is entitled not to answer.

My second point of order arises from another reply from the Prime Minister. She said that her Government were "indivisible" and, therefore, she could not give any separate answer about the role of the Attorney-General. Surely it is a constitutional fact and an accepted principle of the constitution that the Attorney-General has a special position within the Government and gives advice quite separate from the collective decisions of Government? Therefore, he should not be incorporated in the collective views of Government. Surely that is correct.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not need any help. The rules regarding what is admissible, as the Prime Minister mentioned at Question Time, are set out on pages 342-43 of "Erskine May". That is public knowledge and the entire House knows about it. The Prime Minister's answer on the indivisibility of Government is not a matter for me. It is not a matter of order for the Chair.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not a fact that a Minister is entitled at any time to refuse to answer any question?

Mr. Robert Atkins: On a point of order relating to Question Time today, yesterday and the day before, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption.]* You asked for points of order relating to questions today, Mr. Speaker, but the matter also applies to questions yesterday and the day before. It has been alleged in some newspapers, and I am advised that it is correct, that matters raised in Question Time today, yesterday and the day before relate to matters happening in Australia at present which are sub judice in Australia. Those matters are being raised as a direct result of communications with the hon. Members for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) and with officials in the Leader of the Opposition's office. These matters are sub judice in Australia. Will the matter be allowed to continue to such an extent that anything happening in Australia to which the United Kingdom Government are a party will be raised on the Floor of the House, where disreputable remarks are being made about people who cannot defend themselves?

Mr. Speaker: I think that I dealt clearly with that question yesterday. I invite the hon. Gentleman to look carefully at *Hansard* and what I have said about the tendency in this place to name people who have no redress, under the cloak of parliamentary privilege. I am tied by the rules governing this House. I am not tied by any rules that govern any other Parliament.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. With characteristic courtesy the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) said that he might raise the subject of Sir Arthur Franks. My question elicited a rather positive answer from the Attorney-General on the subject. I am exceedingly careful how I use the Order Paper — *[Interruption.]* I defy any hon. Member to say that I have abused the Order Paper in naming individuals. In view of the important answer given by the Attorney-General, I look to you to confirm that my question was legitimate The Attorney-General would not have answered that he was considering the case unless there had been something to consider. May I have your confirmation that it was not an abuse of the Order Paper to name an individual, in view of the fact that it is an important matter? It appears that some people can brief authors but that others cannot.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that that arose from Question Time today, but since the hon. Gentleman has managed to ask his point of order, I shall answer it. He tabled a question which was passed by the Table Office as being in order, so he was entirely correct.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I have your assurance that the rules of order apply to everybody equally? You may have noticed that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is able to indulge in a great deal of sedentary noise. Would you try to persuade him to let some others of us get in as well?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The whole House knows that the rules of order apply to everyone equally.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Robert Atkins *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take Mr. Skinner first.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the comments that have been made during the past couple of days, and, more important, by you today about whether motions on the Order Paper are in order, may I remind you that some of us would like to see some stern action taken when Conservative Members attack people at GCHQ by calling them traitors——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That does not arise from Question Time today.

Sir Anthony Grant: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe that you told us yesterday that the whole question of early-day motions appearing on the Order Paper was to be considered by the Procedure Committee. Without suggesting for a moment that any hon. Member is out of order in the early-day motion that he or she has tabled, would it not bring the House into greater repute if, pending the deliberations of the Procedure Committee, we desisted from naming on the Order Paper individuals who cannot defend themselves?

Mr. Speaker: We have a heavy day before us and I invite the whole House to look carefully at what I said yesterday. I shall repeat it again today. The tendency to name individuals under the cloak of privilege must be treated with the greatest caution. I am tied by the rules on early-day motions as they are at present. Yesterday I mentioned that the Procedure Committee is minded to look at the matter, and I believe that it should certainly do so.

Mr. Alan Williams: Further to that point of order, and with a slightly different version of it, Mr. Speaker. I

understand that it is in order for the Prime Minister to make a reply to the effect that the matter is one concerning security, and that can be made as a political statement even if, under the terms of "Erskine May", it is not covered. Will you confirm that it is open to the Opposition to check the validity of her answer by formally tabling the same question as a written question at the Table Office? If it is a security question, the Table Office will refuse to accept that question, but if it is not a security question, although it has been blocked as a supplementary question today, will the Table Office accept it as a written question?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a hypothetical question. If a question is tabled, it will be screened as to whether there is a block upon it, in the usual way.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Hickmet *rose*——

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As I mentioned yesterday, this tendency to pursue Question Time through points of order is a bad habit. I said yesterday, and the House agreed, that we should stop it, and I hope that we shall.

Mr. Forth: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, you said that you were not prepared to take points of order today on what had happened the day before. You also said:

"I will take points of order only on matters that do not refer back to what happened yesterday."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1986; Vol. 106, c. 271.]

I ask for your guidance because it must be evident to all that, for two reasons, this must not be the case. The first is that colleagues are not always here when a matter arises in which they may have a role to play. Secondly, *Hansard* often gives guidance and clarification on something that may have been missed in the heat of the moment. Are you prepared to guide the House as to whether it is possible to "refer back" to what may be in *Hansard* dealing with a previous occasion, to seek clarification or guidance? Are you able to give the House this guidance?

Mr. Speaker: It is a question of the context in which these things are done. If it is a legitimate matter, that is one thing, but if it appears to be what I can only describe as part of a general excuse to seek to get things raised, it is a different matter. This House would be in chaos if the Chair allowed points of order to arise on matters that had arisen several days in the past. That has always been the rule.

Mr. Gow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I ask for your ruling on a specific matter. Have not you and your predecessors ruled consistently that an answer given by a Minister is not a matter for you, and that Ministers, not the Chair, are responsible for the content of their answers? Therefore, is it not the case that the point raised by the shadow Leader of the House, who sought to raise a point of order arising out of the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, was no point of order because answers given from the ministerial Dispatch Box are not a matter for you?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is entirely the case, but the hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know that a great many points of order are spurious, as many have been today.

Mr. Nicholls: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Reference has been made in a number of questions to the content of the Order Paper. You will have seen a number of motions in the names of Labour Members dealing with various security matters that seem to have attracted a great many names. When one puts in an early-day motion in these terms, in the names of many hon. Members, perhaps even Front Bench spokesmen, is it necessary for those people to have signed the paper, or is it sufficient for the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) to have a list of hon. Members who are prepared to help him in his muckraking efforts——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not know about things like that. The hon. Gentleman well knows the rules regarding the tabling of questions.

Mr. Heffer: You referred, Mr. Speaker, to "the tendency". Could you please explain to the House to which tendency you are referring?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think not the same one as the hon. Gentleman has in mind. Now we will have the statement.

Mr. Hickmet *rose*——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Points of order are taking up a great deal of time. I shall take these two points of order and then we must move on.

Mr. Hickmet: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You ruled some days ago that the proceedings in South Africa—Australia—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me help the hon. Gentleman. Mr. Hickmet.

Mr. Hickmet: You ruled, Mr. Speaker, some days ago that the proceedings in Australia were not sub judice. However, would you rule on this point: in a case to which the British Government are a party overseas, is it in order for Members of this honourable House to cross-examine Front Bench spokesmen on behalf of counsel who act for parties against whom the British Government are appearing? I refer in particular to the cross-examination carried out by the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon of the Prime Minister on behalf of counsel acting for Peter Wright in Australia.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a lawyer, as I understand it. He knows that this matter, as I ruled previously, is not sub judice under our rules. It may be sub judice under the rules of the Australian Parliament, but it is not sub judice under ours.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are confronted now with this very vexed issue of names being named outside this House. You have said that this is something that the Select Committee on Procedure might be minded to look into. May we ask you, Sir, as the guardian of privilege in this House, to put it before the Select Committee? Could you say whether you would be minded to give evidence? If you did so, would that evidence be published?

Mr. Speaker: Order. If I am invited by the Select Committee to give evidence, I shall certainly do so.

Mr. Michael Brown: Would it be helpful at this stage——

Mr. Speaker: No. We shall now take the statement of the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Teachers' Pay and Conditions

3.47 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about teachers' pay and conditions of service in England and Wales.

For more than two years now there have been protracted and unsatisfactory negotiations and—sadly—extensive disruption of children's education. To end that situation I announced in the House on 30 October that the Government would make an additional £600 million available over this year and next for a new pay structure. The structure should contain differentials to reflect the varying responsibilities of teachers and the need to recruit, retain and motivate teachers throughout the school system and at all stages of their careers. I made it clear that this generous Government support for such a pay structure would also depend on a clear definition of teachers' duties carrying through into contracts of employment.

There have been many long hours of negotiations since 30 October. So far, what has been achieved is a document which last Friday the local authorities by a majority vote and four of the six teacher unions agreed to put to their constituent bodies for consideration and ratification. Clearly opinion in the profession is divided. Many teachers concerned for the future of our school system have substantial reservations about the proposals in that document.

However, there has been some useful progress. There is now a clear definition of the teacher's job. Parents, local authorities, heads and teachers themselves all need this, so that there can be no doubt about what can be required of teachers within their contracts. The teachers' working year is to be fixed at 195 days, allowing five days beyond the pupil year. It is also agreed that teachers shall be available for work at the direction of the head teacher for 1,265 hours a year. That is a little less than the figure which the local authorities themselves took to the Coventry negotiations last July, but it is a figure which the Government judge sufficient, and which the Government would be willing to accept. There is progress too on teacher appraisal and yesterday I approved extra funding for development work in six local authorities. Lastly, it is now accepted by all that Burnham must go.

Last Friday's document also addresses complex issues about the ways in which the available teacher time should be deployed in schools. The best broad measure of staffing is the pupil-teacher ratio. That has fallen from 18·9 to 1 in 1979 to 17·6 to 1 this year. Our expenditure provision for 1987-88 and our plans for later years allow for a further fall. There are competing claims, between teaching classes, examination and assessment work, curriculum development, and the professional development and in-service training of teachers. My Department and the local authority associations have been examining those questions in some detail over recent years. I intend to undertake further consultation with local authorities and unions about those matters. But I should make it clear that future changes will have to be accommodated within our expenditure plans for education which the Government have already announced.

Progress has therefore been made in a number of areas, but I have also to tell the House plainly that Friday's document contains some features which the Government cannot accept. First, we cannot accept the excess costs of the proposals on pay. The phasing and distribution mean that the proposals cost an extra £15 million for the three months of January to March next year and another £70 million for the next financial year. The Government's offer, worth £600 million, is for 16·4 per cent. to be implemented in full by next October. That offer stands. It is very generous by any standard.

Secondly, I must leave the House in no doubt about the unacceptability of the proposed pay structure. We have not been given a sensible structure for the profession. Instead we have a reiteration of earlier ideas with higher figures and only minimal movement towards the Government's criteria. The Government want a pay structure for the teaching profession which will provide more incentive posts and there is considerable professional support for that view. Those posts will reward good classroom teaching and extra responsibility. They will also pay for skills in short supply and attract good teachers to demanding posts which might otherwise be difficult to fill—for example, in inner city schools. My proposals are based on 140,000 incentive posts in a profession of 400,000 teachers. Today there are 105,000 such posts. Friday's proposals would provide only 80,000. That would mean that 25,000 teachers who are now on the higher scales would not hold promoted posts come September. My aim is that half of the profession should hold promoted posts or be heads or deputies. Theirs is that only about one third should hold such posts. This is a huge gap and a fundamental point of principle. We must enhance the career prospects of good teachers and give management the flexibility it needs to improve the quality of education in our schools.

Lastly, there is the question of future negotiating machinery. All are agreed that Burnham must go. Friday's document would in effect perpetuate arrangements similar to those which have so signally failed in recent times. The Government hold to the view that for an interim period we need an advisory committee and I shall tomorrow introduce the Bill announced in the Queen's Speech to establish such a committee.

I have been and remain willing to see the local authorities and the unions about these matters. But I am not willing to allow this highly unsatisfactory situation to continue. Our children are entitled to better schooling and that has often been denied them over the past two years. The House, the public and all parents will understand that the Government must put our children first.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that, although we are in favour of reform of the Burnham machinery, we shall strongly oppose any legislation which removes bargaining rights? We welcome the fact that, despite all the press reports, there is no mention of imposition in his statement. But is he aware that we shall also strongly oppose any attempt to impose a settlement, either now or in the future? The nation wants decent pay for teachers, an improved education service and, above all, peace in the classroom.

The question that each hon. Member has to answer is whether these objectives are more likely to be secured by an agreement that has already been negotiated by employers and teachers, and that is supported by at least two thirds of the profession, or by an imposed settlement

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that will not only be accompanied by severe technical difficulties, but is also highly likely to lead to renewed disruption?

I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has at last recognised the substantial advantages and achievements represented by the deal. It establishes decent pay for classroom teachers, provides a clear definition of teachers' duties, lays down a minimum number of duty days, sets up a system of appraisal, establishes negotiating machinery that links together pay and conditions — the right hon. Gentleman did not mention that — and defines, for the first time, a maximum class size.

I accept that there are still differences between the Secretary of State's position and the agreement, particularly over structure and costs. Indeed, what I heard the right hon. Gentleman say about both of those matters was somewhat exaggerated. Is he really telling the House that those differences are insurmountable — *[Interruption.]* He said that they were huge. Did not the employers make it abundantly clear last night to the Secretary of State that they are prepared to discuss the differences in a flexible and responsible manner? So far, the Secretary of State's handling of the dispute has been inept: his ham-fisted intervention at Nottingham, and his unfortunate comment to the House on 13 November about the talks being a fiasco just 36 hours before there was a settlement.

Is the Secretary of State aware that he still has a chance to redeem his reputation if he talks seriously and constructively to the employers and teachers, and reaches an agreement with them? Will he confirm that he intends to do that? Parents will not forgive him or his Government if he fails to grasp this opportunity for lasting peace in our schools.

Mr. Baker: When, about six weeks ago, I did not make the Government's position clear, the hon. Gentleman accused me of dithering, and when I made the Government's position clear, he accused me of being ham-fisted and inept. On 30 October I set out the Government's position, and the framework against which an agreement that would have been acceptable to the Government could have been reached. The document that the hon. Gentleman flourished a few moments ago is an agreement to submit the proposals to the members of the unions. That process is now under way, and may well run for some weeks into December.

Let there be no doubt that there are real worries within the unions. So far, I have seen the Secondary Heads Association and I know of its anxieties on the question of structure. On Monday its members told me that they were very worried about the structure. The Professional Association of Teachers has written to me, and I shall be seeing that association and the National Association of Headteachers again. Yet again the hon. Gentleman has tried to pass off as agreement a situation characterised by serious disagreement, but yet again he has failed.

As I pointed out in my statement, I am certainly willing to hear further representations. Councillor Pearman came to see me last night, and we discussed principally the cost and the structure. The structure is not a minor point, as the hon. Gentleman might like to think. It is the structure to be laid down for the teaching profession for, in effect, the rest of this century. Perhaps I can cite an example. A large comprehensive school that has 75 or 80 teachers may commonly have about 50 of them in some sort of incentive or promotion posts. The proposal that Councillor Pearman confirmed to me last night would be to reduce the number of posts in such a school to 15 to 20. One cannot run a large secondary school on that basis as it does not provide incentives for good teachers.

I cannot accept this flat-earth pay structure. There are insufficient incentive posts and hopelessly inadequate differentials, which means that heads will have a reduced ability to manage their schools. I am prepared to listen, but I want to hear less pretence about marginal differences and more about real movements away from what I regard as an entirely mistaken and misconceived pay and career structure for the teaching profession.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I ask my right hon. Friend to confirm the differences between the Nottingham pay scales and his. I congratulate him on the abolition of the Burnham committee and ask him to reject the unfounded but predictable criticism of Opposition Members. Parents will respect what is being done and will acknowledge that the pay on the table for teachers represents a good deal for the profession, for schools and for children.

Mr. Baker: The amount of money available is the largest that has ever been offered to teachers in a pay deal. About £600 million is available and it is a grave disappointment that the negotiators at Nottingham and London took that sum, added to it and spread it in a way which intensifies the flat-earth approach of their pay structure. It would mean that certain teachers at the lower end of the scales would receive substantial increases of 40, 50, and 60 per cent., which would mean wage increases of £40, £50, £60 and, in some instances, £70 a week. These are substantial increases.

I can demonstrate the difference between us most significantly by taking as an example a good honours graduate of 22 years of age who wants to become a teacher. Under the local authorities' proposals, he would receive only £1 extra, but under my proposals he would receive another £13 a week. If he did well in the profession, however, at the age of 28, for example, he would be earning £12,700 a year under the Government's proposals, but £20 a week less than that annual sum would produce under the local authorities' proposals. That is because the local authorities' proposals do not recognise and reward good, able and energetic teachers.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Does the Secretary of State genuinely feel that this negation of the negotiation procedure will bring long-lasting peace to the classroom? Will he accept that the partnership on which he is so keen does not involve either party getting all that it wants? Given the substantial shift in the teachers' position, would it not become the right hon. Gentleman to be more magnanimous than he is? Will he accept that pupil-teacher ratios are no longer the important criteria and that class sizes are?

Mr. Baker: There can be no justification for disruption. The amount of money that the Government have made available is uniquely generous and I hope very much that there will be no disruption. Unfortunately, it is not clear, even if the Government were to accept the proposal, that

there would not be disruption. The National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers speaks of the schools being made a battlefield.

I was depressed when I read an article that appeared in *Education* last week. I refer to the reported remarks of Mrs. Christine Keats, who is the local secretary in Birmingham of the NAS/UWT. She said on behalf of her union that it would work strictly to the rule book and cause as much disruption as possible. She added:

"We are well known for our ability to find ways of making life difficult for LEAs and that is what we will do if either deal goes through."

I find that attitude deplorable and disgraceful.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): When my right hon. Friend encounters that mood among the leaders of teachers' unions, does he remind them sometimes that the primary purpose of the school system, for which ratepayers and taxpayers pay, is to provide children with the opportunity of a good education, and that all teachers employed in our schools have an equal duty to provide that service?

Mr. Baker: Our children deserve an uninterrupted education, and over the past two years teachers, many of them with heavy hearts, as I recognise, have engaged in disruption. I hope that this will not occur again. As I have said, there has been progress, and the definition of teachers' duties is an example of that. I must re-emphasise that we must use this opportunity to ensure that there is a proper pay structure with proper incentives and rewards for good classroom teaching.

Mr. Jack Dormand (Easington): Does the Secretary of State appreciate just how far the teachers have moved in coming to this agreement, given their long, strongly held and properly held views? I have to tell the right hon. Gentleman, in spite of what he has said, that his proposals —this does not apply only to the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers — are a recipe for further disruption in the schools. The right hon. Gentleman makes great play of the fact that the Government are offering the biggest increase that there has ever been, but I remind him that the proportion is not as great as that which was offered and readily agreed under the Houghton report. Although the right hon. Gentleman talks, and rightly so, about the quality of teaching and the reward for teachers, will he tell the House how he intends to implement the assessment of teachers? Whether the assessment is of head teachers, local government inspectors or HMIs, it is an exceedingly difficult task, and nothing like as easy as he is trying to make out. He had better comment on that.

Mr. Baker: In our discussions with local education authorities and the unions we have agreed that there will be six pilot projects, which I agreed to fund yesterday. I hope that they will get under way. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there is not one set method of appraisal of teachers. I recognise that there are different methods.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the Houghton report. When the Conservative Government took office in 1979, teachers' pay under the Labour Government had fallen in real terms by 13 per cent. below the levels of the Houghton award. That is what we inherited. If my proposal goes through, and taking inflation at 3·5 per cent. per annum, by October 1987 teachers' pay will, on average, be 10 per cent. higher in real terms than it was in 1974.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will exercise the influence that he has in his party and in the country to ensure that there will not be disruption. I do not believe that parents will forgive anyone who says that there should be disruption. There is no justification for it. We have provided an extra £600 million for the resolution of this dispute, and that sum was not on the table a year ago.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Does my right hon. Friend accept that any pay dispute is capable of settlement if we fall into the trap of believing that another few tens of millions of pounds do not matter? Does he agree that it is crucial that we arrive at a structure for the profession that will stand the test of time and will be inviting to entrants into a long-term career in teaching, and that it is worth struggling for that?

Mr. Baker: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. We are dealing with the fundamental issues of the definition of a teacher's job and the structure of the profession and not only the resolution of a pay dispute for the rest of this year and next year. I must emphasise how important that is. It will condition the attitudes of those who want to enter the profession. We must make the profession attractive to young people by ensuring that they can obtain proper rewards and differentials for good classroom teaching and for teaching subjects for which there is a shortage of teachers, and not only through promotion.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if the leaders of the teachers' unions are genuinely interested in increasing the professional standing of their members, they should support an incentive-based pay structure?

Mr. Baker: I agree entirely. I do not see how many schools can be operated without such a structure. I shall give my hon. Friend one example. Under the ACAS document, deputies of smaller primary schools with an average of about 75 pupils would have a salary of £15,300, just £242 more than the maximum salary on the basic scale. If the differential is squashed to that extent, why should anyone want to take on the extra responsibility for such a small reward? No one would want to do so.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Before the Secretary of State proceeds with the line of action he has just outlined, will he bear in mind that a loss of bargaining rights and an imposed settlement failed to work at GCHQ and caused a great deal of bitterness? Unless he changes his mind now, his policy will create even more bitterness in the schools and create precisely the sort of disruption he says he is anxious to avoid.

Mr. Baker: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not underestimate the degree of professional support one has for an incentive-based system. According to the advice that is available to me, to central Government and local government, there is a great deal of support for an incentive-based system. Since I announced the framework on 30 October, the unions and the Labour-led local authority employers have not really moved towards that structure in any significant way. As I said, I am prepared to listen to them if they still wish to talk.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Will the Secretary of State say what he intends to do about the

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differences he has with the teachers and local authorities? Will he continue to exhort them to change their mind? Will he negotiate a settlement with them, or will he impose it?

Mr. Baker: There is obviously an indication on structure from the Secondary Heads Association, which is the only union I have seen so far. We will have to see what the other unions say.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Will my right hon. Friend clarify a point he made during his statement when he referred to an interim advisory committee? Clearly we are all anxious to move forward from this debacle. Am I right in thinking that my right hon. Friend's proposal is to lay a Bill before the House to abolish Burnham and then immediately to institute an interim committee which could be the body to find a way out of this impasse? Would it be that body which had that task?

Mr. Baker: I do not envisage that. The Bill will repeal the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965 and set up an interim advisory committee — I stress interim advisory committee — which will make recommendations to me on the pay and conditions of teachers which I shall then discuss with the unions and local authorities. I shall bring forward the recommendations to the House in statutory instruments. That is rather similar to my powers under the existing Act in that I have parliamentary powers to lay down the levels at which teachers should be paid and at which local authorities have to pay them. Under the Act there is no particular parliamentary procedure to do that; the orders are just announced. I would not envisage the differences on structure being addressed to the interim advisory committee. I hope that we can find a way through that before the committee is appointed and begins its work.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Will the Minister accept that all Opposition Members agree with him that our children deserve an uninterrupted education? However, if he had sat down and planned disruption, he could not have done it more brilliantly than the statement he has just made. Will he further accept that if he persists in the attitude he has shown in his statement there is not the slightest doubt that the teachers will react? They have behind them the attitude of the Scottish teachers who, by an 84 per cent. majority, have rejected the offer. Therefore, the teaching profession in Scotland, England and Wales is now unified against what the Government are doing to the teaching service.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman cannot say that the teaching profession is unified on this matter in England or Scotland.

Mr. Flannery: The right hon. Gentleman knows what I mean.

Mr. Baker: If words have any precision and meaning — I sometimes wonder whether they do for the hon. Gentleman — one cannot possibly describe as a unified position a draft agreement which is signed by only four unions; and subsequently they are even expressing reservations about parts of the draft agreement. I deplore the extravagant phraseology and language used by the hon. Gentleman in talking about disruption and trouble in the schools. I emphasise that there would be no justification for that whatsoever. A substantial sum of money has been provided for a teachers' pay settlement in the immediate future. It is a much larger sum than has ever been provided in the past. Many working parents, who are not likely to see the sort of increases which are available under the proposals, will resent it if teachers walk out on their classes.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I welcome the flexibility shown by my right hon. Friend in being prepared to go on talking. That is very important. In my experience, unless there are adequate differentials, a large number of important jobs in urban areas and many other deprived areas in every school in the country will not be filled because teachers will not have the incentive to undertake what can often be very difficult work in problem areas. Has my right hon. Friend observed that in the conditions he is considering today — the condition requiring assistant teachers to undertake such extra duties as head teachers may require — has been deleted from the agreement? Can he think of any other institutions which heads are required to run without that sort of back-up?

Mr. Baker: On the latter point, teachers will be available for work under the direction of the head for 1,265 hours each year, which is 32½ hours per week. There will be the usual requirements of a profession. It is accepted by the unions that teachers often work longer hours; it is a great tradition of the profession.

On the first point, I draw considerable support from my hon. Friend's experience as a teacher. I agree entirely with what he says. It would be difficult to attract into the profession the calibre of people we want in order to improve the quality of education in our country, especially in our towns and cities, unless there were adequate differentials and awards. That is the nub of the difference between us.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The Secretary of State has talked about his willingness to listen and be flexible. Are we to conclude from that that his statement this afternoon is not his final word on this pay settlement?

Mr. Baker: Ever since I have held this post I have been asked to clarify the position of the Government and to say what would be my position. I have done so and I have been attacked for doing so. I certainly do not look upon the draft document which came out on Friday as the last word from the employers. I must emphasise again that the Government are convinced that we need a pay structure which has a large number of differentials, more than the two on offer from the unions and employers of £750 and £2,000. I have recommended five — from £900 up to £4,800. There must be real incentives which will encourage people to take on added responsibility and incentives to reward the good classroom teacher.

Mr. Peter Lilley (St. Albans): Does my right hon. Friend recall that last week, when he met 350 people comprising teachers, parents and governors from nearly every school in my constituency, all the teachers, including several heads and deputy heads, supported my right hon. Friend's proposals and urged him to reject the ACAS proposal? Did he get the impression that many of the trade unions are out of touch with many of their members?

Mr. Baker: I drew considerable comfort from the meeting I addressed in my hon. Friend's constituency. It was a large meeting of teachers. My hon. Friend reports

quite correctly that everyone who spoke supported the Government's proposals and condemned the unions' proposals.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): I should say to the Secretary of State that Opposition Members have been trying to re-establish peace in the classroom since the dispute began. It has not been helped by the intransigence of his predecessor or an imposed settlement from him. Will he clarify concisely that he will not impose a settlement but will reopen negotiations? As a former teacher, may I ask him, in the interests of peace in the classroom, to stop referring to "good" classroom teachers? We do not hear about "good" policemen when police settlements are discussed, so let us stop that kind of divisive talk from the Government.

Mr. Baker: The comments of the hon. Gentleman clearly demonstrate the great gulf betwen the two philosophical approaches.

On the question of imposing a settlement, I have laid down the Government's preconditions. As yet, those preconditions have not been met. There is a £85 million overshoot and a pay and career structure at odds with the Government's wishes for more incentive posts. As I have said, my door remains open, but there is a large gulf of principle of philosophy on the shape of the structure. Serious proposals would entail a fundamental shift in the shape of the structure on behalf of the Labour employers and the unions.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Is not the use of the word "employer" a misnomer in these discussions? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the employers to whom he refers are almost entirely party politicians and almost entirely working hand-in-glove with the trade unions? Indeed, many of them share the views of the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice). If my right hon. Friend accepts that proposition, does he agree that the relationship between the funding of education by local authorities and central Government now bears little relationship to the words which are used to describe it? It is about time that a paper was presented to explain the costs and procedures that might be involved if teachers' salaries were transferred from local authority to central Government responsibility.

Mr. Baker: I certainly have no proposals to do that. During the negotiations the Conservative employers eventually walked out because they felt they were not party——

Mr. Radice: They did not walk out.

Mr. Baker: They walked out at one stage, then returned, and walked out again. However, although they were representing the employers' interests, they did not feel that they were part and parcel of the process. That demonstrates the totally unsatisfactory nature of the existing Burnham arrangements. They are utterly unsatisfactory.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Secretary of State agree that one of the characteristics of this Government during the past seven years has been their claim of non-intervention in industrial matters? Even as late as last night one of the right hon. Gentleman's ministerial colleagues claimed that, even where the Government have a direct interest in the provision of appliances and limbs for people without legs or arms, they cannot get involved in a dispute and the Secretary of State and his colleagues have said roughly the same thing on many other occasions. Does he not think that teachers may think that they are being picked out for special treatment at a time when most of the people involved in the dispute have, at arm's length from the Secretary of State, almost managed to get the ink dry on a settlement? Does that not suggest to the teachers that the Government are trying not to find an agreement but to stir up trouble?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman does not appreciate the position. As the representative of the taxpayer in all this, I have to find a very large sum of money for negotiations to which I am not party. I am then presented with the bill and told to sign for it. That is an absurd procedure. There was an arrangement two years ago whereby my predecessor had a direct involvement, but that accord was torn up and now I am not a party to the agreement. That shows the fantasy and unreality of the present negotiations. It is absurd of the hon. Gentleman to claim that we are interfering. We are involved as we have to provide a large part of the settlement money.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Has my right hon. Friend noted an authoritative academic study that finds that the average British school leaver in the lower half of the ability range is two years behind his German counterpart in mathematical attainment? Can he confirm that last year only 45 per cent. of mathematics lessons in schools at secondary level were taught by teachers with a main qualification in that subject and that the loss of mathematics teachers to the profession in that year rose to 10 per cent.? Does he accept that the majority of people will deplore the persistent failure of the Burnham negotiators adequately to respond to the crisis in mathematics teaching and will support him in altering the arrangements so that we are able to tackle problems effectively?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend has made a good and important point. There is a serious shortage of mathematics and physics teachers and a less serious shortage of craft, design and technology teachers. Earlier this week I was told by Professor Black, the chairman of the Association of Science Education, that we need 2,500 extra physics teachers. How will we get those teachers? We will get them by offering good graduates the prospect of a career with sufficient incentives. I have proposed five incentive allowances that can be used to attract and retain the people with skills that are in short supply and heavy demand such as mathematics. We must recognise the operation of the market. If we do not, we shall deny children the expert tuition to which they are entitled. I thoroughly support my hon. Friend's comments.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I have sympathy with the Secretary of State's plight, and as a parent I believe that there is an overwhelming need to restore equilibrium in the classrooms, but what does the Secretary of State think that his statement today will achieve? What steps will he now take to bring about an agreement that will bring about the equilibrium?

Mr. Baker: I have already contributed a great deal to the resolution of the settlement, as I have provided some £600 million over the rest of the year and for next year. I have suggested a pay structure that will improve the

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quality of education in our classrooms. The unions and Labour-led local authorities have not moved to that position at all. They have increased the money and spread it in a way that is not in the long-term interests of the teaching profession.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many teachers are not at all happy with the draft employers' agreement and want genuine promotion prospects? They feel that the agreement is too loaded against new entrants and does not encourage true, genuine flexibility and differentials. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we want to see quality through appraisal rewarding the best teachers? My right hon. Friend's decisions so far are dead on to help our children.

Mr. Baker: That is true. Of course, the unions have agreed to the concept of appraisal. That is why they have agreed, together with the local education authorities, to have six pilot projects. There must be an acceptance that there should be teacher appraisal. The profession has not had appraisal so far and it would provide a basis for distinguishing those who should get better rewards as good teachers in the classroom. I agree that many teachers have already expressed strong support irrespective of their union membership for the proposals that I have put forward.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the simple ambition is to restore the quality of teaching in our schools by rewarding teachers who teach well and that that ambition is supported by parents? That ambition is also clearly supported by the majority of teachers, as was evidenced by last week's Gallup poll.

Mr. Baker: There is a great deal of support for the Government's proposal. I noticed a television poll a fortnight ago which revealed that 60 per cent. of those who were asked said that the Government's offer was generous. Twelve per cent. said that it was too generous. Therefore, 72 per cent. of the poll said that the offer was either generous or too generous. Only 23 per cent. thought that we were not generous enough. That reflects the feeling in the country. Many parents, members of the public and grandparents will be surprised that, with all the money being provided by the Government, the unions and local authority employers cannot reach an agreement.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My right hon. Friend may well be aware of the fact that children were told not to turn up at a school in south London today until 12.15 pm because of a teachers' meeting. It seemed that it was impossible to hold the teachers' meeting outside school hours. Would my right hon. Friend, when considering the new contract, take account of the fact that some local education authorities are unable or unwilling — because they are dominated by teacher unions — to enforce proper contracts? Therefore, will he give power over the contracts to school governors through headmasters?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend records what is unfortunately only all too common in schools in several parts of London today, where there is intermittent disruption. The House should be under no illusion that disruption is not taking place in schools. Indeed, it certainly is happening in many ILEA schools. On my hon. Friend's point about enforceability, both the ACAS document of last Friday and the Government proposals envisage that definitions of teachers' jobs should be incorporated in proper contracts. My hon. Friend, however, goes further than that. Yesterday Councillor Pearman, the leader of the local authority side, told me that he would expect each LEA to implement, honour and seek to secure the observance of these contracts.

Mr. Radice: Will the Secretary of State clarify whether the Bill that he is to introduce tomorrow will enable him to impose a settlement?

Mr. Baker: The Bill that I will introduce tomorrow will, first, repeal the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965. It will end the powers that I have to issue parliamentary orders requiring local authorities to pay teachers at a certain level. It will also set up an interim advisory committee and give me renewed powers, to issue regulations. Following the recommendations of the intermediary advisory committee, and discussions of the recommendations with the unions and local authority employers, there would have to be powers similar to those that I have now, to issue regulations requiring local authorities——

Mr. Radice: What powers does the right hon. Gentleman have now?

Mr. Baker: I am always anxious to increase the hon. Gentleman's knowledge, so I just fleshed out the full powers that I shall have.

Business of the House

4.30 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week.

MONDAY 1 DECEMBER — Until about seven o'clock Second Reading of the Advance Petroleum Revenue Tax Bill followed by Second Reading of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Bill.

Afterwards there will be a debate on a Government motion to take note of EC documents on emergency measures in the dairy sector. Details of the documents concerned will be given in the *Official Report*.

TUESDAY 2 DECEMBER—Opposition day (2nd Allotted Day), until about seven o'clock there will be a debate entitled "The Scandal of Insider Dealing". Afterwards there will be a debate entitled "The Misery of Fuel Poverty". Both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

There will be a debate on EC documents relating to the multi-fibre arrangement, new protocol and bilateral agreements. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the House of Commons Disqualification Act.

Motion on the European Assembly elections Regulations.

WEDNESDAY 3 DECEMBER — Opposition day (3rd Allotted Day). Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate on the need for a Select Committee of Privy Councillors to oversee the security services. Afterwards there will be a debate on defence. Both debates will arise on motions in the names of the Leaders of the Liberal and Social Democratic parties.

Afterwards there will be a debate on an EC document relating to research and technological development. details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 4 DECEMBER — Remaining stages of the Advance Petroleum Revenue Tax Bill.

Motions on the Appropriation (No. 3) (Northern Ireland) Order and the Health and personal Social Services and Public Health (Northern Ireland) Order.

FRIDAY 5 DECEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 8 DECEMBER — Second Reading of the Education Bill.

[Debate on Monday 1 December

Relevant European Documents:

(a) 9161/86 Emergency measures in Milk Sector

(b) Unnumbered Emergency measures in Milk Sector

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee:

(a) HC 21-xxvii (1985-86), para. 19

(b) HC 22-i (1986-97), para. 1

Debate on Tuesday 2 December

Relevant European Documents:

(c) 9809/86

Multi-Fibre Arrangement: Extension of protocol

(d) Unnumbered

Multi-Fibre Arrangement: Bilateral Agreements.

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee:

(c) HC 22-ii (1986-87), para. 5

(d) HC 22-ii (1986-87), para. 11

Debate on Wednesday 3 December

Relevant European Document:

(e) 8764/86 Community Research and Development

Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee (e) HC 21-xxviii (1985-86), para. 5]

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his statement.

Does he accept that yesterday's announcement of 1,500 redundancies at Scott Lithgow is a devastating blow to the people of the lower Clyde and underlines the urgent need for support for the Scottish economy, initiatives to deal with the effects of the reduction in the North sea oil industry and action on the long-term decline in the shipbuilding sector which has been accelerated by the Government's policy of malign neglect? In view of the tragic results for workers losing their livelihood in an area where male unemployment is already more than 25 per cent., does the right hon. Gentleman agree that there is a strong case for the Government to provide time for a debate very soon on this and related issues?

It has become apparent that the Government are injecting £100 million of taxpayers' money to assist the privatisation of Rolls-Royce 1971. This follows the writing off in 1985 of £372 million of losses since the company's collapse as a private operation in 1971. When will the House be able to debate this further attempt by the Government to use public resources to promote the selling off of public assets?

The Government have imposed a £1·3 million cut on the Sports Council budget although the council requires extra help for schemes specifically related to work in deprived areas. Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange time for a debate as soon as possible so that the Government can answer for their mean and entirely negative policy towards the Sports Council?

Finally, there is to be a debate next Wednesday evening on research and technological development. May I remind the Leader of the House of my question on 30 October asking that time be given to debate the widely supported idea of an office of technology assessment for Members of the House of Commons? On that occasion, the right hon. Gentleman said that he would examine the possibility of a debate. Has he done so, and what is the result?

Mr. Biffen: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for putting those four points. I shall take them in the order presented.

I am sure that the whole House is united in appreciating the difficulties arising from the proposed redundancies at Scott Lithgow. I note the request for a debate on that and related matters, covering heavy engineering generally and in Scotland. Perhaps that could be looked at through the usual channels.

I assure the right hon. Gentleman that our approach to the privatisation of Rolls-Royce will be characterised by the same strong sense of fiscal rectitude and general imagination—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman must not get too emotional about these things. One of the Government's striking successes has been our record on privatisation and I have no reason to suppose that it will not be sustained in respect of Rolls-Royce. Meanwhile, I note the right hon. Gentleman's interest in giving the topic wider publicity through a debate in the House and I will take account of that.

I understand that the Sports Council was informed some time ago of the amount that would be available so

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that the figure could be taken into account in the council's budget. I cannot offer the prospect of an early debate, but we can look at the subject through the usual channels.

I have taken an interest in the facilities available for the House in technological terms and it would be appropriate for me to tell the right hon. Gentleman that the matter that he has raised was recently considered by the House of Commons Commission. I have no plans for a debate on the subject.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it has always been a pleasure on Thursdays for the House to put questions to my right hon. Friend or his predecessors about almost any subject under the sun which could not be raised in the ordinary way? Indeed, it used to be referred to as "Back Benchers' Playtime". There is now another period occurring after questions, which might be called "Private Eye Time" when spurious points of order go on and on and people outside are maligned by hon. Members who would not dare to make the same comments outside the doors of this Chamber. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is intolerable, and may I suggest to him — you, Mr. Speaker, may listen in, of course — that it might be a good idea to allow just one point of order from each side on any subject after questions and take the rest at 10 o'clock at night? If my right hon. Friend can think of any better way to deal with the problem, perhaps he will tell us, as we need to do something about this problem.

Mr. Biffen: I thank my hon. Friend for his good-natured observations. He raises a very serious point. How we conduct ourselves in the House is a matter for the House itself, in the light of recommendations and guidance proffered by the Procedure Committee. I tend to be traditionalist and conservative in all these matters when innovations are proposed, but, looking back over the years, I believe that continence is essential if we are to maintain our traditional procedures. *[Interruption.]* I deflect my eyes from looking at the Opposition Front Bench to determine who are the more incontinent. The number of oral questions has been restricted and formalised and the 10-minute limit on speeches is increasingly accepted. In all these matters, when the House judges that there is abuse it will find a remedy. I hope that we shall all bear that in mind.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke on Trent, South): That may well have been a good-natured observation by the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Sir K. Lewis), but it is nonsense because it would limit the rights of Back Benchers and would be unacceptable. It is always a pleasure to put a point to the Leader of the House, but he has an easy wicket and he is not giving substantive replies. I should like to ask one simple question. The Prime Minister has offered countless excuses for not replying to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition about why the Australian case is continuing. May we take it for granted that the moment the case is concluded one way or another, the Prime Minister will make a full, frank and comprehensive major statement in the House answering all the points made by my right hon. Friend?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman must put that question at the appropriate moment. His attitude of mind demonstrates that he would not regard any answer as comprehensive and conclusive.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Bearing in mind the motion about Privy Councillors, which is due to be debated next week, and that there was a motion down for a Select Committee to investigate the issues raised by the Warnock report some two years ago — which had the substantial support of over 100 hon. Members — will my right hon. Friend consider after the public consultation process and in the light of the recent reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) the remits of the public consultation that will take place under the proposed consultation paper that will be referred to a Select Committee next year. Such a Select Committee was appointed in Australia.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has asked me to take a view as soon as the current consultations have concluded. It would be extremely uncharitable of me to say that I would not take a view, because, of course, I shall.

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): Will the Leader of the House invite the Chancellor of the Exchequer to come to the House next week, if not before then, to clarify misleading statements that he made in his autumn statement, namely that in the coming year there will be an increase of about £450 million in housing investment for local authorities? Within a day or so of that misleading statement, a reduction was announced by the Secretary of State for the Environment. In real terms, that reduction is 11 per cent. across the country, and my own authority in the hard-pressed housing area of Brent in north-west London has had a reduction of 18 per cent. in real terms. That is a loss of about £40 million in 1987 compared to expenditure in the current year. How can it be true that £450 million extra is being placed in the hands of local authorities next year? Was that not totally misleading and should not the Chancellor come to the House to explain it?

Mr. Biffen: I repudiate at once the charge that that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer would utter misleading statements. However, I shall refer to him the right hon. Gentleman's points.

Sir Ian Percival (Southport): My right hon. Friend will no doubt have observed that since he last commented on early-day motion 35, the number of signatories has gone up from 120 to 162.

[That this House congratulates and thanks all those whose efforts contributed to the prevention of the hideous crime planned, executed and so nearly effected by Nezar Hindawi, and to his conviction; recognises the existence of international gangs who are prepared to commit mass murder in pursuit of their objectives and that the maximum penalty permitted by law of life imprisonment does not appear to be a sufficient deterrent; believes that fresh consideration should be given to extending the death penalty, now limited to crimes of treason and piracy; and asks the Leader of the House to give time for these matters to be debated.]

May I draw to his attention the fact that of those signatories at least 12 are hon. Members who voted against the death penalty on the first vote on 13 July 1983? That shows that this may not be such a closed shop as some

people would like to think. I point out to my right hon. Friend, first, the number of hon. Members who have signed; secondly, that those hon. Members represent constituents all over Great Britain; thirdly, that they are of all seniorities and ages; and, fourthly, that they are of all kinds. Does he not accept that that combination of factors amounts to a substantial case for the allocation of time for debate?

Mr. Biffen: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for updating the statistics of this proposition. Later this afternoon we shall have the Second Reading of the Criminal Justice Bill. I hope that he will consider how that might be used to provide the debate that he seeks.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Following your earlier remarks, Mr. Speaker, will the Leader of the House speak to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure with a view to getting an early report on the use of the Order Paper for early-day motions? Is it not extraordinary that an hon. Member can take a piece of paper, write on it suspicions that Lord Rothschild was a Soviet spy and the fifth man, and can hand it in with allegations that he would not dare to make outside this House?

Mr. Biffen: I must remind my hon. Friend that his remarks apply equally to words used in debate. I understand his point and have a lively sympathy for it. The terms that established the Select Committee on Procedure allow it to carry out its work without any initiation from me, but I shall certainly draw to the Chairman's attention the point that my hon. Friend makes.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): I should like to ask the Leader of the House about the rather strange procedures governing the Channel Tunnel Bill, which is due to be considered in Standing Committee from next Tuesday, before the special report by the Select Committee has been submitted to the House and considered by hon. Members. Is it not extraordinary that a Standing Committee should be asked to consider a Bill without hon. Members first having had an opportunity to consider a full report from the Select Committee? Will the Leader of the House agree to defer the sitting of the Standing Committee by at least a week to enable hon. Members to see this report and comment upon it?

Mr. Biffen: I shall look into the hon. Gentleman's point, but I think that the report is to be published tomorrow.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): No doubt my right hon. Friend will be aware of the serious and increasing anxiety in the House about the possible connection between a court case now taking place in Australia and possible communications between people involved in that case and hon. Members. I am sure that my right hon. Friend shares that anxiety, but does he share it sufficiently to allow time in the near future for the House to give the fullest possible consideration to the effects that that may have on the standing of this House and of the possible abuse of its procedures in cases where legal proceedings taking place in another country may somehow be transmitted into the House, thus abusing the sub judice rule in that country or here?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes his point most delicately and without any offensive naming of names. I shall certainly look at the point that he raises, because I realise that it is causing concern.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens South): The Leader of the House will know that about a fortnight ago I asked him a question about prisons and imprisonment. Bearing in mind that prisons for females may be full and that women are being held in police stations either after remand in custody or, indeed, after sentencing, and that we are about to debate the Criminal Justice Bill which proposes to increase sentences passed by the courts, does he not agree that time should be found between now and Christmas for the sensitive subject of prisons and imprisonment to be debated?

Mr. Biffen: I understand the importance of the hon. Gentleman's point. Equally, I am aware of the pressure on the time of the House between now and Christmas. I admire the ingenuity of the hon. Gentleman who knows perfectly well that he can make a speech on the matters he mentions later this afternoon.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I am looking forward, if that is the right term, to next Wednesday's debate initiated by the alliance on its proposal to set up a Select Committee on security. Am I right in thinking that my right hon. Friend will reply to that debate? I am sorry that he shakes his head, because I was going to suggest that if he did take part he could point out to the leader of the SDP that the whole essence of having a secret service is to keep it secret.

Mr. Biffen: I have no authority over those who are chosen to take the lead parts in debates and for that reason I cannot answer the first part of my hon. Friend's question. In his second point, he neatly made in a sentence a devastating rebuttal of what I suspect will be the essence of the alliance attack, and I congratulate him on doing that.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): We now know that President Reagan supplied arms to Iran in order to finance the Contras, yet the Prime Minister still chooses selectively to condemn state terrorism. In the light of that, will the Leader of the House now reconsider his reply to me at this time last week, about the secret counter-insurgency conference that took place in London earlier this month? The Ministry of Defence has now confirmed that the second-in-command of 2 Para attended and spoke at the conference. The conference was called to discuss terrorist activities against the Governments of Nicaragua, Angola and Mozambique. Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Defence to come to the Dispatch Box to make a statement?

Mr. Biffen: Of course I well recall the point that the hon. Gentleman raised and I will most certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): In his consideration of the proceedings of the House and the business for next week, will my right hon. Friend read carefully the question put to the Prime Minister by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) concerning security? That question makes suggestions that could, if implemented, save the Government a great deal

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of embarrassment and may in the long term save a great deal of parliamentary time-wasting, as happened with Westland.

Mr. Biffen: I will of course draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. He may have an opportunity to elaborate that argument in Wednesday's debate.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Has the Leader of the House had the opportunity to read the 11th annual report of the European regional development fund which was published in October 1986? Page 108 shows that in the distribution of the regional fund project throughout the United Kingdom, the north of England has the seventh lowest percentage allocation out of the nine regions, one third of what the highest region receives and a half of what it would get if the fund was divided evenly. Yet the north has consistently had the highest level of unemployment in Great Britain, second only to Northern Ireland. Is there not something tragically wrong with that allocation?

As the recent publication "Inequalities of Health in the North" shows quite clearly the relationship between bad health and high unemployment, will the Leader of the House arrange for an urgent statement by the appropriate Minister?

Mr. Biffen: The answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's linked question is no; the answer to the second is that I conclude from the statistics that he mentioned that it is very difficult to establish any satisfactory relationship between public expenditure and employment creation. With regard to his third point, I will draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Is my right hon. Friend aware that today is the first anniversary of the debate on the Anglo-Irish agreement? Since that agreement has not achieved any of its three objectives of peace, reconciliation and stability, and since there is political stalemate in the Province, which must be harmful in the long term, will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that time will be found for the House to debate the success or otherwise of the agreement?

Mr. Biffen: I will, of course, bear in mind my hon. Friend's request. I must observe that there is very little available time for general debate between now and Christmas. Northern Ireland business does feature this week. Although it is not drawn as widely as my hon. Friend may wish, I am sure that he can make some of his points then.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May I draw the attention of the right hon. Gentleman to an aspect of security which concerns the people of Leicestershire but has not been mentioned in this House? I refer to the Government's persistent refusal not to assure us that when nuclear convoys — vehicles carrying nuclear weapons — pass through the county, prior warning will be given to the emergency services. As there is such a convoy passing through Leicestershire at this moment, and staying overnight either in or near the county, may we have an immediate statement — *[Interruption.]* This matter is perhaps regarded with humour by others, but certainly not by Opposition Members.

Mr. Biffen: I will, of course, consider the point that the hon. and learned Gentleman makes, but I am sure that Leicester is no more exposed in this matter than the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Does my right hon. Friend accept my support for the plea made by the Leader of the Opposition — who has now left the Chamber — for a debate on the Scottish economy? It might then be explained to the right hon. Gentleman that during five years of continuous growth in the British economy and rising standards of living, the position of Scotland has improved relative to the rest of the United Kingdom. Does my right hon. Friend also accept that the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Bill is an even more urgent matter for Second Reading debate?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what my hon. Friend said. He will realise that we are anxious for the Scottish rates Bill to be launched as early as possible. Of course I take account of his point about the importance of having debates on Scotland, and the Scottish Grand Committee may provide an appropriate forum for such a debate.

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): Will the Leader of the House give me clarification over the point I raised earlier about the attendance and invalid care allowances for terminal cases? I do not believe that any hon. Member on either side ever intended when passing the legislation that the six-months rule should apply in such cases. This is an exceptional issue.

On a previous occasion, when we required equipment for the disabled, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) responded by giving emergency supplies, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). Will he study this matter and, if legislation is required, help to bring it to the House or ask his right hon. Friend to do so?

Mr. Biffen: I heard the hon. Gentleman put his point to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I can do nothing but reiterate her answer. I shall certainly look into the situation and be in touch with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Will my right hon. Friend consider changing the allocation of time for debates on Friday for the simple reason that we now have what is known as the Eleven o'clock farce, whereby every Friday at 11 o'clock an Opposition Front Bench spokesman comes forward with a spurious point of order simply to continue that week's fictional debate for the media for Friday and Saturday morning. That disturbs those who are anxious to engage in serious debate on Fridays.

Mr. Biffen: I will take away the problem and think about it, but I cannot offer the prospect of an early resolution.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Has the Leader of the House noticed early-day motion 92 and 93, standing in my name?

[That this House condemns the Estate Management Company, Estate House, 332A Regents Park Road, London, for its practice of purchasing the leaseholds of

residential property for the express purpose of reselling such leases to home owners at a profit; further condemns the dubious methods used by this company towards unwilling purchasers which includes threats of the loss of their homes; and calls upon the Secretary of State for the Home Department to investigate the possibility of introducing new legislation to better protect home owners from this and similar abuses.]

[That this House condemns the London and Aukland Estates Company Ltd, of 26 Hazelwood Road, Nottingham, for its practice of purchasing the leaseholds of residential property for the express purpose of reselling such leases to home owners at a profit; further condemns the dubious methods used by this company towards unwilling purchasers which includes threats of loss of their homes; and calls upon the Secretary of State for the Home Department to investigate the possibility of introducing new legislation tobetter protect home owners from this and similar abuses.]

They refer to the growing practice in the north of England of unscrupulous firms buying and selling ground rent. Many people, particularly the elderly in my constituency and those of my hon. Friends are upset by the activities of the firms. Can we have an early debate, or will the right hon. Gentleman at least alert the appropriate Minister to the practice?

Mr. Biffen: I thank the hon. Gentleman for drawing my attention to the early-day motions. I will certainly draw them to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

I cannot offer the prospect of an early debate, but the Government will shortly be introducing legislation in respect of leaseholders. I think that on that occasion the hon. Gentleman will find it appropriate to make his speech.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an urgent debate on the Short money for the payment of Opposition offices out of public funds, so that we can discover whether the head of the press office of the Leader of the Opposition is in Australia attending the infamous trial as part of her holiday, or whether she is on official business and paid out of public funds?

Mr. Biffen: I should make it clear that decisions on the so-called Short money have been made for the remainder of this Parliament. Therefore, in the natural course of events, there will not be an opportunity for such a debate. I am sure that the issue that was raised by my hon. Friend is a matter of public concern. I am certain that he will have his opportunity, one way or another, to see that the House knows more.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): With reference to next week's debate on the security services, is the Leader of the House asking us to accept that he does not know who will speak on behalf of the Government, or is he just unwilling to admit that, again, he has drawn the short straw?

Mr. Biffen: Whatever I know or do not know, successive generations of Leaders of the House have stood at the Dispatch Box and said that they were not responsible for naming those who are to take part in debates.

Mr. Peter Lilley (St. Albans): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the debate on the scandal of insider trading is intended to provide an opportunity for the House to debate the dealing in the House by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and his right hon. and hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench and sundry others, on the basis of insider links with those opposing the Government and the courts of a foreign country?

Mr. Biffen: I am always intrigued by my hon. Friend's ingenuity. He will know that it is not for me to comment on what might be deemed to be in order.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): When may we expect a ministerial statement on the progress of negotiations concerning the new EEC directive on shipbuilding? I remind the right hon. Gentleman that the current directive expires on 31 December 1986. This matter is of crucial importance to my constituents in the light of yesterday's announcement by Scott Lithgow.

Mr. Biffen: I take account of what the hon. Gentleman said. I shall refer his remarks to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate also that we have a procedure for examining Community documents and making recommendations for their parliamentary consideration. I am sure that that will also apply to these documents.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am sure my right hon. Friend is aware that there is a strong feeling that there is daily contact between those who are in opposition to the Crown in Australia and the Opposition Front Bench—people not far removed from the Leader of the Opposition, if not the Leader of the Opposition himself—and that it is impossible for Lord Rothschild to answer unfounded slurs against him. We know that it is Opposition business next week. Will my right hon. Friend, through the usual channels, ask the Leader of the Opposition if he wants to have the opportunity to clear his name?

Mr. Biffen: I am grateful for the point that my hon. Friend made in characteristically forceful fashion. I shall pass his remarks on to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Following the resounding rejection by Scottish teachers yesterday of the Rifkind package—a package of pay and conditions which bore little resemblance to the recommendations of the independent report on teachers' pay and conditions—may we expect a statement by the Secretary of State for Scotland next week, or as soon as possible, to ensure that there is no more avoidable disruption of education in Scotland?

Mr. Biffen: I do not entirely accept the premise of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, but I shall be in touch with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. Clearly, this is a matter of great concern in Scotland.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I reinforce the point made by the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) about the Channel Tunnel Bill. Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in Kent in particular, district councils and many individual petitioners—quite apart from Members of Parliament—would feel a sense of outrage if the Select Committee's report could not be read or commented on by them prior to the Bill being considered in Committee on Tuesday? Yet again, it would

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besmirch the Government's already tattered reputation for fair play in this matter if the Select Committee's report were not available for proper consideration in Committee.

Mr. Biffen: The Government have a rather good reputation in this matter. I was asked a plain, straight and serious question by the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford). I promised that I would look into it. The report will be available tomorrow. I shall also bear in mind my hon. Friend's remarks.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will my right hon. Friend examine the business for Tuesday and confirm that a number of subjects such as insider trading and fuel poverty, do not attract nearly as much support from Opposition Members as the early-day motions tabled by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) calling for debate on the Security Commission? Does my right hon. Friend not find it extremely surprising, as Opposition Members are concerned about fuel poverty and insider dealing, that they have never tabled any early-day motions about them? Perhaps the hon. Member for Workington is advising the alliance about what is to come on Wednesday.

I reassure my right hon. Friend that, as Leicester is a nuclear-fee zone, we do not expect that there will be any convoys carrying nuclear material through the city.

Mr. Biffen: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his second point. Alas, the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) has fled the Chamber. It would have been a most magnificent put-down if I had been equipped with that information.

Over the years in this House, one learns to distinguish froth from substance. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is a practitioner of froth. But, even so, froth can be poisonous. My hon. Friends are right to take account of the way in which the Order Paper has been used and the subject for which it has been used. They realise that there are matters of real substance here.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I refer to the serious case of my constituent, Miss Maureen McGoldrick, who is being pursued by the Brent Labour council—*[Interruption.]*—no doubt to the delight of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). First, she was pursued on an anti-racist basis. She now seems to be pursued by the Brent Labour council carrying out some sort of vicious personal, vendetta. Will my right hon. Friend arrange for the Secretary of State for Education and Science to come to the House and make a statement so that we can secure this woman's freedom from the clutches of the council and ensure proper education for the children in her school?

Mr. Biffen: I understand only too well the points that my hon. Friend has made and the very real sense of commitment with which he made them. I know that he has supporters ranging beyond the Government Benches. I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. I cannot hold out to optimistic a hope that he will be able to make a statement, since the matter is substantially outside his control.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): My right hon. Friend will be aware that Mr. Peter Wright is a self-confessed traitor. He will be aware also that the British Government have brought an action against Mr. Wright to prevent publication of a book in Australia that will seriously undermine Britain's security interests. Will my right hon. Friend ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to come to the House tonight to make a statement about the daily contacts that are taking place between the office of the Leader of the Opposition and lawyers acting for Mr. Wright? In particular, will he make a statement about whether it is desirable that the Crown's interest in this case should be undermined in the House by the Leader of the Opposition and those on the Opposition Benches?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has made a sombre and serious point. He has asked me to refer it to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, with a view to having a statement made this evening. I shall do that.

Mr. Richard Holt (Laugbaurgh): Following that lighthearted question, will my right hon. Friend use all his powers of persuasion to bring the appropriate Minister to the Dispatch Box to congratulate British Rail on its decision to reintroduce on its menus as from next Monday, the excellent northern dish, black pudding?

Mr. Biffen: We have discussed a range of issues this afternoon. I am glad that we are touching some more traditional aspects of our national life. I shall certainly look into the matter. Like my hon. Friend, I am a little uncertain as to who would wish to claim ministerial responsibility for this matter.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), in tabling vast numbers of early-day motions, is converting the Order Paper into something that is little better than junk mail? The effect is also to make this piece of paper thicker and thicker, day by day. I wonder whether my right hon. Friend might suggest that the Order Paper be divided into separable sections—just like the Sunday newspapers. We might have a colour supplement, the editor of which could be the hon. Member for Workington. It would have the advantage of being a detachable piece of paper that we could throw away without having to bother to read it in the morning and suffer indigestion after breakfast. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Biffen: That is porridge.

I take note of what my hon. Friend says. Again, that is a matter that could be considered by the Procedure Committee.

Points of Order

5.6 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, of which I have given you prior notice. I wish to ask you three questions. Following the suggestions relating to the possible misuse of the Order Paper by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) in which, under the cloak of privilege afforded to the tabling of early-day motions, he has made libellous allegations against all sorts of innocent citizens, including Lord Rothschild, who I think is a former Socialist, will you ask the Procedure Committee to reconsider urgently the rules for the tabling of early-day motions? Will you be making a submission strongly disapproving of the hon. Gentleman's activities and recommending an end to this misuse? Will you urge the Procedure Committee to report its views to the House as soon as possible so that this misuse is ended at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. Speaker: We had a long run on this issue this afternoon when I was asked about the Procedure Committee. I have already said to the House that, if the Procedure Committee asks me to give evidence to it, I shall be delighted to do so. As the House well knows, the Procedure Committee is minded to raise this matter and discuss it, and I shall be willing to give it my views.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): On a point of order, of which I have given you prior notice, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to the Leader of the House for undertaking to consider the points raised on the Channel Tunnel Bill, which will be considered in Standing Committee next week. I ask for your ruling, Mr. Speaker, whether it is proper for a Bill to be committed to Standing Committee after it has had a Select Committee hearing and before that Select Committee's report has been submitted to and considered by the House. Surely there is a problem, in that hon. Members have no opportunity to consider the detailed issues covered by the Select Committee's Special Report and possibly to suggest amendments in Standing Committee. The present timetable does not allow that. Is that proper?

Mr. Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Member for having given me notice of his point of order, because I have been able to look into it. The Channel Tunnel Bill was reported by the Select Committee on Tuesday 18 November. Under the Order of the House of 4 November, it thereupon stood recommitted to a Standing Committee without any further proceedings of the House. How the Standing Committee now proceeds is, of course, not a matter for me, but I understand that the Special Report of the Select Committee will be published tomorrow. I listened carefully to the questions put to the Leader of the House on that matter and to his replies.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I warn the House that there is an important debate ahead of us and points of order are bound to take time out of it.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) raised a point of order in which he criticised my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). Will you confirm that it is a rule of the House that, when criticism is to be made of a named Member, that Member should be given notice of it? Was notice given in this case?

Mr. Speaker: A number of references have been made this afternoon to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). It is true that if unfavourable references are to be made to hon. Members that must be done by motion.

Mr. Ron Lewis (Carlisle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Increasing numbers of constituents are writing to hon. Members on both sides of the House asking whether they can bring parties through the House. That is to be encouraged. This morning, there was chaos at the Norman Porch. I seek your help, Sir, to ascertain whether the check-in can be speeded up so that our constituents do not have to wait outside for at least an hour, and sometimes longer, to get through the checkpoint. I cast no aspersions on any member of staff. Everyone is doing his best to accommodate Members' constituents.

Mr. Speaker: I share the hon. Member's view that it is a very good thing that there is such an interest in this place. I shall certainly look into that matter.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I refer to my question on Tuesday on severe weather payments. I have heard that the Government have switched the weather stations which will provide the basis of the data used in determining severe weather payments. Is it likely that the Government will tell the House exactly what they are doing?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me, but the point has been made.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your help and guidance. Is it not a tradition and courtesy of the House that, apart from the practice of giving notice when naming an hon. Member, an hon. Member who intends attacking another hon. Member's borough council should give notice of that intent to the hon. Member concerned? You will be aware, Sir, that at least half a dozen Conservative Members have attacked the London borough of Brent at certain times, including today, without informing me. I sought the help of the Leader of the House who, with his usual courtesy, suggested that I needed no such help. Is it not a courtesy that an hon. Member who intends attacking my borough should inform me of that intention?

Mr. Speaker: The tradition of the House is that, if any hon. Member is to be mentioned, notice is, by convention, given to him. I know of no convention whereby, if an hon. Member's borough council is to be attacked, that practice would apply.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to the point of order about motions on the Order Paper, Mr. Speaker. When you meet the Procedure Committee and give evidence, if you are asked, will you bear in mind that all the motions now on the Order Paper have been thoroughly vetted by the Table Office and—because you are the head—by you? Is it not the case that any motion on the Order Paper is in order and that, as yet, no motion has been introduced which is an abuse of the Order Paper? Will you bear in mind also that any changes in that procedure would be unwelcome? As you might confirm, the early-day motions have been tabled principally

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

because we have not been able to obtain the right information from a Prime Minister who has been dodging the column at the Dispatch Box in answer to questions.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot answer the latter part of the hon. Member's point, but he has asked me a question that I can answer. Anything now on the Order Paper has been screened by the Table Office and is in order. As I pointed out yesterday, there is a distinction between abuse of the Order Paper and misuse of the Order Paper, which is what concerns the House.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): I apologise for speaking further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it not be in order for you to say that you deprecate the type of personal attacks that have been made on me, and the many others that have been discussed today? From now on, you could prevent hon. Members from making such personal attacks and starting them by means of bogus points of order.

Mr. Speaker: There is a very heavy day ahead of us. May I say, as a final word on this matter, that I hope that we shall stick to the conventions of the House and to the decent standards of the House, which seem to be very much in jeopardy as a result of today's exchanges.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Not even briefly.

Shipbuilding

5.18 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision, announced yesterday, by the Scott Lithgow company to declare redundant 1,600 employees."

This specific issue of huge job losses is of great importance, not only to my constituency but to Strathclyde and to Scotland as a whole. It is a matter worthy of urgent consideration because this decision will darken the lives of many families in Greenock and Port Glasgow and elsewhere in Scotland. It is essential that we debate the issue now, because these redundancies form the latest chapter in a worsening story in the oil-related industries and the shipbuilding industry not only in Scotland but throughout the United Kingdom.

Finally, I believe that it is within the Government's power to halt the seemingly remorseless job decline in those industries. That could be done by advancing public sector orders, by persuading British shipowners to buy British, and by changing present arrangements or bringing about a much improved EEC directive on shipbuilding.

Today is a very dark day for my constituency, and I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, to grant my request.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision, announced yesterday by the Scott Lithgow company to declare redundant 1,600 employees."

I can well understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about that matter, and he knows that my only consideration in reviewing it is whether to give it precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised as being appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, but I hope that he will find other ways of bringing it before the House.

Royal Ordnance Factory, Blackburn

5.22 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement today of 275 redundancies at the royal ordnance factory Blackburn, and the implications of this decision for the royal ordnance factory organisation as a whole."

When those 275 redundancies come into effect, employment at royal ordnance factory Blackburn will be down to 1,700. That is a reduction of nearly 1,000 jobs in six years. When the ROFs were under secure public ownership during the period of the Labour Government, employment in them in the United Kingdom as a whole, and in the Blackburn factory, rose. It is no coincidence that, since the Government embarked upon their policy of the privatisation of royal ordnance factories, there has been a haemorrhaging of employment in those factories across the United Kingdom. The matter is obviously specific and its importance lies in the significance of today's announcement, not only for my constituency, but for the 18,000 employees of ROF plc as a whole.

Five weeks ago an independent report on the future of the royal ordnance factories, by Mr. David Greenwood, of the centre for defence studies at Aberdeen university, predicted that the sell-off of the royal ordnance factories would lead to a loss of 6,000 jobs in two years. Today's announcement is the first stage in that process. The matter is so urgent that unless it is debated today, and Government policy reversed, many hundreds more of my constituents, and thousands more employees in the ROFs as a whole, will lose their jobs.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement today of 275 redundancies at royal ordnance factory Blackburn, and the implications of this decision for the royal ordnance factory organisation as a whole."

Again, I have listened to what the hon. Gentleman has said and fully appreciate his concern for his constituents. However, I regret to say that I do not consider the matter as being appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR MONDAY 15 DECEMBER

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours
Mr. Barry Henderson
Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark

BILL PRESENTED

ABOLITION OF DOMESTIC RATES ETC. (SCOTLAND)

Mr. Secretary Rifkind, The Solicitor-General for Scotland, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr John MacKay, Mr. Michael Ancram and Mr. Ian Lang presented a Bill to abolish domestic rates in Scotland; to provide as to the finance of local government in Scotland; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 9.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (No. 9) Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1993) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: I should tell the House that no fewer than 22 hon. Members have shown their interest in the debate that is to follow. I appeal to them for brief contributions in view of the late start.

I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

5.26 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill is the fifth in a series of major reforms of the powers of the police and the courts that we have brought before the House during the past five years. The Criminal Justice Act 1982 established a new structure for dealing with young offenders. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 set out a clear framework for the exercise of police powers. The Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 established the Crown prosecution service to provide for greater consistency in prosecution decisions. The Public Order Act 1986 provided the police with strong powers to avert disorder and to protect citizens as they go about their lawful business.

I should like to make two comments on this massive programme of reform. First, I believe that it will be largely completed once the Bill is through Parliament. I realise that the pace of change has been fast, as happens under a radical Government. I know that that has created occasional strains for the police, the courts, the probation service and all those who help to run the criminal justice system. I hope that, after the Bill, there will now be a pause for disgestion, in relation to major new legislation.

I am sure that the electorate will not be foolish enough to elect a different Government who would throw it all back into the melting pot by politicising the police, stripping them of powers that we have given them, removing a crucial part of our defence against terrorism, and, no doubt, putting the police and prison services back to what, under Labour Administrations, has been their historical place at the bottom of that party's list of priorities.

Assuming that the Bill is passed and that disaster is averted, the services that I have mentioned will, before long, have a framework of law adapted to the needs of modern society within which, without further major change, they can steadily build up their effectiveness.

Secondly, reforming the law is not, of course, the whole answer. What the Government are now doing in response to the steady 30-year rise in crime that we share with most other European countries is to intensify all the different sections of our policy. Crime prevention, police strengths, police powers, safeguards for the citizen, inner city initiatives, investment in prisons, development of alternatives to prison, much closer international co-operation — anybody who has followed our decisions over recent months will remember how, one by one, we have built up all those policies, and we shall continue to do so.

Today, we ask the House to endorse in principle another crucial part of our plans — strengthening the legal framework of the criminal justice system.

I should like to take the House through the major elements of the Bill as succinctly as I can given its length and importance. Its main purpose is to strengthen the powers of the courts in relation to large-scale crime and to improve the treatment of victims.

Parts I and II of the Bill carry out most of the major recommendations of the Roskill committee on the reform of fraud trials. Fraud is a major crime with both direct and indirect costs. Indirectly it can, if unchecked, undermine the standing of our major financial institutions, the reputation of which is crucial to their central role in international markets.

The Roskill committee remarked on the fragmentation of effort that can hinder the investigation and prosecution of serious fraud. It recommended an examination of the merits of setting up a unified organisation for investigating and prosecuting complex fraud cases. The Bill provides the statutory framework for a serious fraud office, the director of which will act under the supervision of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. The new office will be responsible for the investigation and prosecution of the most serious and complex frauds and will work in close co-operation with the police. It will have powers to require questions to be answered and documents to be produced.

The committee also proposed streamlined court procedures for fraud trials. The Bill will establish a means by which the prosecutor may transfer serious and complex cases of fraud straight to the Crown court. The most controversial recommendation in the Roskill report was for a specially constituted tribunal to try the most complex frauds instead of a jury. With one dissentient, the committee argued a detailed case for establishing a fraud trials tribunal, chaired by a judge and with two suitably qualified lay members.

The problem of the uncomprehending juror, which the committee emphasised, cannot be brushed aside. There is a danger of random justice when the evidence in a trial is so technical and labyrinthine that the jurors have great difficulty in following it. On the other hand, it is a central principle that a man or woman charged with a serious offence should be tried by jury. We thought that the House would rightly hesitate before moving away from that principle.

We thought very carefully about the proposal for a fraud trials tribunal. We judged that the sensible course would be to give the other proposed changes, which are designed to make the jury's task easier, a chance to prove their worth. They include measures intended to improve the presentation of evidence, provision for preparatory hearings and changes in the rules of evidence. We do not rule out the possibility of returning some time to the idea of a special tribunal, but we shall not be pursuing it in the Bill.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the proposal to set up a serious fraud office is particularly welcome, but in the light of the growing size and international aspects of fraud, does he agree that the estimates in the Bill of the costs of the serious fraud office are likely to be underestimates? Will he not rule out looking at a tribunal in future, purely to attack the problem of the internationalisation of fraud?

Mr. Hurd: I shall certainly not rule out looking again at the idea of a special tribunal. I am not sure that it follows directly from my hon. Friend's question, but I shall see whether I can find the connection.

Part II, which makes extensive changes to the rules of evidence in criminal proceedings, also comes largely from the Roskill report. The changes make possible greater use of documents as evidence and the more frequent taking of evidence abroad. The changes in this part of the Bill are a very substantial response to the Roskill report. They should provide a crisper, tighter and more effective system for the prosecution and trial of major frauds. Taken together with other Government legislation to strengthen the regulatory framework, including this Session's Banking Bill, they should do much to boost confidence in our financial institutions, at home and abroad.

It would make no sense to have different rules of evidence for difference offences. Part II therefore extends to all criminal proceedings. It also includes provision for children who are victims or witnesses in trials——

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): Before my right hon. Friend leaves that point, I hope that he will cover industrial counterfeiting. I am sure that he is aware that there is considerable concern about industrial counterfeiting following the Chanel case. Will he ensure that clause 12, with the provisions following the Roskill committee's recommendations, allows that conspiracy in the United Kingdom to counterfeit abroad shall be indictable here? Will he cover the communication of information and confiscation of the profits of counterfeiting, which come under clause 44 and other parts of the Bill—if not now, perhaps in Committee?

Mr. Hurd: I know my hon. Friend's concern about that matter. The creation of new offences to deal with counterfeiting goods will be outside the scope of the Bill. That falls within the authority of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry because of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968. I know that my hon. Friend is discussing his proposal with the Secretary of State. I shall make sure that what my hon. Friend has said today is brought to the latter's attention.

I was referring to the provision in the Bill for children who are victims or witnesses in trials of violent or sexual offences to give their evidence on live closed circuit television. That will spare them the ordeal of testifying in court in the presence of the accused. I hope that that provision, while still providing for cross-examination—this is an important point—will enable more cases of child abuse to be brought before the courts.

Part III makes changes in the jurisdiction and powers of the courts. Three offences—driving while disqualified, taking a vehicle without consent and common assault—can now be tried either summarily or on indictment. Under the Bill they would be reclassified as summary only. A fourth, criminal damage, is made triable by the magistrates only where the value of the damage is less than £2,000, compared with the present threshold of £400.

None of those offences is to be regarded lightly. Driving while disqualified, in particular, is always a serious matter. Disqualification will have been imposed as a result of a serious offence, and continuing to drive involves the wilful disregard of a court order. But the House will be aware of the very considerable increase in the business of the Crown courts and the delays that result from that. The proposals will remove about 5,000 cases a year, which is just over 5 per cent., from the Crown courts and help to relieve a little of the formidable pressure.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I should like to continue a little. With his ingenuity, the hon. and learned Gentleman may find a way of intervening again. I have already cut out parts of my speech because of the lateness of the start of the debate. I must carry on, but I shall give way later if the hon. and learned Gentleman wishes to try again.

The House will know that we have been wrestling with the problem of the damage caused to public confidence by the occasional apparently over-lenient sentence. The effect of such cases is wholly disproportionate to their number because of the publicity that they attract. The White Paper published in March set out three options. Under the first, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-general would be able to refer Crown court sentences for the opinion of the Court of Appeal. The purpose would be to influence future practice and not to place an individual defendant in jeopardy. That was in essence the proposal that my predecessor brought forward in the Prosecution of Offences Bill, which did not find favour in another place. The second approach would also involve the reference of cases to the Court of Appeal, but where the court's view was that the sentence was inadequate, under that option, it would be able to increase it. The third approach would build on, and give statutory force to, the practice whereby the Court of Appeal hands down guidelines on sentencing, by requiring the Judicial Studies Board to publish the guidance and disseminate it among the judges.

We spent much time thinking hard about the three possibilities. Any scheme in which the offender stood to have his sentence increased would raise real difficulties. The power to refer cases would need to be used even-handedly, wherever a sentence seemed out of line, rather than as a safety valve in exceptional cases. There would be problems in identifying such cases at the centre; it would be clearly unfair for such a scheme to operate only in cases which happen to have attracted much publicity. The role of the prosecution — which has hitherto eschewed arguing for a particular sentence—would be significantly changed in a way that I know some would find deeply repugnant.

When we published the White Paper, we thought that the idea of giving the Judicial Studies Board a more active role was the most promising option. On further reflection, we found it less attractive. There was a fear that by following that road, the Executive would be trenching on the independence of the judiciary. Sensible guidelines, sensibly applied, still seem to me to be the key to good sentencing practice. I do not rule out the possibility of putting the Judicial Studies Board on a statutory footing at some future time. But the more we thought about the arguments that had so moved those who spoke against the earlier proposal in another place, the more we became convinced that they lacked foundation. A procedure in which, in exceptional cases, the Attorney-General was free to use an individual case that had raised genuine public concern to trigger a wide consideration of the relevant sentencing principles by the Court of Appeal seemed to us practicable, sound and unobjectionable in principle.

[Mr. Hurd]

That is why clause 29 creates a procedure under which the Attorney-General would be able, with leave, to refer sentences to the Court of Appeal for its opinion on the principles that should be observed in sentencing in similar cases in the future. This proposal and that made in the Prosecution of Offences Bill are not quite the same. The procedure would be expressly confined to cases that appeared to my right hon. and learned Friend to raise questions of public importance. The leave of the court would be required, and the court's attention would be focused on the lessons to be learned for the future.

Those proposals do not involve politicians in the day-to-day business of sentencing. That is a matter for the judiciary and must remain so. However, we have to ensure that the courts have an adequate range of powers available to them. Parliament has approved increases in the maximum sentences for attempted rape and trafficking in class A drugs during the past two years. The Bill similarly proposes to increase the maximum penalty for carrying firearms during the commission of crime to life imprisonment. There has been some discussion on that proposal and some criticism of it on the ground that it would remove the incentive not to pull the trigger. That is misconceived. The proposal is for a maximum, not a mandatory, sentence, and the court can differentiate. Other things being equal, the courts are bound to regard the use of a firearm as the more serious offence and to sentence accordingly. The effect of our proposal is that the highest penalties will be available for the worst cases. Far from weakening the deterrent against pulling the trigger, the proposal is a strong incentive for the firearm not to be there in the first place.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): In connection with this narrow and rather important point, has the Minister consulted both the police authorities and those who hold unlicensed recreational firearms about the proposals?

Mr. Hurd: I must have notice about the extent of consultation. We have had extensive consultation with the police at all levels, as my hon. Friend knows. I will ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State to check that point and deal with it when he replies.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hurd: I shall not give way just yet as I wish to get on, but I shall give way before I sit down.

I now wish to talk about the important proposals for confiscation. They follow the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 which provided the courts with powers to confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking. Parliament, across party lines, gave a fair wind to that proposal. We stressed that drug trafficking was a special case, because it was so profitable and because of the revulsion the public rightly feels at the destruction which it wreaks. We made it clear that we wished to move on to cover other offences but would use a different model. That is what we have done.

In part IV we have departed from the drug trafficking provisions scheme in several important ways while still introducing what we believe will be an effective scheme to allow the proceeds of highly profitable crime to be seized. It is an affront to justice that a criminal should, having served his sentence, live comfortably on the fruits of his crimes. The new powers will be available to the courts where the profits involved appear to exceed £10,000. There will be a procedure for freezing the offender's assets before trial and once a confiscation order has been made, the High Court will have the power to order the realisation of any of the defendant's property in order to satisfy the order in full. These are important new powers for the courts which will strengthen their hands in dealing with big-time criminals.

Part V deals with compensation for victims. Clause 71 extends the circumstances in which the courts can make a compensation order against an offender, to include for the first time compensation for the dependants of those fatally injured. It also requires the courts—this is a substantial change—to give reasons in all cases where they have power to order compensation, but decide not to do so. We wish to ensure that the possibility of compensation is not overlooked. Clause 72 allows the proceeds of the sale of property forfeited by the offender to be used to compensate the victim.

A major flaw in the criminal justice system in the past has been the extent to which the needs of victims have been overlooked. We are, step by step, putting that right. We want the victim to be back centre stage. The position of the victim was improved by the Criminal Justice Act 1982. The police are giving greater priority to ensuring a more sensitive reception for victims, especially of crimes such as rape. I was especially glad recently to announce a grant of £9 million over three years to help the development of local victim support schemes in addition to the help we have been giving the national association for some time.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Does the Home Secretary agree that a person who is arrested, charged with a serious crime and held in prison for a considerable period and who suffers from severe mental stress to the extent that he is under permanent psychiatric supervision but is subsequently found to be innocent of any crime is also a victim of crime? Does the Home Secretary agree that there is no provision in the Bill to compensate such victims?

Mr. Hurd: No, such a case would not come within the Bill. It would come under the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, where the procedure for compensation resulting from complaints against the police was thoroughly examined.

The criminal injuries compensation scheme was established in 1964 by the Conservative Government. It is widely recognised as a tangible expression of society's concern for the victims of violent crime. In the last financial year, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board received nearly 40,000 applications and paid out some £42 million in compensation. The number of eligible applications continues to grow. I announced earlier this month that an additional £114 million will be available to the board over the next three years. Taken together with the increase to £550 in the minimum award, this should enable the board to meet growth in demand and, importantly, achieve some reduction in arrears.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) has conveyed to me the anxieties of the Police Federation about an adjustment in the scope of the scheme which affects the treatment of accidental injuries suffered by the police. I notice from the Order Paper that the Opposition have now latched on to that point. *[Interruption.]* That is chronologically correct.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): That is most opprobrious of the Home Secretary. The Police Federation came to us and raised the matter with us in exactly the same way as it raised it with the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths). It is a serious point.

Mr. Hurd: It is a serious point and it was raised with me first by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds. I have received a constructive letter directly from Mr. Peter Tanner. Later I observed that the Opposition had put the issue on the Order Paper. I have related the chronology of the matter accurately and not in the least opprobriously.

Such accidental injuries suffered by the police are already largely outside the scheme and count as industrial injuries. But our acceptance of a recommendation of the interdepartmental committee would remove the already very residual extent to which the scheme covered accidental injuries. I have arranged to meet the Police Federation soon to discuss that, and I hope to be able to satisfy its doubts. I shall certainly keep the House informed and I agree that it is an important matter.

The increase in the lower limit for compensation has been criticised by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). To that, I would respond that there has always been such a limit to exclude lesser injuries and to enable effort to be concentrated on the more serious cases. It is not possible to give a hard and fast rule on the size of award which results from particular injuries. But, in general, awards for such injuries as the loss of a front tooth would normally appreciably exceed £550—the new proposed limit—while wounds without lasting effect or scarring, such as minor cuts, sprains, bruising or abrasions would fall below the limit. The question is not whether one has a limit but where one sets the figure, and £550 seems to strike a reasonable balance.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the Home Secretary assure the House that the psychological injury, often suffered, for example, by old people who have been mugged but who are not visibly injured, will be regarded as serious injury although there may be only subjective symptoms, so that people who suffer such psychological injury will be included in the criminal injuries compensation scheme?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. and learned Gentleman knows that the board follows the practice of the civil courts in general and I imagine that it would do so in this particular. I shall look into the practice that results from that principle.

Over the years the scheme has evolved into a new social service. We are now spending three and a half times as much in real terms on it as was spent in 1978-79. The number of people receiving compensation has risen far faster than the increase in violent crime. We are now putting still further resources into the scheme.

If we are to use these resources to best effect and begin to work off the arrears that have built up, we must concentrate on those injuries which substantially affect people's well-being. If the Opposition, faced with the facts and figures, pretend otherwise, they are simply playing a silly political game with an important service which was negligible in their time, but which we have built up and on which we now plan further substantial progress.

Part VI makes several changes to the law on juries. The most controversial is the abolition of the defence right of peremptory challenge. That has been steadily reduced over the century and the present proposal takes the reduction in the number of challenges from the seven to the three that was enacted under the Labour Government to its logical conclusion.

It seems to the Government to be wrong in principle that jurors should be removed without reasons being given, and unsatisfactory that in cases with large numbers of defendants the composition of the jury should be radically changed.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way to my hon. Friend when I have finished this point.

The wholesale removal in such cases of members of the public of whom the defendants know nothing beyond their name and appearance and who there is no reason to suppose would be other then impartial does not enhance public confidence in the jury system. Indeed, it undermines the random quality of the jury system which is its essence.

Mr. Ashby: I know that my right hon. Friend believes that justice should be even-handed, yet I notice that this provision does not take away the prosecution's right of stand by. Has he considered that aspect, especially in relation to the European convention on human rights which provides for equality between the prosecution and the defence?

Mr. Hurd: I shall come to that point. The accused who has a substantive reason for believing that a particular juror is likely to be biased against him, will be able, as now, to give his reasons to the court and to seek the juror's removal, using the procedure known as challenge for cause. We have accepted that the abolition of peremptory challenge will have implications for the much more rarely used procedure under which the prosecution can stand jurors by for the Crown, giving reasons only when the panel of jurors has been exhausted. My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General is preparing guidelines which would confine the use of the stand by procedure to strictly limited categories of cases. These will be made known during the passage of the Bill and the House will want to look at them carefully.

Clause 84 widens the base from which jurors are drawn by some 2 million by increasing the upper age limit from 65 to 70. People in that age range will not be required to serve, if they do not wish to do so, but the change will enable recently retired people to carry out this important civic duty. They have a great deal to contribute in terms of experience and maturity and I hope that that change will be widely welcomed and uncontroversial.

In part VIII the Bill returns to the theme of combating major crime and revises and re-enacts the law on extradition. Our present law is plainly out of date as crime becomes increasingly international, so all countries with a democratic system and a reputable legal system need to combine against crime. We need to do much more to buttress the international rule of law and to prevent fugitive criminals from using frontiers as a means of evading punishment. At present, there is the strict requirement that the country requesting extradition from Britain must establish a prima facie case against the fugitive in our courts before its request may be granted. That is a considerable impediment because of differences between our legal system and those of many other

[Mr. Hurd]

countries, including our European partners. A safeguard will be needed and retained to prevent fugitives from being extradited if there is a danger of them facing arbitrary justice. If those changes are made, the United Kingdom will at last be able to accede to the European convention on extradition. We would intend to do that.

Part X contains a variety of measures of which the most significant abolishes the anonymity of defendants in rape cases and extends the statutory protection given to rape victims' anonymity so that it runs from the moment of the offence, rather than from the moment of charge, as it does at present. There may be common ground on this. It does away with the bogus tit-for-tat principle by which the victim and the defendant were put on the same footing.

Two proposals are not in the Bill because we are consulting on them, but I expect that they will find a place in it before the Bill is much older. As the House knows, we recently published a White Paper containing our reactions to the Prior report on prison discipline and we intend to bring forward proposals in Committee, if the Bill gets its Second Reading. *[Interruption.]* The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) will have read the White Paper and will know the way in which our minds are moving.

In addition, I expect to publish soon the consultative document on proposals for changes in the normal periods for remands in custody.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): The Home Secretary is dealing with miscellaneous provisions and he must know of the great concern about weapons, knives, crossbows and the martial arts. In Committee will he consider dealing with the question of control and banning of many of these odious weapons?

Mr. Hurd: We look at that the whole time and I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman has drawn out attention to it recently. Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 the police have for the first time the power to stop and search if they have reasonable grounds for suspecting the existence of an offensive weapon. Shortly I shall discuss with the London branch of the Police Federation the problems that it says it has in that respect and I shall listen carefully. Obviously, I shall listen carefully to any points made by right hon. and hon. Members. We have proposals ready on crossbows—I do not think that I am offending the rules of the House by saying this—and I hope that there may be an opportunity to make progress on that this Session. On the range of weapons, there are always problems of definition. It is already an offence to possess offensive weapons and I do not believe that that is sufficiently widely known. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman about the importance of the matter. We must keep it constantly under review to see whether the law can be strengthened and improved.

The Bill fits into our general strategy against crime. It is a common Opposition trick when they have nothing particular to say to criticise the Government on the grounds that, whatever they are doing, they should be doing something else. It is not a logical criticism of the Bill to say that while it deals with fraud, firearms offences and major crime, it does not deal with burglary. Equally, when we take action, as we have done and do, through crime prevention and strengthening the police to tackle burglary, it is not logical to criticise us because we are not dealing with major crime. The Opposition, especially the right hon. Member for Gorton, hop about in that way from one stance to another, while failing to take the one action which they alone can take, to haul back and repudiate the anti-police activities of councils under Labour control. It is remarkable that here, where the Opposition have no power, they chatter about great things for the future, but where they have power, their friends too often use it to undermine and isolate the police.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton) *rose*——

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I have almost reached the end of my speech.

We shall reinforce and intensify all the different parts of our policy. It is crucially important that the House should be able to look at the policy as a whole. That is why we have published today a criminal justice working paper which I commend to the House. When they read it, right hon. and hon. Members will find that it is not in any way complacent or self-congratulatory. We have tried to pull together the analyses of crime and to show how our different policies act in harmony. I am sure that the combination of policies which we have set out is the only sure and sensible way of edging back the level of crime. Obviously, it will be a long business and it must involve, not only the Government and the criminal justice system, but parents, teachers, the media and all those who in different ways fill the minds of the young, particularly teenagers. I am convinced that if we remain clear-headed and steady, as a society we shall succeed in this task.

5.58 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

> That this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill within whose framework substantially fewer crime victims will be eligible for compensation, which specifically reduces eligibility for compensation for police officers and members of fire brigades injured in the course of duty, and which is entirely lacking in any coherent approach towards combatting the record and worsening crime wave from which this country has suffered since the return of the present Government.

This year, 1986, one of our fellow citizens became the victim of the 25 millionth crime committed since the Government came to office. Already under the Prime Minister 10 million more crimes have been committed than were committed under the Labour Government, whom she accused of being unable to maintain law and order. Therefore, the Bill must be judged by the effect that it is likely to have on stemming that terrifying increase in crime and on making more likely the prospect of remedying the alarming 65 per cent. failure rate in clearing up crime under this Government, this Home Secretary and this Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister had no doubt about the importance of this Bill. Two weeks ago, in the debate on the Queen's Speech, she described it as the "centrepiece" of the Government's legislative programme, and promised that it would provide

> "a further strengthening of society's defences against the criminal."—[*Official Report*, 12 November 1986; Vol. 105, c. 21.]

Like all the Prime Minister's utterances on law and order, this statement was long on over-ambitious hyperbole and

grievously short on truth. Far from meriting the label of "centrepiece", the Bill is a ragbag of notions, some good, some bad, but most irrelevant.

The Law Society was right to say of the White Paper from which the Bill stems:

"these proposals do not suggest a coherent approach to the criminal justice system. They are symptomatic of vacillation and dithering."

It is clear that to pad out the Bill's 128 clauses and 10 schedules, the pigeonholes at the Home Office have been ransacked. Hence, no doubt, the highly pressing provisions on the burning of crop residues and the obsession in the Bill with repealing successive Diseases of Fish Acts, starting with that of 1937.

The Bill is slovenly in its drafting. In clause 98 and schedule 2, it requires that various statements should be drafted in what is described, but sensibly not defined, as "ordinary language". It thus accurately implies that the rest of the Bill is drafted in extraordinary language, much of it incomprehensible even to those who drafted it, if the litter of misprints is anything to go by. On the same page, it is referred to in one line as the Criminal Justice Act 1986 and in another as the Criminal Justice Act 1987. They had better decide what year it will be passed.

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: No, I shall not give way.

The slovenly drafting leaves one page literally incomprehensible, and we shall move amendments to put that right at the appropriate point. I doubt whether the Home Secretary has read the proofs of the Bill with the care that he devotes to those of his novels, which are certainly better plotted and undoubtedly have better endings.

Some of the proposals will have our support. These include the establishment of a serious fraud office, the videoing of evidence from child victims, a provision very much in line with the proposals that we make in the Labour party policy document, "Protecting our People", the enhanced protection of the anonymity of rape victims and the ending of anonymity for rape defendants. We are not opposed in principle to the confiscation of assets from those who gain in crime, but we note that the system is markedly different from that relating to drug trafficking offences. We are surprised that the Government are so confident in going ahead with this scheme without experience of how the Drug Trafficking Offences Act will work. The provisions for this — 24 clauses; a Bill on their own — are so convoluted that there are serious doubts as to whether they are operable. We have misgivings about the inadequate provision for restoration and compensation when confiscation has taken place wrongfully or erroneously.

We deplore strongly the fact that the Bill is before the House for Second Reading without containing the provisions, to which the Home Secretary referred, on the prison grievance and disciplinary systems. It is wrong that the House should be asked to give a Second Reading when these important proposals are to be put in as an afterthought, particularly in the light of the way in which the Home Secretary has botched prison policy in the recent past. In the light of these failures, the Bill is far too free in creating new imprisonable offences, to cram yet more people into our prisons.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the much publicised fresh start that the Home Secretary is trying to impose on prison officers is being rejected by every prison officer branch? Sadly, that is the backlash. Prison officers are responding to the way that they have been treated by the Government, and my right hon. Friend is alluding to this.

Mr. Kaufman: I have had meetings with members of the Prison Officers Association in prisons that I have recently visited, and there is great bitterness among prison officers about the way in which they have been treated by the Government, ever since the degrading events earlier this year. I agree with what my hon. Friend has said.

A number of the proposals in the Bill are bad, and we shall oppose them. It is wrong, in part II, to set aside the hearsay rule, which prevents reliance on secondhand evidence. It is vindictive that overstaying, against which there are already sufficient remedies and penalties, should be turned into a continuing offence. It is dangerous to remove the prima facie rule from extradition. It could pander to the dubious legality prevalent in authoritarian states. In particular, we oppose retention of the Home Secretary's power to send someone to his death in another land.

We deplore the Home Secretary's stubbornness in following his predecessor's deserved rebuff on enacting a power to refer cases to the Court of Appeal when sentences are regarded as too lenient. The poor old Attorney-General has been having a hard enough time lately as it is. It is wrong to erode the nature of his office still further by seeking to involve him in influencing sentencing decisions.

We oppose the abolition of the peremptory challenge in jury trials. There is no evidence that peremptory challenge has been misused. Much to the Government's discredit, there is no evidence on the subject at all. In March, when the White Paper was published, it told us:

"The Director of Public Prosecutions is now monitoring the use of peremptory challenge and prosecution standby".

It went on to promise:

"The figures thus gathered will be available to inform debate when the Criminal Justice Bill is before Parliament."

It is eight months later, the Criminal Justice Bill is before Parliament and we do not have the evidence that the Government promised.

On 9 July, when I questioned the Home Secretary about the monitoring exercise, he replied:

"the results will be available for informed debate when the House considers the proposals that we set before it."—[*Official Report*, 9 July 1986; Vol. 101, c. 306.]

The Home Secretary did not even refer to that monitoring exercise today, nor did he refer to his promise, which he has broken, that the monitoring exercise results will be available while we are discussing the Bill. That makes all the more deplorable the change that he proposes.

Mr. Ashby: Does the right hon. Gentleman know that those figures will in any event be hopeless and unusable because all that has been done is that people from the Crown prosecution service are noting whether the challenges are to a male or female, and the age of the person. It is not being done in relation to the composition of the jury, and there is no reasoning or anything like that. These figures will be hopeless and useless, and no doubt that is why they have not been referred to.

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Gentleman commands unique respect for the way in which he approaches these matters.

[Mr. Kaufman]

I accept absolutely what he says about the poor quality of the figures. However, whatever the quality of the material, it was promised and that promise has been broken. We would at least have been able to judge its quality if the Government had adhered to their commitment and provided the information.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): The right hon. Gentleman says that there is no evidence that the right of peremptory challenge has been misused, but is he not aware of evidence to that effect in connection with the Cyprus secrets trial?

Mr. Kaufman: That is not evidence. That is the hon. Gentleman's personal and bizarre preoccupation, which is a very different matter from evidence.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that what little evidence there is about peremptory challenge exists only in cases where there is more than one defendant, and that that is where complaints have arisen? There is absolutely no evidence of any complaint where there is only one defendant.

Mr. Kaufman: Once I made the great mistake of not giving way to the hon. Gentleman. After that, I learnt my lesson, and I am now very glad indeed that I learnt that lesson. He has made a very important point. I shall come to the very important matter of multiple cases in which there are several defendants.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the House that interventions are made only at the expense of the speeches of other hon. Members.

Mr. Kaufman: I take into account what you say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall abide by your request.

With regard to peremptory challenge, the Law Society is opposed to the change. It says:

"This right can be the only means of removing patently unsuitable jurors."

Opponents of peremptory challenge may be irritated with its use by the defence. However, it has been wisely said:

"It is part of a defence lawyer's role to try to select a jury that he thinks will give his client the best chance of acquittal."

Although the Roskill committee suggested the abolition of peremptory challenge, it sympathised with the need of a defendant to have some method of ensuring an appropriate racial or sexual mix on the jury. In pursuit of exactly that objective in the case of Banf and others in Bristol Crown court in 1981, Judge Stocker ruled that the defence could and should use all their peremptory challenges — there were 12 defendants — to ensure that there were black people on the jury.

Abolition of peremptory challenge may lead to the overuse and even, perhaps, to the misuse of challenge for cause. Its use may now expand in our courts. The need for the retention of peremptory challenge was most movingly summed up in "Blackstone", who said:

"peremptory challenge: a provision full of that tendernes and humanity to prisoners, for which our English laws are justly famous. This is grounded on two reasons. 1. As everyone must be sensible what sudden impressions and unaccountable prejudices we are apt to conceive upon the bare looks and gestures of another; and how necessary it is, that a prisoner (when put to defend his life) should have a good opinion of his jury".

That was in the days when there were capital sentences, but a life sentence is a fairly severe sentence, too. I hope that the Home Secretary will not scoff at its importance.

Mr. Hurd *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall give way to the Home Secretary.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is quoting from "Blackstone" a passage that we put into the White Paper in order to show that there was a time when the balance of the system was tilted against the defendant, when sentences were very heavy and when in other respects the defendant had less than a fair chance. It is very hard to argue that that is true today. That is why, throughout the centuries, the right of peremptory challenge has been steadily reduced.

Mr. Kaufman: The Home Secretary's intervention does not carry much credence. If he does not regard a life sentence as very heavy, he is somewhat lacking in the imagination with which we had credited him until now.

"Blackstone" then says:

"the want of which might totally disconcert him; the law wills not that he should be tried by any one man against whom he has conceived a prejudice, even without being able to assign a reason for such his dislike. 2. Because, upon challenges for cause shown, if the reason assigned prove insufficient to set aside the juror, perhaps the bare questioning his indifference may sometimes provoke a resentment; to prevent all ill consequences from which, the prisoner is still at liberty, if he pleases, peremptorily to set him aside."

Those are very important words and I am very sorry that the Government, being aware of them, have decided to ignore them.

We, with many others, are worried about the new life sentence for carrying firearms, even replica firearms, in furtherance of crime. Most curiously, this afternoon the Home Secretary justified the new penalty by assuring us that it is unlikely to be used. But that does not solve the problem. It will be on the statute book, there to be used and outside the Home Secretary's control.

The Association of County Councils succinctly makes the point that there will be the same maximum penalty for carrying and for using firearms. It cannot be denied that such a development could put police officers and members of the public at even greater risk than at present. The Police Federation has written to me about this. It says:

"We fear that the criminal who believes he faces life imprisonment if he is caught in possession of a weapon will be tempted to use it in order to escape arrest."

Its spokesman has said, very tellingly:

"Laws that lay down maximum sentences, which will not be enforced, make a mockery of the life sentence. . . The danger must be that the criminal, trapped while carrying a gun, does not appear to face any deterrent from using it or from killing."

This is an ill-thought-out proposal which could place at risk the lives of police officers — not that this Government seem to have much regard for the lives or wellbeing of police officers, if their disgraceful proposals on compensation are anything to go by.

At the time of the autumn statement earlier this month, the Government's propaganda machine made much of what was depicted as increased provision for criminal injuries compensation, and the poor, gullible press was taken in by these claims. In fact, the Government are making the predicament of thousands of crime victims much worse. That is saying something, considering how the chances of obtaining compensation under this Government have already seriously deteriorated.

When the Labour Government left office in 1979, 26,299 cases were pending before the Criminal Injuries

Compensation Board. By the end of last month, that queue had more than doubled to 60,000. People are having to wait for deplorably long periods for their cases to be settled. Of cases settled in 1985-86, 30 per cent. had had to wait for over a year. At least 12,000 of those still in the queue have already been waiting for more than a year.

The reason for this is, first, a massive rise in crime, which has led more people to make claims. Secondly, the Government are starving the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board of staff. Two years ago the Select Committee on Home Affairs recommended staff increases. The staff has hardly been increased at all. The result is that, while in 1981 there was one member of staff for every 171 claimants, there is now one member of staff for every 212 claimants. The work load is impossible. That is despite the fact that the Government have taken action to reduce the queue, not by providing the necessary staff to help the claimants but by depriving thousands of potential claimants of the right to claim.

In 1977, the Labour Government increased the lower limit for eligibility to claim from £50 to £150. This was the first increase for 13 years. In announcing it, my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) made it clear that

"the increase is intended to restore its original value without changing the scope and purpose of the scheme."—[*Official Report*, 15 February 1977; Vol. 926, c. 146.]

In four years, not 13, this Government had already twice increased that lower limit upwards, to £400. After seven years, they are planning the third increase, to £550. An increase of £80 would have been enough to keep up with inflation, but the Government are imposing an increase of twice that amount. In any case, two years ago, the Select Committee on Home Affairs denounced the previous increase to £400 as "excessive". It recommended:

"the £250 minimum which was in force until last year should be used as the base rate for further cost of living increases rather than the current figure of £400."

Last year, in their response to the Select Committee, the Government said that this recommendation would be borne in mind by the Government in considering any future increase in the level of the lower limit. That response was hypocritical, and this new increase proves it to have been hypocritical.

In its press statement three weeks ago the Home Office claimed that the increase to £550 is intended to concentrate resources on the more seriously injured applicants. That deliberately deceptive rubbish means that thousands of others will be deprived of the rights to compensation. in 1984-85, 28 per cent. of awards were below £550. So the Government, who snivel on about crime and victims, are actually penalising victims—many thousands of them. Clearly, they are doing that as a covert way of cutting the queue as well as a means of saving money. Their claim is that their changes will cut the queue by possibly 5,000 a year for three years, but at the end of that three years, even if we accept the Government's forecast as accurate, that would still leave the queue twice as long as it was when the Government came to office.

And to save what? The awards to those receiving less than £550 in 1984-85 came to only £2,300,000. That money is minute in terms of Government expenditure, but it means a lot to individual crime victims. The country should note the Government's priorities. Nearly one third of crime victims are to lose their chance of compensation to save a couple of million pounds while £100 million of taxpayers' money is being wasted on the privatisation of British Gas. All that squandered taxpayers' money should have been spent on helping victims of crime.

But there is one special group of crime victims whom the Government are deliberately damaging, and that is the police. Clause 74(7) excludes police officers altogether from compensation if they are injured accidentally while attempting to apprehend an offender, or preventing an offence from being committed. It could also harmfully affect many others including members of fire brigades, nurses and transport staff. That change would mean that a police officer who is permanently disabled or discharged from service following an accidental injury, as covered in the subsection, sustained as the result of attempting to make an arrest or prevent a crime, would receive no recompense for such an injury. He would lose entitlement to compensation for loss of earnings which could run into thousands of pounds.

In the House not long ago the Prime Minister paid a smarmy tribute to the police in the specific context of police who had sustained injuries in the course of duty. She proclaimed:

"We support the police in the way in which they carry out their duties."—[*Official Report*, 8 May 1986; Vol. 97, c. 254.]

Empty words like that are easy to utter, but the same Prime Minister who uttered those words has her name on this Bill which will deprive hundreds of police of the right to compensation. Those words should stick in her throat.

I make it clear that the Labour party will oppose that subsection. We hope that Tory members of the Standing Committee will have the decency to vote with us and get rid of it. If they do not, I pledge here and now that the Labour Government will restore justice to the police, just as they will extend the right of compensation to the other crime victims now being deprived of it by the Government.

Mr. Hurd: That is another pledge.

Mr. Kaufman: Yes, that is another pledge. Add them up. I am ready to make pledges to the crime victims that the Government are bilking of their right to compensation. Yes, I am ready to make that pledge anywhere. That is a priority pledge, if the Home Secretary wants to know—a priority pledge to the police and to crime victims. *[Interruption.]* We have said that we shall reduce the level and we shall look with care at the recommendation of the Select Committee on Home Affairs of reducing it to the base level for inflation purposes of £250.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I, if not my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, am rather glad to hear the pledge that the right hon. Gentleman has just given. However, I should like him to be precise. Is he saying that he will return to the present position—that where police officers take exceptional risks they should receive compensation—or is he saying that he will go all the way back to the position which existed some years ago when that test did not have to be met?

Mr. Kaufman: I am certainly saying that we shall restore the present position, but we want to go further than that. In our policy document, "Protecting our People", we said:

"After full consultation, Labour will introduce a scheme to ensure that police officers injured in the course of duty receive compensation without having to apply to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. We will ensure that the families of police officers killed in the course of their duty also receive appropriate financial support."

[Mr. Kaufman]

When we return to office — I give this commitment to the hon. Gentleman — we shall urgently consult the Police Federation in an effort to remedy any feelings of injustice that police officers may have on these matters. We strongly believe — my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and I have considered this carefully with the Labour party — that it is unfair that the police should not have proper entitlement to criminal injuries compensation.

Sir John Farr: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No, I shall not give way any more. I have been asked by Mr. Deputy Speaker not to give way. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. He knows that usually I would give way to him.

Yesterday — the Home Secretary has referred to it — nicely in time for the debate, the Home Secretary published, at public expense, a glossy Tory party propaganda document which, using rigged statistics and distorted diagrams, tries to play down the crime increase under the Government.

For a Government or a Tory party document, it breaks new ground because it contains jokes. On page 40, in a chapter satirically entitled "The Way Ahead" it says:

"If terrorists win substantive concessions from a democratic government in one country they are likely to give encouragement to terrorists in other countries."

That cannot be meant seriously in the light of the Prime Minister's statement a dozen days ago in Washington when, referring to President Reagan's sale of arms to Iran, she said:

"I believe implicitly in the President's total integrity on that subject."

The Home Secretary may not have read that document. I offer him the excuse that it is likely that he does not read a great many of the documents that come out in his name, but this strange document makes crime in Britain seem a remote possibility indeed.

In the document the Home Secretary says that the "statistically average person" can expect an assault resulting in injury "once every century". That reassurance will be a source of great comfort to the 750,000 people in England and Wales alone who have been victims of violent crime since 1979.

The document says that our standard Thatcherite citizen can expect a burglary in the home once every 35 years. That, of course, makes everything perfectly all right for the victims of the 7 million burglaries which have taken place in Britain since the Government came to power.

The document says that there are

"no simple solutions to the problem of crime".

That was not what the 1979 Tory manifesto said when it proclaimed:

"Surer detection means surer deterrence".

But under the Government, detection has become less sure with a fall in the clear-up rate from 42 per cent. to 35 per cent.

The document depicts crime as some natural phenomenon such as the tides or the seasons. The Home Secretary said:

"The growth in recorded crime seems to have a momentum of its own which has hitherto defied the efforts of any Government to check or reverse it."

That is rich coming from a party whose 1979 manifesto implied that the then much lower level of crime was the fault of the Labour Government.

The document says:

"Crime defies the efforts of any Government to check or reverse it."

That is odd coming from a Government whose 1983 manifesto claimed:

"Already street crime is being reduced and public confidence increased in some of the worst inner city areas."

That is a bit of a contrast with this document, which says:

"The risk of crime is not evenly spread amongst the community. The British Crime Survey shows that people living in inner city areas face a risk of being burgled between three and six times greater than residents of other neighbourhoods. Though high-risk communities comprise just over a tenth of households in England and Wales, residents of these areas were the victims of a third of the burglaries, a quarter of the car thefts and a third of the street crime . . . reported to the British Crime Survey."

That is the party that said, in 1983:

"street crime is being reduced and public confidence increased in some of the worst inner city areas."

The fact is that, under this Government, 10 million more crimes have been committed than under the Labour Government, whom the Prime Minister used to blame for crime. Under this Government, the incidence of theft has risen nearly twice as fast as under Labour. The incidence of robbery has risen nearly three times as fast as under Labour, and that of burglary has risen more than four times as fast as under Labour. The crime figures for England and Wales for the first six months of this year show that the crime crisis in worsening. Compared with last year, in the second quarter of 1986, all crime was up by 8 per cent., violent crime by 6 per cent., theft by 8 per cent., vandalism and criminal damage by 9 per cent., burglaries by 10 per cent. and sexual offences by 17 per cent.

In the first six months of this year, there was one crime of violence against the person every four minutes, one act of criminal damage every 50 seconds, one burglary every 33 seconds, one theft every 15 seconds and one crime of some kind every eight seconds. What will this Bill, this alleged centrepiece in the fight against crime, do about that record crime wave? The answer is, next to nothing. The Bill is not so much about preventing or fighting crime as about what is to be done with alleged criminals when they have been caught, and what is to be done about apprehended criminals when they have been convicted. The plan is to send more and more to prison. But the Home Secretary's own statistics show that 58 per cent. of convicted criminals imprisoned with a sentence of three months or more are back inside prison within two years, and that 69 per cent. of young offenders taken into custody become recidivists and go back into custody.

If this long, complex and largely irrelevant Bill is the best that the Government can do, there is no hope under the Conservatives of any progress being made against the crime wave. Under this Prime Minister, communities have been robbed of the resources that they need to prevent crime. Millions of people are forced by this Government to live without hope or belief in the future. Our nation has become a family divided against itself. In those circumstances, we can expect only an inexorable rise in crime of every kind.

To check and reverse that crime wave, we need to bring the British people together as partners against crime and fear. For that partnership we need not a new Bill but a new Government — a Labour Government who will provide the policies to unite the nation against crime.

6.32 pm

Sir Ian Percival (Southport): What a miserable, sour speech that was! I do not complain about some of the criticisms that have been made, and I might even share one or two of them, but the Bill provides us with an opportunity to make constructive contributions. If the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) reads the report of his speech, he may find that it contained little that was constructive.

Of course the Bill is not perfect and is not, in itself, a comprehensive scheme for fighting crime. Who could be so silly as to think that a Bill would be? The Bill is part of the Government's strategy, and embraces those parts of the strategy that require legislation. It is fatuous to look at it in isolation. When the Bill is seen in that context, one is staggered by the vast amount that is in it. Many important subjects and technical matters are covered. I shall mention only a few of them. I think that there is a danger, on Second Reading, of falling into the error of looking at each part of the Bill while failing to see the whole Bill in context.

I deal first with clause 2. I, too, welcome the fact that the Government are implementing much of the Roskill report, just as I welcome the fact that they are not implementing the recommendation on juries. It is much to the Government's credit that they have recognised that juries are perfectly able to understand most fraud cases if those cases are properly presented. Of necessity, clause 2 seems to make quite substantial inroads into the right to silence. At this stage, I do not wish to argue the importance of the right to silence, but those inroads should be spelt out so that we all know what we are doing when considering that clause.

In my thinking on clauses 14 to 20, I come close to the right hon. Member for Gorton. After all, credit must be given where credit is due. I hope that there will be the closest possible consultation with the practising bar before the final form of the hearsay provisions is decided. Barristers are practitioners and it is they who can say how the provisions would work in practice. Things may not be half as easy as they seem. Consequently, my plea is for the closest consultation possible with the practitioners. However, that is a matter to be discussed in Committee.

My next remarks touch on clause 29. As a former Law Officer, I say with some feeling that the Government should reconsider the matter. They should think of the extra burden being placed on an already heavily overburdened member of the Government. Whenever anyone complains that a sentence is too lenient, the complaint will be sent to the Attorney-General, who will have to look at it and send for the facts. When he has the facts, he will usually find that the sentence was appropriate, and so he will not refer it. The Member of Parliament involved will then say that the Attorney-General has let down the public once again, and so on. It is a terrible cross to ask the Attorney-General to bear in addition to all his other problems.

The Government should also ask themselves whether that provision is necessary. I do not believe that the Lord Chief Justice would find it difficult to give guidance if he really thought it necessary. One does not need to have an over-lenient sentence to make him do that, but merely an appeal against a proper sentence. It is not, I am sure, beyond the wit of the Lord Chief Justice to say, "Let me have a look at what is coming up in the list. Oh yes, I'll take that one." That provides us with the perfect way of going about things as then all that business of whether to involve the Judicial Studies Board goes by the board. The Lord Chief Justice can say in public just what he wants to say to the public and the judges. I hope that the Government will reconsider that point.

Clause 83 does away with the right of peremptory challenge. I disagree slightly with everything that has been said so far. It is wrong to say that there is no evidence of abuse, though it depends on what one means by evidence. It would seem that on occasion that right has been used for purposes for which it was not designed, and that has not increased public confidence in the system. But just because there may be examples of abuse, it is easy to forget that the right of challenge is also put to good use.

Recently, I went to a seminar and at lunchtime I told one of the judges that I had concluded that we should do away with the right of peremptory challenge. He then put a point that I had never thought of. He said that in the last case in which he had appeared as an advocate he had used the challenge because he thought that his client was innocent, so he wanted a sensible jury that would understand what was going on. He wanted not to get rid of the gentleman in the blue suit and white shirt but to put him on the jury. Consequently we should not allow ourselves to be carried away just because there may have been some abuse.

I wish to raise one point of detail that is not covered in the Bill. It relates to sentencing. At that seminar, the view was universally expressed that it would be helpful to those who had the terribly difficult task of sentencing if they had discretion to suspend youth custody orders in whole or in part. I ask my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and his team to consider introducing such a discretion.

As I have said, I think that there is danger of taking such a Bill clause by clause and failing to consider the entire Bill in the context of the overall problem that it is designed to overcome or diminish. We must ask what contribution the Bill will make to the fulfilment by the Government of their responsibility to preserve law and order and to their overall strategy to fulfil that and their responsibilities. These responsibilities are to prevent crime, not least by deterrence, to catch those who have not been prevented or deterred, to obtain the conviction of those who have been caught and to provide those who have the extremely difficult task of deciding what sentence to impose with an armoury of options that will enable them to punish the guilty and protect the innocent. I know that there are other factors that must be taken into account in sentencing, but the ones to which I have drawn attention are the principal criteria. It bears repeating that when it comes to sentencing the court must be able to punish the guilty and protect the innocent.

The Bill must be tested against those requirements and against the root causes of crime, especially the causes of the crimes that are increasing in number. It seems that the right hon. Member for Gorton found it easy to pick out figures that show where crimes have been rising, but his comments would have merited more consideration if he had tried to relate the figures to the causes.

The House should remind itself that creeping over the world is a wave of evil that the Lord Chief Justice recently found it necessary to describe as something that might overwhelm us and other civilisations. I shall mention two examples. First, there is the Hindawi case, which included three new features which probably have already been

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forgotten by many. One of those features is the hideousness of the crime which he tried to commit. It was not a matter of placing a bomb in a position where it might have killed one or two people. If the act had succeeded, it would necessarily have killed up to 400 people who had nothing to do with the dispute that caused Hindawi to be hired. To that must be added the way in which he intended to commit the crime, and the fact that he did everything in his power to effect the crime. That all adds up to a new evil and hideousness. We have all heard of hideous crimes before, but the Hindawi case provided a new dimension.

There is another new dimension to the Hindawi case, and it demonstrates to us something we have been reading about in books, but until the Hindawi case it had never come close to us. The case demonstrated that there are international gangs of villains who are ready to commit mass murder for money. Hindawi was not an idealist or a Moslem fundamentalist; the man did it for money.

Thirdly, the Hindawi case brought us face to face with another dimension. Whether we like it or not, we have on our hands and in our prison system for a minumum of 30 years, even with full remission, a member of a gang which boasts that it does not allow its members to rot in other people's prisons. At the moment that Hindawi was arrested, he wrote a letter suggesting ways in which he might be removed from custody.

Another area of evil is the activities of the major drug barons. If a man puts £1 million-worth of drugs on to the market knowing that that will necessarily result in the degradation and then the death of an unknown number of people, mostly young, and does so purely for money, he is indulging in a degree of evil that to me beggars description. We must ask ourselves whether there is any sentence or punishment, if punishment is still an element, which bears any relationship to either of those crimes other than that that person so convicted should forfeit his or her own life.

I do not propose to develop that argument. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has suggested that the Bill is a suitable vehicle for debating capital punishment but I do not agree with him. I think that it is a separate subject. The other matters that are dealt with in the Bill are so important that we should not be diverted from them by discussing the death penalty. Capital punishment is of such importance that it should be discussed as a separate issue. As I have said, I shall not develop it here.

There is a lower level of evil, but a real one, that we must have in mind when we are considering making improvements to our system of criminal justice. We must consider the offences that are rising in number and causing the most problems for the police. These are the crimes to which we should direct our attention when dealing with Bills such as the one that is before us. My first four headings are sex, drugs, civil order and international gangs. If we did not have the civil disorder that we have and the danger from international gangs that led us to have half of the police forces of three counties on duty at Bournemouth when we exercised the elementary right of a democracy of meeting to talk, just think of the use to which those police man hours could have been put in protecting the public in their ordinary daily rounds.

Sex and drugs do and must figure repeatedly in any discussion of crime. That is both because sex and drug offences are growing in number and because of their spin-offs.

Mr. Alec Carlile: And alcohol.

Sir Ian Percival: That is not nearly in the same category. Whether that be so or not, I shall not be diverted from issues which I can clearly establish at least to my satisfaction, where I can establish a danger and I can see some of the answers to it.

There has been an increase in sex and drug offences and many of the increases in other crimes have a relationship to that. How many of the muggings that are carried out by young people are committed by those who find themselves in the hands of drug pushers? These young people may well mug somebody to obtain the money to buy the next filthy shot. How many of the so-called opportunist housebreakings are committed for the same reason? No one can answer that question, but everyone knows that it is a substantial number. There is also the element of corruption. It is no accident that the number of convictions for corruption has risen as well. These are areas of crime that have corrupted society in every way.

Who is responsible for these developments? First, we must identify the cause and, secondly, those who are responsible, for we must get at those who have responsibility. It is clear that there are all too many men and women who cold-bloodedly exploit sex, drugs and pornography for money. All three elements are related directly to one another. I do not believe that anyone who has seen even the minimum of the salacious filth that is available in magazines and videos, and even brought into our homes in television programmes, could doubt for a moment that there is a clear link between pornography and the increase in sexual crime. The people who exploit sex, drugs and pornography and cause so much misery for the young—it is young people who suffer the most—must be ruthlessly pursued and destroyed.

Then there are others who exploit all those things as part of their crusade—to them it is a crusade—to destabilise society by destroying the capitalist system. As long as we identify them and point out to the public what they are up to, I think that their influence can be kept to a minimum.

Another much wider and more important factor is the lack of moral values in so many people. If the House runs true to form, it will not be long before somebody gets up and sneers at the fact that I have had the temerity to refer to moral values. I shall no doubt be accused of preaching or moralising, which is supposedly a nasty thing to do. So let me say this. I know full well that there are very few men and women who are good enough and strong enough to live all their lives strictly according to what they may have been taught to be the normal standard. To put it another way, if I am ever fortunate enough to be invited to the saints and sinners dinner I hope that there will be enough red carnations to go round.

But I know equally well that it is a good thing to have standards and to try to live up to them; and I know equally well that there is no sadder sight—every lawyer in the Chamber will support me—than young people in the dock who have no sense of right or wrong, good or bad, and the depths to which that lack of knowledge has brought them. That is no criticism of the young. How can

they know those things if nobody tells them? It is a terrible indictment of all those who have failed them. It is an indictment of those close to them who have failed to give them any values. of those who should have led them by example but have set such a dreadful example, of those who have thrown filth and deviation at them, not least some of those who were so anxious to prevent the House from passing the Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, etc.) (Amendment) Bill presented to the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). They sought to justify their actions in the name of art or, just as spuriously, in the name of freedom. That would be laughable if it were not so serious.

Mr. Tom Cox: I am following closely what the right hon. and learned Gentleman is saying and I agree with him. I am sure that he would readily accept that many hon. Members are very interested in moral standards. Will he link his comments to the repugnance felt by many people about certain newspapers which go out of their way to pay large sums of money for stories? There have been examples of two brutal cases. One was of someone who murdered members of his family and the other was of someone who, sadly, raped women. The newspapers were prepared to pay large sums for the girl friends of those individuals to tell their stories. Is that not equally repugnant and a lowering of our moral standards?re

Sir Ian Percival: Of course. I am glad that I gave way because I acknowledge that many hon. Members have placed great value on standards. I should not like what I have said to be otherwise interpreted. The hon. Gentleman will know as well as I do that for far too long in the House moral values have been sneered at by some of our colleagues. I am glad that he is happy to stand up and be counted. I am glad that he said what he did. I accept that some of the newspapers bear a heavy burden in that respect. The fact that I have not mentioned them should not in any way mean that I underestimate the importance of that. I am merely trying quickly to catalogue some of the guilty.

To continue that, the lack of moral values, too, is an indictment of the loony fringe of some local councils encouraging promiscuity and homosexuality despite the misery, and now the dangers, to which they are known to lead.

Those in public life and we in the House have a strong duty. Those who have preached in the House to the rest of us and the nation for so many years that it is old-fashioned to have standards, that the permissive society is the civilised society—I have had to listen to that kind of talk and preaching so often—and that in sexual matters "anything goes" have a great deal for which to answer. As long as those people and any others who have contributed to the lack of moral values continue to preach that sort of attitude, and until they start giving the young the assistance which they say they want to give them by helping them to have some standards by which to try to live, we will have to run very fast even to remain on the same spot.

All that we are doing is merely palliative. I am sure that the Government will continue to set a lead in bringing home to all the value of standards. I believe with all my heart that apart from the small number who have unhappily had their lives ruined beyond repair, those of us who believe in what I am saying will find a ready response from the young, many of whom are longing to have some help from those to whom they look for guidance, even if they do not want to come straight out and ask for it.

I remember when I used to have to fix a time for my daughter to come in. There was always grumbling if I said she should be in by, say, midnight. A few years later she said that it was a marvellous protection to be able to say, "The old devil says I have to be in by 12 and if I am not I will not be able to go out again." It is not nearly as complicated as some people make it. There are ways in which we should be able to give guidance to the young. Unless and until we do, as I have said, we will have to run very fast to stay on the same spot. Meanwhile, we must do what we can to improve the situation. I believe that the Bill, as part of the Government's whole strategy, will make a real contribution and for that reason I welcome it.

6.58 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): At the outset of the speech in which he commended the Bill to the House, the Home Secretary emphasised the sheer volume and quantity of amendment and reform of the criminal law and the law of administration of criminal justice which has taken place in the past few years. Listening to his Second Reading speech, too, one was bound to say to oneself that here were five or six Second Reading speeches of five or six Bills, each deserving separate consideration and philosophic attention in its own right. When that happens, especially when it happens in association with a public sense of abhorrence for crimes that are increasing in prevalence—the sort of abhorrence to which the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) has given moving expression—there is more than usual danger of standards being cast aside, of principles of justice being neglected and of natural justice being treated as of no account in the anxiety to get new provisions on to the statute book. When that occurs, a responsibility rests upon every hon. Member whether or not he is a lawyer or one who concerns himself specifically with criminal law.

I should like to refer especially and briefly to part IV of the Bill, because it illustrates what I have in mind and enables me to palliate even if I cannot make good a failing on my own part. In the context of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, a revolutionary innovation was made in the criminal law through the introduction of confiscation. When it was introduced, even those who were anxious and disposed to object nevertheless argued that the offence in question was so dangerous, so abhorrent, such a threat to society that it justified the exceptional innovation. I know that there were others besides myself who were opposed to the principle but let it go by on the basis that it would not be drawn into precedent or extended beyond the context which was originally thought to justify it.

Part IV of the Bill reveals exactly the same kind of proposal as first appeared in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, a lesson—if one were needed—in the rapidity with which something introduced as exceptional to deal with a quite specific and exceptional danger can become a pattern to be virtually carbon copied whenever there is a new phase of criminal legislation.

In effect, part IV of the Bill extends confiscation not merely beyond the original context in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 but to any crime whatsoever that can be associated with pecuniary gain. The Bill extends it to

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the offences triable in magistrates courts which are set out under schedule 3; but the terms of that schedule have no relevance, because the Minister is given power by order subject only to negative procedure to add to those listed any other offence triable in magistrates courts. The Bill extends confiscation to offences triable in a Crown court upon indictment virtually without any limitation other than that implicit in the nature of confiscation itself. Thus, there is in the Bill what might be described as the explosion of a tentative innovation which Parliament had accepted in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 in the previous Session.

In public, outside this House, I drew attention last year to the dangerous nature of what had happened and expressed the belief that it would not be long before the precedent was repeated. However, I failed to record dissent on the Floor of this House or, if it had been possible, in the Lobby. One of the irrecoverables of life is the dissent that one did not express, the vote that one failed to cast. At any rate, by this brief speech this evening, I am endeavouring to expiate what I left undone last Session.

Mr. Mellor: The right hon. Gentleman knows the respect with which I always treat his contributions. That is what moves me to ask him this question. What conceivable objection can there be to the proposal in the Bill that, once it is known that a convicted criminal has benefited to the tune of more than £10,000 from crime —and that established in the indictment—that person should then be rendered liable to lose property to the value of that sum so that he should not otherwise benefit from crime? I cannot understand how that is objectionable.

Mr. Powell: I was about to refer to what seemed to me the major flaws in the innovation and its major inconsistencies with what people would regard as the principles of our criminal justice.

In the first place, the innovation superimposes what is in effect an additional penalty—and a severe one—upon the penalties which have been prescribed by statute for the offences in question. We go to considerable trouble in legislating to decide what penalties would be appropriate to particular criminal offences from which profit might be drawn by those who commit them. Yet, in part IV of the Bill, we pile on top of these indiscriminately the engine of confiscation.

The second flaw associated with confiscation is that, by its very nature, it puts the burden of proof upon what in part IV would be called the defendant.

Mr. Mellor *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Powell: That is obviously a matter that needs to be examined closely in Committee. It may be possible by work in Committee to amend part IV so as to correct some of the inherent flaws. They might at least be considerably reduced, if not eliminated altogether.

The student of part IV of the Bill as it stands finds himself contemplating a situation where, in effect, the defendant is presented with a proposition and it lies with him to make the case against it. The burden of proof—in that sense of the term—is rested upon the defendant in the course of the process of confiscation.

I believe, indeed, that every part of the Bill will require the most exhaustive discussion in principle and detail in Committee; but in this Second Reading debate I believe it right that a marker should be put down especially against part IV, which extends so widely the principle of a procedure introduced out tentatively and in a different context in the previous Session of Parliament.

7.7 pm

Mr. Charles Irving (Cheltenham): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department and his colleagues on producing at least some measures that will go a considerable way to combating the rising concern in the community about serious crime and crimes of violence. Generally speaking, we must welcome the increased powers to deal with fraud in the light of the insider trading scandals and it is timely and appropriate to take that matter to a sensible conclusion.

The confiscation of assets of offenders convicted of highly profitable crimes gives the Bill at least the air of justice. The overhaul of the criminal injuries compensation scheme is long overdue and is to be welcomed. Public feeling is quite rightly rising very high indeed about the violence in the community. It is a scar on the face of this civilised nation that thugs, brutes and violators run free while non-violent offenders, fine defaulters and the mentally ill clutter up expensive prison beds. Both Labour and Conservative Governments have falsely promised to reduce the prison population and have so far dismally failed to do so. I hope that my right hon. Friend will have greater success than has been achieved in the past—he certainly cannot have less success.

My commendation of the Bill is, however, tempered with a deep disappointment. The Bill is essentially a rag-bag of measures and an administrative housekeeping system. No attempt appears to have been made to reduce the prison population or to make room for those who terrorise their neighbours. The Government have rightly devoted great attention to the needs of the police, the courts and the prison service. They are rightly generous in their allocation of resources to the needs of those services. They have given the police and the courts great powers to deal with the problems of crime and if those powers are exercised our streets may be slightly safer, but they have failed to tackle the problems of non-violent offenders.

The Bill fails by its omission of any proposals to reduce this country's excessive use of imprisonment for non-violent people. We send more people to prison than any other major west European country and we imprison them in conditions that are nothing less than a national scandal. Fewer than one in five prisoners have committed crimes of violence, sex or robbery. Of the 92,800 sentenced offenders entering custody in 1984, only 15,000 had committed such crimes. In addition, 21,800 fine defaulters received short custodial sentences, a very costly administrative hazard.

Fifty-eight per cent. of male offenders leaving penal establishments are back before the courts within two years, and 33 per cent. have to spend most of every 24 hours in overcrowded prisons without easy access to private toilet facilities. What a shambles it is. The only word to describe such a system is "perverse". It seems designed to create and maintain criminality. Unless sanctions other than custodial sentences can be found for non-violent offenders, the Bill is bound to increase the problems because it cannot do other than increase the number of men and women in prison.

My final criticism is that the wrong people are being sent to prison. To pile more people on top of those already there is obscene. In considering the problems that will be increased we should not forget that in the past few years there have been riots in 22 prisons and the resulting damage has cost the taxpayer many millions of pounds and brought even worse problems for prison staff. We must not lose sight of the immense difficulties and dangers that prison staff carry on behalf of society.

For a nation proud of its commitment to youth, Aileen Ballantyne's article in *The Guardian* of 24 November makes grim reading. It states:

"In all just over 11 per cent. of under 16 year olds who come before the Courts receive custodial sentences. But there is little evidence that this approach to juvenile crime is having any effect on reconviction rates. 71 per cent. of those sentenced to detention centres and 81 per cent. of those sentenced to youth custody centres re-offend within two years of release."

On the same day, *The Guardian* speculated that the Home Affairs Committee was about to recommend a single sentence of "treatment" for all under 18-year-olds instead of custody. The Bill should have dealt with some such measures. It is a tragedy that it has not done so and I hope that it is not too late to remedy that omission.

Many people feel that the police, the courts and the prison service are not tackling their problems. I believe that the proposal to abolish peremptory challenge of jurors will enhance that lack of confidence in our system of justice. When emotion runs high, as it did in the miners' strike and in the aftermath of the IRA bombings and the inner city riots, the law is rightly seen as the great cohesive force in our society. Anything which weakens that will produce an impossible situation when people's confidence in the courts is already wavering. It is right that on such occasions, and, indeed, on all occasions, the defendant's right to a fair and unbiased trial should be publicly demonstrated and that the defendant should be able to exercise his or her right to countermand public bias. The abolition of the right to peremptory challenge will greatly damage public confidence in the impartiality of the courts.

Unless changes are made in Committee it will be very difficult for me — a strong supporter of the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders and the prevention of crime, with a long interest in justice and in the improvement of the prison system — to support the Bill if it came back to the House as now drafted. I hope that the Committee will remove this tinder box of injustice and change the Bill.

7.16 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) has spoken with great eloquence on a number of matters that I had wished to raise in my speech. I agree with his every word and I hope that the Minister will pay real attention to that speech from a member of his own party.

The right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) spoke of the decline in moral standards in this country. I very much agree with him, as I am sure do most, if not all, Members of the House. There is a considerable need to teach the young standards to apply in their adult lives. I remind the right hon. and learned Gentleman, however, that any Government who, through their economic policies, lower the material standards of any substantial sector of society, run the risk of lowering moral standards in that sector of society. There is some statistical evidence, which all of us who have experience in the courts would support anecdotally, that that has been the case in this country. Some years ago, before I became a Member of the House, I attended a debate in which a Conservative Member quoted the Prime Minister as saying that unemployment does not in any way contribute to crime. What a misjudgement and a myth that was, and how wrong it has proved to be.

I remind the right hon. and learned Gentleman, too, that part of the Bill is designed to deal with a very serious decline in moral standards, not among people who are ill educated and do not know the difference between right and wrong but among those who are extremely well educated and perfectly well aware of the difference between right and wrong, but who are committing massively increasing offences of enormous fraud in high places. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman is saying that the Bill in some way makes a contribution on behalf of the Government to raising moral standards in this country, I believe that he has failed to read the Bill properly. As his hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham said, the Bill is no more than a ragbag of administrative measures.

Sir Ian Percival: If the hon. and learned Gentleman is suggesting that there is a link between unemployment and crime and is seeking through that to blame the Government, that is a damned insult to the unemployed. Of course a great many convicted people are unemployed. All professional and petty crooks are unemployed and have no intention of being employed, but the vast majority of generally unemployed people lead decent, honest law-abiding lives and ought to be congratulated.

Mr. Carlile: Of course the majority of unemployed people lead honest lives, but where has the right hon. and learned Gentleman been for the past few years? Does he disagree with the deputy Prime Minister, Viscount Whitelaw, who has said in terms that he accepts there is a link between unemployment and crime? The right hon. and learned Gentleman should open his eyes and look at the evidence of what is happening.

When the Home Secretary introduced this Bill he said, in effect, that it was the last piece of the Government's master plan for the criminal justice system in Britain. It was the final piece in the jigsaw, the last of a series of Bills, and no doubt the Government will seek to rely upon it at the next general election for the bogus allegation that they have made law and order their own fiefdom. Why have we had to wait until the eighth and probably the last Session of Parliament of this Prime Minister's Government for the Government's plans for the criminal justice system to be completed? If they thought that they had the answer to those problems why has it taken so long to produce them?

The Bill, therefore, is part of the overall package of measures that the Government have introduced. God knows, we have had many such measures. Some of us, including the Minister of State, suffered for 59 meetings on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Mellor): I attended more of them than the hon. and learned Gentleman did.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman: Look at the Home Secretary's attendance record.

Mr. Carlile: I am grateful for the sedentary intervenion by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr.

[Mr. Carlile]

Kaufman). The Home Secretary of the time appeared for a total of about one hour during the whole of those 59 meetings. If one looks at the collection of Bills that have been introduced over the last eight Sessions one sees that the Government have made an enfeebled attempt to address the problems. But at least the people are now in a position to judge what the Government have done because we have been told that this is the end of the Government's criminal justice scheme.

I shall not quote many examples from the avalanche of statistics which condemn the Government's criminal justice policy, but let us reflect on just a couple of the more horrifying statistics. Since 1979 the number of remand prisoners, unconvicted people, has doubled from 4,000 to 8,000 in round figures. Those people are sometimes held in fearful conditions, which the hon. Member for Cheltenham has described. A few days ago an in-depth investigation by *The Independent* revealed that many are held in prisons pervaded by the smell of urine and faeces. Over that same period from 1979 the waiting time between charge and trial for remand prisoners has gone up by over 70 per cent. That figure is based on the Government's own statistics contained in their glossy publication called "Criminal Justice: A Working Paper" which came out yesterday.

What have the Government put forward to meet the increasing evidence produced by criminologists about the damaging effect of crime, even minor crime, upon the victim? What have they done not merely to deal with procedure in court but actually to stem the massive increase in fraud offences which are revealed daily and on an international scale in our newspapers? Very little.

Some provisions of the Bill are welcome. I welcome the establishment of a serious fraud office and much of the revision of preparatory and trial procedures for fraud cases. They are useful reforms. Simplification of the way in which documents are treated is welcome, and I accept that we have to look at the hearsay rule, though I have grave misgivings about the effect upon a defendant of some of the proposed measures. In Committee we shall have to ensure that we have the checks to go with the balances.

I welcome the provisions that will remove the agony experienced by an advocate who has to cross-examine a child in the full glare of the open court system. I also welcome the provisions that would deprive people of the proceeds of serious crime and I welcome too—though with the misgivings expressed by the right hon. Member for Gorton—the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board being put on a statutory basis. However, I fear that the Bill as it stands suffers from flaws which are so unacceptable as to be fatal.

The Bill makes no contribution whatever to the real problems of burgeoning crime that face society, crimes of violence and crimes in which weapons such as those mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) are used. The Bill fails even to start upon the process recommended by the Law Commission of codification—meaning simplification—of our criminal law: but the real weakness of the Bill is the attack that it makes upon our jury system. Obviously, the Home Secretary agrees basically with my view because he said that the right to jury trial is the central pillar of our criminal justice system.

The right hon. Member for Gorton went back to a quotation from "Blackstone". He got it in first, but I think a number of other hon. Members might have used it in the debate, as part of the proof that the jury system and the right to peremptory challenge are historically fundamental to our criminal trial process. The jury system has been under threat and has been whittled away for many years.

In 1973, under a Tory Government, the right to question jurors was restricted, and a juror's occupation was no longer made available to the defence so that an informed judgment about the juror could be made when deciding whether to challenge. In 1977, under a Labour Government, some cases were removed from juries, and under that same Labour Government the defence right to challenge jurors was reduced. In 1978, interestingly under a Labour Government, jury vetting was legitimised, and in 1984 the number of people disqualified from sitting on juries was doubled by the Juries (Disqualification) Act 1984. Now the right peremptorily to challenge jurors, so the Government say, is to be taken away.

In the White Paper the Government admit that the peremptory challenge can be useful as a substitute for challenge for cause. Challenge for cause means that reasons have to be given in open court. Peremptory challenge can save time, embarrassment and untold complications.

As a practitioner with some experience I foresee terrible arguments in the courts and a huge corpus of case law building up as to whether defence counsel is entitled to challenge jurors because they are black people, women, white people, men, working people, accountants, you name it, on the jury. The peremptory challenge system, against which there is no evidence of misuse in modern times, is a useful shorthand way of avoiding the embarrassment and difficulties which the courts will face if the only challenge by the defence is to be challenge for cause.

As a previous speaker has said, the Government are not even-handed about this. They have destroyed the right of peremptory challenge for the defence but not for the prosecution. Oh yes, we are assured that prosecutors will be given non-statutory guidelines, but they will still have the right of stand by—peremptory challenge for the prosecution—and vetted juries, a system in which the dice are loaded in favour of the prosecution and against the defence. That system will offend our traditions and, as a lawyer, it will offend my instincts and, I think, the instincts of many others in the House. It will lead to injustice and further unfair criticisms of the jury system.

There has been sniping at the way the jury was challenged in the Cyprus spy trial, but nobody, as far as I know, has had the courage to go outside this House and stand up and say that distinguished leading counsel in that case misused their right on behalf of defendants to challenge the jury. It has been said in this House but not outside. It may be that in the case of multiple defendants there are too many challenges, although I think that is an inconvenience we can put up with in order to retain our fair jury system. In any event, I cannot imagine that it would over-tax the Government and their officials to produce a simple, sliding scale system which would keep the total number of challenges down to what we would all regard as a reasonable maximum.

The very right to trial by jury deserves some attention. The Home Secretary said how important it is that that central pillar of our system, the jury trial, should be

available for those charged with serious offences. I agree. However, people who are charged with assault and battery are no longer to have the right of jury trials. That means that a police officer charged with common assault is no longer to have the right of jury trial. I am aware that the great majority of police officers who are charged with assault elect trial by jury because they want to be tried by a cross-section of the non-criminal population at large. It is right that they should retain their right to trial by jury, for if they are convicted they will lose their livelihoods, pension rights, self-esteem and the esteem of others and it is quite likely that they will have to suffer—even for a short period—the deep humiliation of a very unpleasant period of imprisonment.

What about the social worker, or the house-parent of a children's home who is charged with common assault? Is it conceivably right that such a person should be deprived of the right to elect trial by jury when their whole livelihoods and future career prospects could be wrecked by a conviction of what might seem on the face of it a minor offence, but in reality is not?

I believe that a charge of committing damage which causes just under £2,000 of damage is not a trivial offence either. It is an offence for which sentences of imprisonment are rightly passed. I believe that where people's liberty is at issue—for substantial periods—they should have the right to jury trial for what are serious offences. The Bill represents a real challenge to our jury system and therefore a challenge to us in this House, upon whom the population rely to maintain their traditional liberties. As yet, these liberties are not contained in any Bill of rights and therefore these liberties must be maintained by the determination of all hon. Members of this honourable House. I hope we shall see more Conservative Members speaking out both here and in Committee in defence of the retention of the jury system.

The Bill will also damage community relations. It will deprive the immigrant overstayer of the right of appeal within the immigration appeal system. It will introduce a new notion of the continuing offence, which will even include the absurd proposition that the immigrant will be guilty of an offence while awaiting trial. That will damage relations between the police, immigrant communities and the authorities as a whole. Surely that cannot be a sensible part of the Government's masterplan for the criminal justice system.

Not only is it wholly unacceptable that the proposed revision of prison discipline is not included in this Bill but, even when the Government finally get round to putting something before the House, they apparently will not follow the recommendations of the Prior committee. The Government, so it would appear, have decided it is worth ignoring the careful deliberations of a committee which devised an excellent system of fair prison disciplinary judgment. The Government have done so to save what appears to be no more than £300,000.

We in this country have always been fearless in providing a safe haven for those who elsewhere face charges for what could be described as political offences. Such charges have been made under systems of justice which are unacceptable to us. We have been able to give sanctuary to many even though we have not always agreed with them. For example, not everyone agreed with everything Garibaldi said but this country was prepared to offer him sanctuary, and protection from extradition.

We must ensure that this country remains a country in which fairness, justice, and fearlessness against foreign Governments who are less just than we, are maintained, so that we can remain proud of our system.

There are many other issues in the Bill which must be considered in Committee and I give the Minister and the Home Secretary due notice that, particularly on proposals against the jury system, many of us will be prepared to argue vehemently and long for the retention of the right of jury trial.

If one can be forgiven for using rugby analogy, the Home Secretary, by introducing this Bill, has made a flying tackle which has left him writhing in the mud while the criminal justice system has run away. Crime is ever on the increase, but in this Bill nothing of substance has been offered to allay the fears of the people.

7.39 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I hope that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) will forgive me if I did not closely follow his argument. I was gripped not only by what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said, but by the excellent speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving), who speaks on these matters with knowledge. He produced some telling statistics. He said that about 58 per cent. of criminals return to prison. He complained about our present prison system and said how inadequate and unsatisfactory it is. Hon. Members must agree that that is a shocking statistic. I am lucky to have in my constituency one of the top security prisons, at Gartree. That prison is regarded as a good one. There is no doubt that many improvements could be made.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will ask his right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to examine a report that was sent to him about a month ago from my constituency. It concerns a serving police officer from Market Harborough, who went to the United States on a Winston Churchill Foundation award. For about three months, he studied an American experiment. The worst criminals were generally not those of mature age, but were in their late teens or early 20s. In America, the worst persistent criminals are taken to camps where they live rough for a month and have to depend upon each other. This is an innovation. The police officer's wife, who is a serving policewoman, went with him. A report on what they found lies on the desk of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham said that it is not good enough to be satisfied with over 50 per cent. recidivism. Let us try something different. Let us try to put American expertise into the treatment of persistent young —male and female—offenders in Britain. We may lose, but it is worth a try.

My first criticism of the Bill relates to the fact that certain firearm offences are likely to attract terms of life imprisonment. A range of 40 to 50 firearm offences are specified in the Firearms Act 1968. The worst two types have been selected for this deterrent. Although I support the Bill, I am not convinced that my right hon. Friend's approach will be successful. What will a determined, armed criminal say and do when he is caught? He will know perfectly well that, if he lands inside, he will face life imprisonment. This measure will be an incentive to an

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armed criminal to use his gun to resist arrest and to escape rather than to leave the weapon in his pocket to reassure him and never think of using it.

If we pass these two clauses strengthening the penalties of the Firearms Act 1968 to provide for life imprisonment, we shall put at greater risk the lives of police officers and all those engaged in protecting property.

This may or may not be an election year—I do not think it is, or will be in 1987. That is beside the point. It always sounds good to say, "We have done something, we have got life imprisonment for armed criminals." What does it amount to when we examine the 40 or 50 offences in the Firearms Act 1968? Some offences are serious, such as shortening a shotgun. Nobody who shortens a shotgun is of good intent. There is a range of grave offences. The 1968 Act stipulates penalties of up to 12 years, accompanied by a fine. Some are substantial terms of imprisonment.

What matters is not the range of available penalties, but how the judiciary and the magistracy will apply them. It frightened me to look at the range of maximum penalties in the 1968 Act—I shut the book quickly. We must examine how they have been utilised by the different benches—by the magistrates and by the higher courts. They have not even paid lip service to the range of deterrents that Parliament has laid down. As I know a little about this subject, I know that what my right hon. Friend intends to do is a bit of eyewash.

The transfer of some matters from a higher court to a magistrates court may or may not be a good idea. I expect that I am not alone in having sent letters to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in the last month or two. Magistrates in my constituency, the chairman of the juvenile court in Leicester, the clerk to the magistrates of the Market Harborough bench, and many other magistrates have written to me. They are worried about steps that have been taken by the Government to withdraw the police presence from magistrates courts. I sent these letters to the Home Secretary. I know that he has a lot on his plate, and I admire the way in which he gets on with what he does.

Nevertheless, in Leicestershire, it is safe to say that the magistrates are uneasy at the prospect — due to legislation that we have passed and which came into effect on 1 October this year—of magistrates courts sitting without a police presence. Very often, the police do not do anything, but it is the opinion of the magistrates that they provide a certain reassurance. They reassure timid witnesses. They could be there to give evidence in future prosecutions.

My right hon. Friend asks the House to approve the transfer of four more offences from the higher courts to the magistrates courts, including serious offences relating to assault and battery. Surely these matters cannot be tried at magistrates' court level without a prominent police presence. The chief constable in the county of Leicester has been approached. He has agreed, on a trial basis, until funds are found from somewhere, or the money is authorised by the Home Office, to have a police court presence for a period of six months, from 1 October 1986.

I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends not to expect us to accept these further four responsibilities being handed down from higher courts to be properly dealt with by the magistrates court unless they can have the reassurance, which they request, of a permanent police presence.

7.49 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): It appears that under clause 121 a person who comes to this country as a resident or refugee and overstays is to be prosecuted and to have no right of appeal. I believe that that should be considered against the background of the conventions on refugees to which this country is meant to be a signatory and which give anyone who claims refugee status and overstays a right of appeal. If we take away that right of appeal, where do we lie in respect to the conventions?

I draw the Minister's attention to the report of the Special Select Committee on race relations of about two years ago in which we showed considerable concern for refugee status and the way in which the British Government seem to fly in the face of many of the Geneva conventions. As has been said, we used to be extremely proud that we were the home of the refugees. Britain, especially under this Administration, which is reluctant to give political asylum to anyone, seems to have become the one country which the genuine political refugee seeks to avoid for fear that eventually he will be thrown back to his country of origin, where often his life is in danger.

I shall not travel further down that line but will return to the main substance of the Bill. Clause 1 will set up the serious fraud office. I welcome any measure that leads to prosecutions in some major frauds of the past few years in which people have escaped prosecution. As we have seen in recent weeks, there is certainly insider dealing. The problem must be tackled, and that requires expertise. As I have said in respect of the Crown prosecution service, if we really want a service that works, we must set it up properly, put in the resources at the beginning, obtain the best, most qualified staff and support them. Financial costs of £3 million or £4 million have been mentioned. If we are to buy the best—and we need the best in starting the service — we should at least invest wisely and properly at the beginning. We might then produce a service that carries out its task properly. I think that is the will of the House.

I should like to put in a plug for the Crown prosecution service, of which I am a fervent supporter. I do not apologise for that. Perhaps, if there were a little more investment in that service, some of the ills about which many people carp and complain would easily be overcome. With the right staffing and the right resources, I am certain that we shall produce a first-class service of which we can all be proud. The Government have failed with that service, but I hope that, with this one, they have learnt their lesson and that there will be an improvement and a service worth having. We badly need a good service. I think that there have been nine prosecutions in the past few years for insider dealing. One need not walk "the square mile" for long to know that nine prosecutions are but the tip of the iceberg. A vast morass of corrupt misdealing remains undetected. We may well in this legislation remedy that wrong.

My next point concerns juries. I must declare an interest as a practicising barrister. I have the advantage, pehaps, of having been both a solicitor and a barrister, which makes me unusal in some ways.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): The hon. Gentleman briefs himself.

Mr. Bermingham: Indeed.

Having watched and participated in the selection of jurors for the best part of 20 years, I have begun to notice something. Since the White Paper was published in March, I have taken the opportunity to ask other barristers around the country for their views. It seems that most barristers do not challenge most of the time. That right is rarely used, but there are places where it needs to be used. The fuss and bother have grown, basically, in the press which has hit upon the exceptional cases in which the peremptory challenge is used and blown them out of proportion. But in perhaps 99 per cent. of cases, the challenge is not used.

The other day, someone said to me, "But what if you go to Bodmin or Mold Crown courts where the juries are drawn from the immediate locale, the villages?" The barristers practising in those areas often find that the defendant says to them, "I think that I know that chap." He may be a shopkeeper or someone who works on the next farm but one. Because the jury in a small Crown court is drawn from the local area, the anonymity of the cities is missing. Those who practise on the western and Welsh circuits fear that they will run into that problem. How will they challenge for cause? Do they stand up before the judge and say, "Your honour, challenge for cause. We think that we know that man."?

Mr. Mellor: Of course.

Mr. Bermingham: The Minister says, "Of course." But that argument can be turned round if one is a member of the jury. People may say, "He was not challenged. What is the relationship between the two?" The questioning against the defendant begins. The minute one starts going down the road of challenging for cause, one starts to create innumerable problems, which we do not have now.

Mr. Best: In my experience in the courts, if there is any question of there being a nexus between a member of the jury and the defendant, invariably the judge, to be absolutely safe, discharges that juror.

Mr. Bermingham: I concede that, but at present, if one feels that way, one makes the challenge and does not have to give the reason. One does not begin to explain before the rest of the jury why certain people should not be on the jury.

Mr. Mellor: I do not want to prolong this matter, but the hon. Gentleman has always interested me greatly. Having started with the appropriate admisson that the challenge is sparingly used, he gave us an example from the very courts in which he will see, if he looks at the figures, that it is rarely used. The peremptory challenge is most often used in the Central Criminal Court. Although I, as a member of the legal profession, am as gullible as any of my colleagues, I think that the idea that the peremptory challenge is used at the Old Bailey because of that does not wash.

Mr. Bermingham: If the Minister of State had listened carefully, perhaps he would have realised what I said. Perhaps he will read my statements. I said that the fear of those who practise on the Welsh and western circuits concerns removing their right to challenge. I agree with the Minister that there are cases in which the system has been misused. But, just because someone commits a crime, one does not abolish the system.

I do not want us to go down the road of the American courts in which four days are spent trying to swear in a jury, which gets around every conceivable challenge. That does no one a service. Our system limits us to three challenges. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) suggested considering a scale of collective challenges in cases involving multiple defendants. Perhaps there is some merit in that, although it needs further consideration. I ask the Minister of State and the Home Secretary to accept that there is a strong feeling in the legal profession that the removal of the peremptory challenge is not a good idea.

I hope that I am lucky enough to serve on the Committee, when we may again consider the review of sentencing. Again, we are treading a dangerous road. Despite what one may say about the Attorney-General being the one person who can decide, the reality of practical life is that the sentences about which complaints are made — for example, from Leeds and Newcastle-upon-Tyne Crown courts — result from the Crown prosecutors speaking to counsel, taking a view on the sentence and then beginning a process of referring the matter through the system to the director's office and, ultimately, to the Attorney-General. In effect, one is saying to the prosecution, "You should have an interest in the sentence passed by the court." Many of us believe that a good prosecutor stands aloof from sentencing. The prosecutor's function is to present the facts of the case to the court.

Mr. Mellor *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Bermingham: The Minister shakes his head in disagreement. He should take the trouble to ask those who prosecute day in and day out, as I do, what they think. Perhaps then he will be led away from the advice that he is getting from the Box, which is taking him well away from what he ought to do.

Mr. Mellor: I should not rise to the hon. Gentleman's bait because the choice is either not to listen, or to listen and constantly disagree. I am not taking issue with the proposition that the prosecution does not want to get involved in sentencing. The hon. Gentleman has a sharp mind and should address himself to the proposal before the House, which is not that prosecutors should become remotely involved but that the Attorney-General should decide — as he does at the moment on an alleged misdirection in law that leads to an acquittal—whether it is in the public interest to refer the matter to the Court of Appeal, which will consider, on an application, whether it wishes to hear it. That has nothing whatsoever to do with the prosecution. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to condemn the proposal, he should do so only on a clear understanding of what it is.

Mr. Bermingham: I say again, and with great respect to the Minister, "How wrong you read me." I am merely suggesting that the sentence will land in the hands of the Attorney-General because somebody has taken exception to it and the practice will grow. Once again, we are starting on the wrong road.

Lord Justice Lawton said in the Court of Appeal the other day that he welcomed that proposal, so that he could start reviewing sentences. We all know that the judiciary keeps its eye upon sentencing, and that has worked well in the past. I should like to see further developed the idea

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of senior judges reviewing the sentences passed by recorders, assistant recorders and Crown court judges. That would provide consistent sentencing, and a series of tariff levels, and there is no harm in that.

However, that does not require us to start on the road of formal review. It was said earlier that sometimes the Lord Chief Justice plucks a case from the list of sentences coming to appeal to give that advice. We all know that that happens, and many of us welcome it because it helps towards consistency. Perhaps it could be developed.

The Bill contains many fascinating features which will no doubt be considered in great depth in Committee. I hope that many changes will be made to the Bill, because we all want to see our criminal law brought into the 21st century on time, and to see justice done. We all pursue that goal. On this occasion the Government have again made several fundamental errors.

8.3 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): When the Bill gets onto the statute book, a big step will have been taken to improve our criminal legal system. There are so many improvements, changes for the better, and actions taken where they have been badly needed, that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) might have been speaking in a wholly different debate, so unnecessarily sour and irrelevant were many of his comments.

The trouble with the right hon. Gentleman's claim to be concerned about law and order is that it is both relatively new and wholly unconvincing. While his party is full of people who spend their energies attacking the police, insulting the judges and urging breaches of the law, it is hardly credible for its members to purport to be of the party of law and order. As the right hon. Gentleman's speech illustrated, their best proposals, such as neighbourhood watch schemes, have, of course, long since been Conservative party policy, and they have been proved very effective.

The Bill is a constructive successor to the many other improvements that the Government have already introduced into the legal system. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which gives sensible powers to the police and more protection for the suspect, the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1984 and other administrative steps to reduce delay — for example, the tape recording of interviews, which is being introduced too slowly, but which, nevertheless, is spreading — will, more than anything else, speed the process of criminal trials and improve justice.

Likewise, the answer given to me yesterday by my hon. Friend the Minister on the setting of time limits for bringing cases to trial was impressive, but it would be far more impressive if he undertook the introduction of a scheme requiring a limit of 110 days, as we already have in Scotland. I hope that it will not be too long before his proposals are fully implemented. Other substantial improvements have been the improvement in pay, training, equipment, leadership and morale in the police that the Government have achieved, the crime prevention measures, which are expanding all the time and which have proved so successful, the extension of the armoury of sentences available to the courts and the radical prison building programme.

The trouble with the Bill is that it is so large, long, diverse and worthy of discussion that to speak for 10 minutes on Second Reading becomes a frustrating exercise. I want to spend what is left of my time criticising those parts of the Bill that I believe are a mistake, or that will require substantial further consideration.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take it as read that I commend the major parts of the Bill and the important measures of implementing action against serious fraudsters and protecting victims. Putting the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board on a statutory basis will inevitably require more resources to be made available. Crime will be reduced by sensible, helpful and responsible measures such as the attempt to end the unacceptable position whereby those who make fortunes from crime are allowed to hold on to their ill-gotten gains and enjoy them later; the extension of remedies against juvenile crime by holding parents more responsible; the strengthening of control against immigration abuse; and the sensible easing of the rules that prevent us from returning other countries' villains to their own country —in reciprocity that will enable us to get back for trial in this country our citizens whom we suspect of crime. All those measures play their part, and I support them.

My first criticism of the Bill relates to clause 83, which would abolish the defendant's right to challenge up to three potential jurors without giving a reason. In my view, that would be a big mistake.

Some hon. Members who seem to know little or nothing about the operation of our criminal trials have called for that, as have others who believe all they read in the papers, that guilty people are acquitted wholesale because defendants are tailoring the juries. That is utter nonsense. I do not know by what authority that assertion is made, but it runs contrary to the experience of those of us who practice in the criminal courts.

I wonder whether all those who speak loudest for the measure know what a peremptory challenge is. How can one tailor a jury if one is allowed to say no to only three people whom one does not like the look of? One cannot question them to discover that they will not favour one's case. They may very well be replaced by people who are even more ill-disposed towards the defendant than those who were challenged. Hon. Members who are concerned about the practice of tailoring should realise that that is far more likely to happen as a result of this measure because pressure will inevitably build up for an extension of the right to challenge jurors for cause.

Mr. Best: Does my hon. and learned Friend accept that it is very unsatisfactory that the right of peremptory challenge should be on the basis only of what a juror looks like, and no other investigation? Has he considered the system in the United States which, albeit lengthy, ensures that where there is a challenge, there is challenge for a very good cause because the individual jurors are examined?

Mr. Lawrence: I am sure that the road down which the United States has progressed is specifically one that would not be attractive to this or any other Government. The spectacle in a United States court of juries being challenged for one, two or three days, to process a trial

that takes half a day or a day, is preposterous. Apart from that, it is extremely expensive and very demanding on the time of the jurymen. It may be one reason why, in some of the states in America, the number of jurymen who sit on juries is much lower than 12. Therefore, the example of the United States is particularly bad and should be held up as a dreadful warning to all of us here.

The harm to the system which might be caused by the abolition of that measure is not, I think, always realised. At present it costs very little in financial and administrative terms to operate. What matters above all else, once we are considering the interests of an accused person, as we must in our system, is that the person on trial should have confidence in the jury that tries him. If he sees that the prosecution has a right to stand by for the Crown those whom it does not want to see as jurors, how on earth can any defendant consider that the system will be other than one-sided against him?

If, on the other hand, the prosecution is unable to stand by for the Crown, how many convicted people who have not conformed with the requirements of disqualification, either because they are too stupid or because they wish to ignore them, will sit on our juries? I was told by a colleague only yesterday that in the Old Bailey, out of 52 people chosen for a jury panel, three had convictions. If the Crown had not been able to stand them by, some of the jurymen who had previous convictions would have served on juries. That is wholly undesirable.

If a black defendant cannot have at least some black jurymen if he wants them, if a woman cannot have at least some women, or if a young person cannot have at least some youngish people on the jury, how can we believe that there will be confidence in the jury system by those whose co-operation, after all, is absolutely vital for the process of a criminal trial? We could not try people if they refused to take part in the process, if they lay down on the floor of the dock, or if they made noises and had to be taken away. The whole point is that the defendant in a criminal trial should have confidence in the jury, and the abolition of the peremptory challenge will severely weaken that, because it is a safety valve. A man who has been in custody for a year might never believe that the system has not been weighted against him if he cannot at least have the right to challenge jurymen whose faces he does not like, and in a way that does not upset the jury.

And if I were a juryman, I should not like to be asked probing questions about my views, by biases, where I come from, where I live, how many children I have and all the details of my private life. There must be many defendants who will baulk at challenging someone on the jury if they feel that by doing so they will disturb the equilibrium of the jury and set up opposition to themselves, even though they have no confidence in a juryman.

It is inevitable that if the peremptory challenge goes, there will be many more challenges for cause. The judges will not be able to resist that pressure. It will strip away the privacy of jurymen, questions will take a great deal of time and trials will be considerably delayed and much more expensive. We shall slide down the United States slope.

Opposition to the abolition of that measure has been strong this evening and almost unanimous. It will become stronger as the public realise what the measure involves. The proposal will be rejected by the majority of people in the legal profession and it is they who have to operate the system. This proposal will not, I hope, endure, but if it does, my hon. Friend the Minister of State will have to manage with as much fortitude as he can muster without my support in the Lobby.

My second criticism is about clause 29. My objection is that it is an unnecessary stick for the Government to beat their own back with. I believe that my hon. Friend the Minister of State and the Attorney-General will come to regret the position in which they will be placed. Everyone who feels that a sentence has been less severe than he would like, which is likely to be a high proportion of victims in criminal trials, will clamour for the Attorney-General to appeal, and he will have to say no so often that the impression will get around that the Government are unfavourably disposed towards severe sentences.

Does my hon. Friend the Minister of State think that he will avoid publicity for low sentences by such a measure? There will be publicity when the low sentence is passed, when the Attorney-General says no and when the Court of Appeal says, "We would have imposed a bigger sentence but the Government have not given us the legislation to do so." The question will then be: will the Government introduce the power to impose increased sentences on people whom some members of the public or the prosecution think have been given inadequate sentences? Then one opens up a whole new can of worms. It will not be necessary for me to waste time in my short speech on developing that argument. As it is, a charade will develop in which the Court of Appeal will wish to take no part. It will not wish to sit there and to hear cases presented to it when it has to say, "If we had been the judge, and if we had heard this, that and the other, in a similar case, we would have given such and such a sentence."

The proposal is quite simply not necessary because guidelines can be, and are being, laid down on all subjects of importance — rape, child abuse, City fraud, social security fraud, drug cases and violence. The guidelines are coming out of the Court of Appeal, for the guidance of judges, to bring their sentences into more or less conformity throughout the country. That happens whenever an appeal is lodged against a sentence. The measure is unnecessary. It is an unnecessary creation of a self-imposed misery on the Government and the poor Attorney-General.

Thirdly, the trouble with clause 30 is that the people who are most at risk — the police — are against it. We should listen to them. If one gives life imprisonment for the carrying of firearms, the person who is faced with that may be tempted to say that if he is to be hanged for a sheep, he might as well be hanged for a lamb, and use the firearm to kill. The person in the front line will be the police officer. Either he will be frightened to relieve the villain of his weapon in case he shoots, or he will be bold and courageous, and run the risk of being shot. If the police officer is shot, the villain will escape arrest, and, by escaping arrest, he will avoid a life sentence. If he is caught, he will stand to gain no more than a life sentence in any event. The measure is unnecessary. If a firearm is not used but is only carried, 14 years' imprisonment is quite enough. If it is used, life imprisonment can be given for murder or attempted murder or the use of the weapon.

I have doubt rather than criticism about clause 21. I welcome the idea behind sparing children the horrors of court proceedings, but there are real procedural and technical difficulties in operating such a scheme and in a way which will not do injustice to a defendant in a

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notoriously dangerous trial area. If a defendant cannot have the right to have the witness who gives evidence against him there in the presence of a jury, however miserable and upsetting such a procedure is, he may think that an injustice is being done. The psychological effect of looking at and cross-examining someone on a video screen is different from that of seeing a witness sitting or standing before one in a witness box.

I am most sympathetic to the Government's proposal, but I strongly doubt whether it will be as straightforward to operate as my right hon. Friend might think. The matter must be examined in greater detail and given more thought. I refer my hon. Friend the Minister to a most interesting article by Professor Glanville Williams in one of the daily papers. He suggested that the measure did not go far enough. However, if it went further perhaps we could introduce refinements that would make it more acceptable than this simple proposal.

With so much good in the Bill I ask my hon. Friends not to spoil it and perhaps jeopardise its chances because of the few measures which do not carry the support of those who must operate the system and will be responsible for making it work.

8.21 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) remarked on the many deficiences in the Bill. He described it as a ragbag. Indeed it is. It is a little bit of anything and not much of everything. The Bill may be part of the Government's overall strategy, as the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) said. It has much of the pre-election fever about it, but, unfortunately, it falls far short of being a deathbed repentance.

No one can deny that the criminal justice system is in need of reform, but the Bill only scratches at the surface. It does not consider, and it certainly does not present, a positive approach to many of the areas of anxiety that it purports to confront.

It is reasonable that the entire question of the use of video equipment should be given detailed consideration. It should not be presented as a half-thought-out proposal to try to allay the anxiety of the general public about young children being required to give evidence in abuse cases.

The measures in the Bill certainly fail to show any understanding of the distress caused to young children while giving evidence or of the need to protect their young lives from even greater emotional damage. Why has no thought been given to other distressed witnesses, such as old ladies in their 80s and 90s who have been robbed, beaten and raped, or young girls raped by gangs of youths? Why should they have to suffer the indignity, shame, humiliation and distress of giving evidence in open court? Surely if video link evidence is being considered for use in British courts and if we are to make use of modern technology, this important change needs to be given detailed and careful consideration.

Many people, including the Police Federation, do not think that the proposals in the Bill for a live video link for certain assault and sexual offences do much to help child witnesses. Video recordings may be the answer. They should at least have been given serious consideration before the Bill was drafted.

Many other provisions in the Bill seem to raise more problems than they solve. Will the increase to life imprisonment for carrying firearms encourage the use of firearms in the furtherance of crime? If the penalty is so great for carrying firearms, the criminal will have little to lose by using them. Will the confiscation of the assets of crime, desirable though it is, penalise those who receive the assets of crime in good faith?

The Bill misses what our people most want. They want to reduce the number of victims and they want crime to be prevented, not committed and then punished. Prevention and deterrence — that must be the cornerstone of policy. That is the cornerstone of Labour party policy. We want our young, our women, our old, and weak citizens to feel secure on the streets and in their homes. That can happen only when we have a Government who are determined to invest in tackling crime.

I welcome the setting up of the serious fraud office. It will be needed to examine the Government's last election manifesto which promised to do so much to reduce crime in Britain, but which has failed so miserably.

8.26 pm

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): Who is protecting the people? Yesterday the people of Leicestershire discovered that for themselves. They had only to walk into the county hall where they saw the local Labour group objecting to the use of video cameras in the shopping centre in the middle of Leicester. That is what is meant in so many town halls throughout the country in practical terms when the Labour party talks about protecting the people. Or is this yet another activity by a local Labour party which the Shadow Cabinet will hasten to disown?

The Bill is detailed, practical and varied. Far from being a criticism, that is a strength. The Bill combines action on many different fronts. A sad experience of the criminal courts is that, during a 10-year period, different and great changes in the conditions with which they have had to cope have taken place. Therefore, far from criticising the Bill on that ground, I welcome it.

If the transfer system for offences of serious and complex fraud means that we no longer have to sit for 90 days in magistrates courts while foreign witnesses are flown to Britain to be harassed in person by defendants —as I once witnessed at first hand some years ago—the reform will certainly be worth while.

It is a long time since the days of the grand jury, but if committal proceedings are observed today it can be seen that the spirit of the grand jury is still with us. I look forward to returning to this topic on a future occasion because it will be demonstrated that the operation of the transfer system to serious and complex fraud can and should be applied to committal proceedings as a whole. I look forward at some time in the future to their complete abolition.

Part II deals with evidence. Too many of our rules of evidence in the criminal courts are far too technical and exclusionary. The proposals in part II extend the process of abolishing those rules and make the issues matters of weight. Clauses 13 and 14 see the slaughtering of more sacred cows in the area of hearsay. I am amazed that Opposition Members still want to be stuck in the 1930s with the hearsay rule in its un-reupholstered form. I welcome back an old friend—conspiracy to defraud, in

clause 12 — with whom I spent many hours over the years, until he was largely banished by the ill-conceived provisions of the Criminal Law Act 1977.

The problem with over-lenient sentences is not the habitual over-lenient judge, but misjudgment. Most judges are perfectly well aware of Thomas on "The Principles of Sentencing", the Court of Appeal guidelines, the "Criminal Appeal Reports", sentencing series and all the relevant principles that are to be applied to hypothetical sets of cases. The problem arises when, through an error of judgment, a judge of otherwise sound judgment makes a mistake. If he errs against a defendant, the matter can be put right in the Court of Appeal, but if he errs against the public interest by passing an over-lenient sentence, nothing can be done. That causes widespread demoralisation among the public and, I suspect, members of the judiciary.

So far, the Government have grappled with that problem once unsuccessfully. They are to be congratulated on attempting to deal with it again. The original proposal of publishing additional volumes from the Judicial Studies Board would not have come as close to solving it as this proposal is likely to. Once this section is in operation, as I hope it will be, it too will be seen as a step in the right direction. However, further action may subsequently prove to be necessary to give the Crown a full-blooded right of appeal against sentences which are wrong in principle.

Clause 113, together with the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 and the increase in penalties for class A drugs offences to life imprisonment, have given the courts a formidable battery of armaments with which to tackle this series of offences. It is comprehensive. The various powers in the Bill, especially those of the Customs to grant bail, give the Customs service and police drugs squads all the weapons at their disposal for which they can possibly ask.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Spencer: I am pushed for time and I cannot give way to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

I pay tribute to the work of Customs officers, especially the investigation branch. As civil servants, their rates of pay, as they will ruefully disclose, do not match those of their brothers in the drugs squads in the police units. I saw their work at first hand in the case of Dye and others recently. They are a highly skilled and professional band, especially drugs team F, led by Mr. Hewer, Mr. Houston and Mr. Avery, which is highly skilled in surveillance.

For two and a half months that team kept close surveillance on international drug traffickers, at times literally breathing down their necks and overhearing their conversations. I saw how useful another of the Government's innovations was, the tape recording of interviews.

Peremptory challenges have generated a great deal of heat and controversy. The right hon. Member for Gorton waltzed down memory lane, hand-in-hand with William Blackstone. Although that may be an engaging sight, it is not much of a solution to the problems that we in the courts must face in 1986. Much of the criticism of the reform from members of my profession is emotional and misguided. We shall not have to look for new volumes of law. If hon. Members care to look at pages 312 to 314 in 'Archbold', they will see that the matter has been hammered out in the courts since the Challenge of Jurors Act 1305.

In this area, the approach of the law should be rational, not hunched, demeaning or degrading. I will give only one example from my experience in the Dye case. Each of the six defendants exercised his right of peremptory challenge — some in full measure. About 12 or 13 jurors were removed for the defence. That would have produced a jury virtually all of whom would have been under the age of 25. On behalf of the Crown I exercised the right of stand by to get a jury of greater age range.

That exercise on my part and the part of the other counsel involved in the case is not an attractive sight. It is demeaning and degrading to the fair face of British justice for members of the bar to treat jurors rather like auctioneers at cattle markets, saying aye to some and nay to others. That is not a rational process. I would far rather have a system where somebody had to put their objections on the grounds of reason, not of hunch. I am happy to see this innovation and reform, which will have support of almost unanimous proportions in the country.

I welcome the reforms dealing with young offenders, but draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to one matter. In every county there is a need for secure accommodation for juvenile offenders. In 1984, the local authority in Leicestershire closed the only secure juvenile home and recently there have been a number of cases where magistrates have wanted to remand juvenile offenders in secure homes. Either they could not do so or they had to resort at great expense to similar homes in other areas. In many instances, young juveniles have been put into care or accommodation unsuitable to their needs and they have absconded. Most young people on the missing persons juvenile list were already in care. It is not good enough for local authorities to wash their hands of this sort of facility and leave it to everybody else simply on the grounds of political bigotry.

The reform of the criminal law is a continuing process. The Bill provides effective and varied steps once again to outflank the criminal who is always astute to sidetrack the law if he possibly can. I end, as I began, with the question, "Who will protect the public?" The Labour party has tonight suggested that we should cut the prison population by thousands, by throwing open the gaols, and that we can improve our system of criminal jurisprudence by measures such as codification. I am sure that when the day comes, and the question is posed to the British public, they will know only too well how to answer it.

8.40 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): A number of hon. Members have referred to the views of the Police Federation. I should put it on record that the Police Federation will, before we debate the Bill in Committee, make known its views fully and in writing to all hon. Members, clause by clause, in so far as its legislation committee arrives at conclusions. Therefore, at this stage I recommend to hon. Members that they do not take in vain the federation's views, except in so far as I shall make one or two of them clear.

I warmly welcome the Bill, although it is a kaleidoscope and some parts are better than others. I certainly welcome the reforms proposed in the jury system. I am glad that the fastest growing group of our fellow citizens, those between the ages of 65 and 70, are to be allowed to serve on juries.

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

Their judgment and maturity will be of great benefit. I welcome what is to be done about extradition. I would prefer that the prosecution had a straight right of appeal against excessively lenient sentences, but I recognise the Government's wisdom in understanding that the House would not accept that. What we have on offer is perhaps better than nothing, although I appreciate that that view does not command a great deal of support within the House.

I welcome the abolition of the power of magistrates to remand people to be held in police cells for up to four days. That is good news for the police service. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Minister of State have recognised the force of some of the criticisms that I, among others, made on behalf of the police service to various parts of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, so that this Bill provides some modest but useful amendments in respect of search of persons in police detention, for example, on the way to the police station.

There is then the thorny matter of the penalties for firearm offences. I am aware of the view of both the Association of County Councils and, at an early stage, of the Police Federation, that the removal of any difference between the penalty that is available for carrying a firearm or for using it would be a mistake. I am bound to say that, subject to further examination, I myself find it almost impossible to oppose the proposed increase in sentences for the carrying of firearms. I shall be surprised if, at the end of the day, the police service goes on record as being against a more severe penalty than the one that at present applies to the carriage of firearms.

The Bill does not do one thing that I wish that it did. It does not crack down on the misuse of public funds by certain local authorities in attacking the police. In particular, I refer to what is known as the GLC in exile. Eleven out of 12 Labour authorities in London still work together at Middlesex house, employing a substantial number of people, largely to attack the police. I put on record one example to which I hope that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) will address his mind.

The former GLC granted one Herbert Windsor £12,000 to start something called the Police Accountability for Community Enlightenment Group. He set this up and was given by the GLC £145,000 of ratepayers' money to attack the police. Not long ago, this gentleman was taken to court. He had not only been paid a substantial wage, but had raked off about £1,000 a month through false expenses claims and paying wages to bogus staff. He was gaoled for 18 months after being found guilty on six charges involving theft, false accounting and deception. The GLC should never have set up such a body with public funds to attack the police. I wish that the Bill, among other things, had taken some steps to stop this.

I come now to what is for me the major flaw in the Bill, and my hon. Friend the Minister will understand to what I refer—to subsections (2)*(b)* and (7) of clause 74. The effect of this clause, if it were to be passed, would be to remove police officers and a large number of others involved in law enforcement, such as prison officers, special policemen and bailiffs from the right of obtaining compensation when they are severely injured or killed in cases where it can be shown that the injury, though it arises from their law enforcement duties, is not strictly a criminal matter.

I give just three illustrations. First, I am sorry to say that this morning in Bristol a young woman police officer was killed while driving her police car. Information had been given to her that a suspect vehicle was in the vicinity. She and another officer in the car identified the wanted vehicle and immediately gave chase. Her car went out of control, she was killed and her brother officer was seriously injured, although I understand that he is likely to live. If the Bill were to pass as it stands, the relatives of that young woman police officer would no longer be eligible for compensation, because at the time of her death she was not the victim of a criminal assault. That is wrong.

The second example is that of the police officer, Mr. Taylor, who died the other day in Stoke-on-Trent. He was called to the scene of a break-in, where three housebreakers were apprehended. There was a struggle on the landing, and the policeman fell through the glass wall along with one of the housebreakers. The police officer was beneath the housebreaker. Probably that is why the suspected offender lived and the police officer died.

Because charges may yet be preferred in this case, I want to be careful in what I say, but if the officer was pushed in the course of the melee in such a fashion that he fell through the window and it could be regarded as an assault upon him and a criminal injury, then under the Bill, his dependents would still be entitled to claim compensation. However, if it were to be judged that his falling through the window were purely accidental, then that dead officer's dependents would no longer be able to claim compensation. That is totally wrong.

My third example is hypothetical. Let us suppose that a mugger, a rapist or even a terrorist were to be apprehended by a police officer, and he called on an hon. Member or another member of the public for assistance and the two together gave chase. Let us also suppose that as they were running over a roof top, a field or a street, both of the persons pursing the offender were to fall and injure themselves. The member of the public might have a minor injury and break his wrist. The police officer might break his back. If the Bill were to be passed, the member of the public would be eligible—and rightly so—for compensation, but the police officer would not.

Of the nine Home Secretaries with whom I have worked over the years—I say this, I hope, sparing his blushes—my right hon. Friend is the most sensible and sensitive of the lot. He has told me that he understands the police anxieties about this. Very fairly this afternoon, he said that he will meet the police to see whether it is possible to arrive at an understanding.

My right hon. Friend will have been fortified in that intention by the words of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr.Kaufman). I rarely look a gift horse in the mouth. If the Opposition are prepared to take that view for proper reasons, and not because they are trying to climb aboard what they think might be an issue that will do them a little good, then I and the Police Federation will be glad of their support. The Home Secretary is a man of wisdom and perception. I believe that in one way or another he will find a modus vivendi that will avoid discriminating against the police service in this fashion.

I conclude with a few words about the proposed amendment. During my time in the House, with the nine Home Secretaries, I have noticed that crime has continued to rise under all Governments and in all countries. It is therefore facile for the right hon. Member for Gorton to

seek to lay the problem at the door of this Government or of any other Government. It is simplism of the worst kind for him to suggest that it is all down to unemployment. The right hon. Gentleman ought to realise that the most rapid increase in crime in this country is among young males between the ages of 13 and 16. By definition, they are not unemployed. The issue is more complicated than the Opposition have been prepared to allow.

I say this, too, to the Opposition. When I look at their record when they were in government—the exodus of police officers, the underpayment of police officers, the appearance of their Ministers on the picket line, their failure to carry any legislation through this House that would have been of assistance in the fight against crime—and when I look, too, at some of their present policies—their backing, as in the case of the Greater London council, for virtually any anti-police brigade that their local authority colleagues can find to support—I have to say to them that their conversion, if it be a conversion, to pro-police attitudes is welcome but is as yet to be carried through into practical form in the town halls.

The Opposition amendment cannot be accepted. The Bill should be welcomed, but requires amendment. I look to my right hon. Friend to achieve the changes that I have suggested to him.

8.53 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I am glad to be following the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) because I always listen with great care to what he has to say. However, if he wishes to be taken seriously as the spokesman for the Police Federation, he must try to rise above the level of being a party political hack. If he wishes to put the case for law and order, he must be prepared to be rather less partisan. He does his own case no good by going over the top, as he has done this evening.

I wish to refer to two points that were made by the hon. Gentleman. The first relates to clause 30—the increase in the maximum sentence for possessing firearms and for firearms-related offences. I was more impressed by the argument of his hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), who argued that the Government were moving in the wrong direction by increasing the penalty to life imprisonment.

The case that was put very effectively by the Opposition earlier today demonstrates that we recognise that there is a law and order problem. The Home Secretary and his colleagues do not have an exclusive claim to be the only party for law and order. A case can be made for effective crime prevention measures. When the argument is advanced that civil liberties have to be protected and that one has to pay regard to democracy and accountability, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds would serve his cause and that of the Police Federation better if he and the Police Federation were prepared to accept that there is genuine concern about this issue.

If we express our concern about accountability and civil liberties, that does not mean that the Opposition are anti-police; nor are millions of trade unionists; nor are the hundreds of thousands of individual members of the Labour party. Those who suffer most from crime are not the constituents of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. They are my constituents and those of other Opposition Members. We represent the inner city and the deprived and depressed industrial areas where the crime rate is greatest and where those who are in the most danger are the old, those who are imprisoned in their homes, the very young and those who already lead impoverished lives.

The case that I want to raise has been raised by me with the Home Secretary and his hon. Friend the Minister of State on a previous occasion. I want to use it to illustrate the difference between us. The Opposition are as much concerned with crime prevention measures as they are with prosecuting, imprisoning and thereby punishing those who are convicted of having committed criminal offences.

Clause 30 deals with the penalties for criminal offences that are connected with the use of firearms. About six months ago I explained to a colleague of the Minister of State in the Home Office that there is a massive loophole in the law relating to firearms. Anybody in this country has virtually free access to unlimited supplies of shotguns and ammunition. Anyone who holds a foreign passport and goes to a sports shop or a gunsmith merely has to make a statement that he intends to export the gun that he intends to purchase within 30 days. He is then allowed to purchase a repeating shotgun, or a double-barrelled shotgun, and the ammunition to go with the gun. No record of his purchase in the sports shop or from the gunsmith is made. He does not have to go to the police station to give the serial number of the gun, or to obtain a firearms certificate or a shotgun certificate; nor does he have to go to the police station and, subsequently, to Customs and Excise to demonstrate what he has done with the weapon: whether he has exported it, or sold it legally, or returned it to the shop. In other words, there is a complete absence of controls on those shotguns. I am reasonably satisfied from the case that has been put to me that that is a major source of illegal weapons in Britain.

If the Secretary of State is concerned about the rise in crime involving firearms, why on earth has he not taken action to close that loophle? When he opened the debate the right hon. Gentleman said that he was concerned to follow a programme of crime prevention and that the Bill was merely a part of the Government's overall attack on crime. Unless the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues are prepared to demonstrate that they recognise that there are major problems and causes of crime to which the Government are paying no attention, he and his colleagues will not be taken seriously when they argue that they wish to stem the rising tide of crime in Britain.

8.59 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I give the Bill a great welcome. It is a robust attack on major crime and it will provide a strong framework to make life so much better for the victims of crime.

My constituents will find it incomprehensible that the Labour party will seek to divide the House on the Bill. They will not understand why the Labour party will be voting against increasing sentences from 14 years to life imprisonment for carrying firearms during the commission of a crime; the confiscation of the proceeds of crime over £10,000 from criminals; and the ability to extradite terrorists and major international criminals from Britain to face justice in the countries in which the offences were committed.

Nor will my constituents understand why the Labour party will be voting against the total reorganisation of investigative and prosecution procedure in relation to fraud cases—the creation of a serious fraud office—

[Mr. Kenneth Hind]

when they have been banging the drum about Johnson Matthey and complaining bitterly that the Conservative Government were doing nothing about that.

My constituents will not understand why the Labour party will be voting against the major improvements for dealing with victims of crime. In particular, I draw attention to the provision making the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board a statutory body and raising the limits for payment of damages. That has been criticised today, but it is a modest increase and those who deal with personal injuries will realise that the proposed level is about the level of damages that are awarded if a front tooth is knocked out.

My contituents will not understand the questions that have been raised about the proposal to protect rape victims from the moment a crime is reported — such names will not be reported in the press. They will not understand the opposition to removing the protection presently enjoyed by those on trial for offences of rape from mention in the press and exposure to the media so that the public will know their names. Nor will they understand why children who have been the victims of sexual harassment and crime of all kinds should not be allowed to give evidence by video from their homes. Those of us who have practised for years in the courts realise the major trauma that is caused to children who are asked in court to relive the indignity of the sexual assault, burning further into their minds for the future the horrible acts that have been inflicted upon them, with all the problems that they cause.

The public will not understand why the Labour party want to stop the Government from keeping in custody those people who are swallowing drugs and bringing them into Britain, so that the drugs can be extracted from their bodies, so that such filth cannot be spread about our streets, destroying the lives of our young people and generally destroying much of the fabric of our society.

It is beyond comprehension that a party that complains about the Government——

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): It is beyond the hon. Gentleman's comprehension.

Mr. Hind: —doing nothing about crime will divide the House. Shame on it.

Mr. Cohen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: No, I am sorry, there is no time.

Let me deal briefly with one or two items in the Bill which concern me.

Perhaps I should tell the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) that the party that is so concerned about crime has six out of 208 Members in the Chamber, yet it will seek to divide the House.

Mr. Ron Davies: There are six on the Conservative Benches.

Mr. Hind: The Labour party has spent a lot of the evening dragging Members in to keep the debate going.

Two items in the Bill cause me great concern. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister is aware of my views on the right of peremptory challenge, as I have expressed them before. Having supported that right, I am concerned about the provisions, as there is little evidence to back up the criticisms that have been levelled. I do not think that I have challenged more than 20 jurors while practising at the criminal bar. I challenged many of those jurors, particularly in fraud cases, because they could not read the oath on the card. If a juror cannot read the oath, he will probably be unable to read a balance sheet or to understand the complexities involved in fraud cases.

I am also concerned about the inequality in the treatment of the defence and the prosecution. The prosecution will effectively have a right of peremptory challenge in asking a juror to stand by for the Crown, but that advantage will not be enjoyed by the defence. If that ever came before the European Court of Human Rights for consideration I am sure that it would take a dim view of it.

More importantly, the provision aims to rectify an evil that occurs when there are many defendants in a case, and counsel for the defence attempts to tamper with the make-up of the jury to the advantage of the defence. There are, however, other ways of dealing with that problem apart from abolishing the right of peremptory challenge. Rules could be framed to deal with cases in which there is more than one defendant, so that such manipulation of the jury cannot take place.

The question of appeals also causes me some anxiety. I fully support what has been said about the Court of Appeal's role in providing guidelines for sentencing in criminal cases. It has done that particularly well of late, as can be shown in the guidelines for sentences given for supplying drugs and rape. In such cases, two outstanding directives have been given by the Court of Appeal. But we are being asked to support a clause that will give the relative of a murdered man, or a man killed through reckless driving, the opportunity to ask the Attorney-General to refer the case to the Court of Appeal. The Court of Appeal judges may say that in the circumstances the sentence is wholly wrong and that such and such should have happened. That would leave the relative dissatisfied. Moreover, the tabloid newspapers, in particular, might apply pressure and press for stronger provisions. Perhaps that issue should be reconsidered.

We could adopt two courses. First, we could bite the bullet about allowing the prosecution a right of appeal. We have never done that in this country, but that is effectively what we are doing. We could go the whole way, and could allow the prosecution, in cases of leniency, to refer the matter to the Court of Appeal. The other option would be to leave things as they are and avoid the double jeopardy that is often given as a reason for opposing such provisions. However, we have a halfway house. That is bound to lead to pressure for the prosecution to have a right of appeal in cases of leniency. I foresee that it is something that we shall be considering within the next few years. It would not surprise me to find ourselves dealing with such a measure in the years to come.

I have expressed two criticisms of the Bill, but we have a sound piece of proposed legislation before us, which deserves to be supported, and the public will not understand why the Opposition are opposing it.

9.10 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The Home Secretary's speech and the speeches of the many Conservative Back Benchers who have contributed to the debate, plus the issue of the paper yesterday entitled "Criminal Justice: A Working Paper" — it is clearly a party political paper designed to help the Conservative party during the coming

election campaign—have posed an awful warning to the British people. That document, the Home Secretary's contribution and the remarks of Conservative Back Benchers are part of the Conservative party's claim of success in dealing with the problem of crime. A passage in the document states:

"Much of the action described in the previous paper"—

that was issued about two years ago—

"is now complete."

In other words, the Government are running a successful campaign in terms of law and order. But is it complete?

Let us consider the figures that my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) produced when he opened the debate on behalf of the Opposition, on which no one was able to challenge him. Let us consider the overall picture of recent years. What are the Government's achievements? There is more crime than ever before and the rate of increase in the number of offences of theft, burglary and robbery is much faster than under any other recent Government, Labour or Tory. I can push the point home because I can say with confidence that the Governments of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and of Harold Macmillan, as he then was, would not have tolerated these figures.

The present Government have done more to destroy law and order than any other recent Government. That is demonstrated by the crime figures, and we know that we send more people to prison than any other country in western Europe, including Turkey, which traditionally has had one of the highest prison populations in the area. The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving)—I am sorry that I missed his speech because I know that he speaks well on these issues—knows full well the disaster that that implies within the prison system. We send more young people into custody than any other country in western Europe, and any other comparable country worth talking about in the western world.

Let us talk about riots. We have had riots of a nature, intensity and frequency that we have not seen for over 100 years. We would need to go back to the 1870s at the very least, and probably the 1850s or 1830s, to find anything comparable. There have been riots in the course of industrial disputes. There have been riots in the country lanes around Stonehenge. There have been riots in the inner cities and riots in the prisons. This is success? God preserve us from failure.

We have the sad sight, seven years into this Government's rule, of the police being put more and more into a paramilitary role, and more extensively than in their entire existence. The Tory party tries to treat the police as if they are its own private army, to be used and abused as it likes.

The Government make the fatal mistake of ignoring the successes that the police have. The fraud squad, which was set up by the Metropolitan police, has been successful. Of 100 completed cases, there have been 81 convictions. The Government have rightly spread the idea to other areas, but we have heard no praise of the Metropolitan police in one of the areas in which it is doing its best. Instead, the Government try to pretend that in other areas of policing there is not a problem. They say, "Support the police." They seem to be saying that the use of some magic word like abracadabra will put everything right. It will not. Unless we deal with the underlying conditions that cause the crime, the riots, the riots in our prisons, the industrial disputes and the mayhem, the only thing one can do with the police is use them to keep the lid on. The police begin to resent that.

Yesterday, I visited Bramshill police college to chair a meeting of senior officers. There was a debate on whether the Metropolitan police were accountable. I have no doubt that a couple of year ago hardly any officer would have voted in favour of the police not being accountable. They would have voted massively in favour of saying that they were accountable. Although the wording of the motion made it clear that they were not accountable to anyone, 26 senior officers voted for that motion and 44 against. We know that some years ago both the independent Police Complaints Authority and the police accountability that the Labour party has been talking about were not popular. Now, they are beginning to become popular. We know that that was happening a year ago when we saw the first poll in the *Daily Mail* which showed that 50 per cent. of people in this country felt that the police were not sufficiently accountable.

All of that is ignored in this wretched Bill. It is a wretched Bill—but not because there are no good things in it because there are, and we will support them. The real issue facing the Government is that they have produced a Bill that does a few good and encouraging things, which we shall support, and few bad things, but on the whole it does nothing about crime prevention, victim support or proper policing in our society. That is the reality of the Government's achievement. They present that as a success. It will not come over that way. Documents such as "Criminal Justice: A Working Paper" will not help very much either.

The Prime Minister has talked of changing attitudes in this country, as has the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit). I often wonder why he does not question the fact that he is always presented in cartoons as a bovver boy or a skinhead. I can see why. The Prime Minister and the right hon. Member for Chingford encourage the very dishonesty, disruption and destruction in our country that they claim to speak against, and the Home Secretary has now joined them.

The document is profoundly dishonest in its presentation. It is the first time I have seen a histogram presented in such a way that the so-called clear-up rate of crime shows an increase in the height of the graph against the neighbouring scale. In fact, if one looks at the percentage figures they show a decrease from 42 per cent. in 1978 to 35 per cent. in 1985. One does not need to be a statistician to know that that is a dishonest presentation. There is so much else that is dishonest in the presentation of the figures, such as the comparison between different years, leaving out the years that are an embarrassment to the Government because the crime rate has gone up so dramatically for theft, burglary and robbery.

The other thing said by the Home Secretary, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton so effectively pointed out, is that crime increases under all Governments. Under this Government in certain areas, as I have already shown, it increases much faster and we must take into account all the other points that I have raised, such as the riots and so on.

If we have a Government who fiddle the unemployment figures, fiddle the crime figures, do an about-turn on the economy and pretend that they have not, and send a senior civil servant to Australia and tell him to economise on the truth, what sort of honesty does that show the people of

[Mr. Clive Soley]

this country? What sort of presentation does that make to the people when the Conservative party claim to be the party of law and order? The Conservative party is interested in law and order only when it thinks that it can get a few cheap votes out of it, as it tried in 1979—I accept that it was largely successful — and in 1983. Conservative Members go around shouting, "We'll get tough. We'll deal with crime." They say, "Give us the powers; we will back the police."

Mr. Hind: We did.

Mr. Soley: I would not argue with the hon. Gentleman. The Conservative party did all that, and it is one of the reasons why the crime figures have gone through the roof and we have had the riots and so on. That policy has failed and the hon. Gentleman knows it. That does something much more serious. There is an acute danger in this country of the police becoming demoralised. The demoralisation will enter the police force precisely because the Government have led them to believe that Government policies would lead to better law and order, and that more police officers and more money for police officers and building more prisons would somehow solve all the problems. The evidence is that that has not worked, that it has failed again.

The Government have created an atmosphere of dishonesty. They have debased the very word "honesty" in their approach to crime, law and order and policing. The Bill contains a handful of useful and important reforms, including perhaps the most important proposal to allow children to give evidence on video. However, that may be difficult to achieve in the way presented in the Bill, but that point can be considered in Committee.

The other parts of the Bill are decorative and intended for an election. The Bill launches another serious attack on the jury system by proposing to abolish peremptory challenge. If the fraud investigation group of the Metropolitan police was so profoundly successful that the Government felt it right to extend that system to the rest of the country—if it was so successful, with a clear-up rate far better than almost any other form of crime that I have referred to so far — why are the Government interfering with the jury? The serious fraud office which the Government propose to set up is welcome. I suspect that it will work. However, that makes it clear that there is no need to meddle with the jury in the way that Conservative Members suggest.

I do not wish to consider the question of peremptory challenge in too much depth because many hon. Members have already referred to it. I would be more impressed by the arguments of the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) if he recognised that the right of stand-by by the Crown is to be dropped. At present the prosecution can challenge in that way and vet, but the defence cannot and he knows that.

Mr. Spencer: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the right to check on juries' antecedents was set out by the Attorney-General in the previous Labour Government and details can be found in *The Times* of 11 July 1978?

Mr. Soley: I accept that that is true and of course we must reconsider that. I make no bones about that vetting must be re-examined. The hon. and learned Gentleman has made a fair point. However there appear to be considerable divisions within the Government, and I welcome that, not just for party political reasons. If we can carry those Members in the Committee we might save some of the damage that the Bill might cause. I would like those Conservative Members who have expressed concern about the Government's attack on juries, to carry that concern into voting in Committee.

In the same context, in relation to the firearms issue——

Mr. Hind: The hon. Gentleman referred to a desire to abolish and change the Attorney-General's directive of 1978. Does the hon. Gentleman not think that we should make all efforts to ensure that there are not people on juries who have long criminal records? Those are not the kind of people we want on juries.

Mr. Soley: One of the points which troubles me about Conservative Members is their complete lack of understanding about people on juries. If the hon. Gentleman wants to stop liberal-minded people getting on to juries and letting people off, the people he should want to remove are middle-class liberals. The working-class person will be more willing to reach a judgment against the defendant. There is much evidence for that. There is no evidence that the system works in the way that the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) suggests.

I accept the point that has been made by several hon. Members that to remove the right of jury trial for criminal damage under £2,000, assault, and taking and driving away is unacceptable. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) made a powerful point about the police officer or social worker who has been assaulted. Will they be unable to go to a jury? What about those who think that assault is a serious offence? I believe that it is very serious. What about people in serious criminal damage cases involving £1,000 or even a great deal less who feel that their careers are in jeopardy? They will not be able to have a jury either. For their own sake, the Government had better drop these proposals. Indeed, I suspect that at the end of the day they will have to drop them.

I have dealt with the setting up of the serious fraud office, which we welcome. As for firearms offences, if the Government go through with their proposals despite the warnings of their own Back Benchers they will be sentencing to death the small number of police officers and people in the community who choose to face a gunman. Let there be no illusions about that. The Conservatives completely fail to understand the kind of people likely to commit offences. *[Interruption.]* It would be easier to be delicate with Conservative Members if they talked a little more sense. The vast majority of offenders who come before the courts and go into prison commit crimes in a relatively unpremeditated way, frequently under the influence of drink.

The group who tend to act in a premeditated way, however, can be especially dangerous. They do not think to themselves that whereas they could have coped with the old 10-year sentence they could not cope with the new 14-year sentence. They simply work out the chances of being caught. Having taken a gun with him in the first place, if such a person knows that he will get a life sentence whether he hands over the gun or simply shoots the person confronting him, he will shoot that person to increase his

chance of getting away. Until the Conservatives make some attempt to understand what is going wrong with our society they will continue to get things wrong in this way.

There is nothing in the Bill to deal with the underlying crisis in law and order. We were told by the Home Secretary in his opening comments and in the document released by the Government that all Governments have faced this problem in recent years. That is quite true, but the reason is not so miraculous as the Government make out. It may not be possible to prove any exact cause and effect relationship, but one can say with some confidence that when community and family links begin to break down, behavioural problems of every kind, from crime to mental breakdown, are likely to occur.

What has made the present Government fundamentally different from any previous Tory Government as well as from any Labour Government is that they have introduced policies which have made crime more likely. Massive public expenditure cuts lead to a reduction in the number of caretakers, park keepers, toilet attendants, and so on, who by their presence in public places deter crime, help to clear up the effects of crime and, indeed, assist the victims of crime. The Government have also cut a number of other activities designed to prevent crime such as the repair and renovation of older properties which are so easy to burgle. We can now identify the high crime areas.

If the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) were still in the Chamber, by God I should have a thing or two to say about him. He does not represent the Police Federation on this—he represents the Tory party—so he is taking money under false pretences, and on this, more than on anything else, he is in danger of doing the police an acute disservice. He should be representing the police, not the Tory party, and to do that properly he should bear in mind that the main interest of the police is in the prevention of crime because their chances of getting into difficulty are thereby reduced. Yet there is no suggestion of that in these proposals. *[Interruption.]* I see that the hon. Gentleman has returned. I will repeat what I said in a moment for the hon. Gentleman's benefit.

The Government's board and lodging allowance system has forced more and more people, especially young people, into homelessness, drug abuse and alcohol abuse when the Home Secretary's own research shows a strong link between these three factors and crime. Last night or the night before—I cannot remember which—I was passing the Riverpoint hostel in my constituency and I saw a big crowd of youngsters queueing to get in. They were desperate to get in and were drinking. In situations like that they drift from drink to drugs and get into trouble with other people. When that happens a few Conservative Members get up and protest about homosexuality and pick-ups and God knows what else. However, it is the Government who have created the circumstances which have made those problems worse.

I shall now return to what I was saying about the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. I accused him of being a spokesman for the Tory party rather than for the Police Federation, and for that reason I said he was taking money under false pretences. I suggested compensation a couple of years ago, so it is not new. If the hon. Gentleman had listened some time ago he would have heard me say that one of the ways we could explore the feeling about this is by allowing police authorities to insure their officers.

If we did what the Home Secretary will not do and introduced a proper system of accountability, it would save police officers having to go through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, and that would be a good thing. We would introduce such a system. There is no point in the hon. Gentleman going on about the Police Federation suddenly developing an interest in the Labour party. *[Interruption.]* We have put forward these ideas without payment. He is paid for the job that he does, but I do not hold that against him. We are doing it for nothing but we will not ask for part of his salary. We do it because it is right.

I should like to put one other point to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds and to a number of his hon. Friends. I have yet to hear of one Conservative council anywhere in the country agree to a crime survey. They will not do so, of course, because it would identify the victims and show what sort of policing and local authority response is needed to do something to help them. The Tory party is not interested in that because it costs a bit of money. It does not cost very much, but it would do something for the victims of crime and for crime prevention.

I was in St. Paul's in Bristol last week and saw the desperate need in that area for a crime survey, but the Conservative council will not support that idea because it is not interested. When Conservative councillors or even Conservative Members of Parliament are prepared to put their money where their mouth is, I will believe that they have something to tell us about crime prevention and victim support. The truth is that they have nothing to tell us. It is a cop-out and we all know it.

More than anything else, we need a well resourced crime prevention and victim support scheme. We need economic policies that are designed to help the most devastated area in Britain, because those are the areas where there is a high crime rate. We need crime surveys in those areas to identify the victims and decide how to help them, and we will not get that from the Government.

We need a proper independent police complaints authority. A few years ago the Conservatives and the Police Federation did not want that, but now everybody wants it, except the Tories, who are the only people left out in the cold. We want a proper system of police accountability containing all the safeguards that I and my hon. Friends have spelt out. There is a duty to enforce the law and we need minimum standards laid down by the Home Office and a strengthened police inspectorate, but none of those things is in the Bill because the Government are not interested in them.

If the Government really cared for the police they would give officers a little more training. Is it fair to put 19 and 20-year-olds on the streets of our inner cities with just about 20 weeks' basic training? For that matter, is it fair to put prison officers with about 10 weeks' basic training in prisons which at the moment are explosive? In some cases in Northern Ireland, such prison officers were looking after people on hunger strike or on a dirty protest. Is that doing our duty to the forces of law and order? No, it is not, and again the Government are running away.

The Government should have a coherent policy on the availability of weapons. My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) was right. I put to the Government the need to have a well-structured committee in the Home Office making reports on the availability of weapons—crossbows, guns, the lot—so that we could debate those reports in Select Committee and make recommendations.

[Mr. Soley]

Let us have a good policy on alcohol abuse rather than this Christmas fernickety bit every now and then. We know that 50 per cent. of murders are committed when the person or victim is under the influence of drink. We know that 50 per cent. of battered babies cases take place when one or both of the parents are drunk. We know that a vast number of crimes in the inner cities are committed under the influence of drink. But there is no alcohol policy. When the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) was a Minister he put up too much the price of tobacco and alcohol—industries that supply money to the Tory party—and he got the sack.

Let us have a proper policy on drugs—*[Interruption.]* The Minister is suddenly interested in drugs when it means headlines. Suddenly, drugs are interesting in the *Daily Mail*. For every death from heroin we spend about £1·3 million but for every death from alcohol we spend between £200 and £300. What a policy—yet the Government are trying to present themselves as having a policy on crime.

We can rebuild our fractured community. The British people are not more dishonest, more violent, than any other nations. The British people can do it but only if they are guaranteed the support and help of a Government who care and respond to the needs of the people, not one who care and respond every time an election is in the offing and think they can get a few quick votes by trying to pull the wool over the eyes of the electorate.

9.35 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): What an amazing ragbag of ill-assorted prejudices and spleen we have just heard from the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). It was an extraordinary performance. What we have been given is a series of total misconceptions about the Bill and the criminal justice policy of the Government. We have been given a ragbag of the hon. Gentleman's opinions and prejudices about the criminal justice system that in no way amounts to a coherent strategy of a group of people who could seriously be put forward as the alternative Government at some election within the next few months or whenever it may be. I thought that the former Member for Knowsley, North, Mr. Kilroy-Silk, was the master of the all-purpose rant on these occasions but the hon. Member for Hammersmith has served a very good apprenticeship with him in that art form.

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: No. I must get on. I have already given up 10 minutes.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) made an extremely impressive speech, as always, in which he spoke of the many changes for the better that are made in the Bill and said that the Bill was so large, so long and diverse and of such a quality that 10 minutes was a frustratingly short period to deal with it. I think that is a far fairer introduction to the debate than anything we have heard from the hon. Member for Hammersmith.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) described the Bill as an inevitable kaleidoscope in the breadth and diversity of the issues that it embraced That is inevitable when one is dealing, not with the fantasy world of Labour politicians—increasingly desperate to find some shred of semblance or credibility to face the public—but with reality. That is a fair description of a measure designed for a criminal justice system that is a sophisticated piece of machinery that needs to be addressed by a range of sophisticated changes if any effect is to be perceived. That is why this Bill, notwithstanding its diversity, has certain broad thrusts which will commend themselves not just to the House, but to the British people.

This Bill will sharpen our attack on large-scale crime. This is achieved in a number of effective ways. First of all it is done by providing an effective mechanism, which the law has lacked for too long, to confiscate the profits of major criminals. Secondly, it addresses the general concern, mirrored on both sides of the House and certainly within the wider community, about the effectiveness of the procedures against fraud. Thirdly, it addresses one of the principal problems that face us in a world in which crime is becoming increasingly international. How do we make our extradition arrangements compatible with those of some other countries? How do we ensure that our extradition arrangements allow us to get back those criminals who go overseas?

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North) *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: I must continue; I am sorry, but I shall not give way.

The Bill's broad thrust is to assist the victims of crime by establishing a real breakthrough. For over 20 years the criminal injuries compensation scheme was purely ex gratia. Now a statutory right to compensation will be established. Courts will be required to give reasons for not making compensation orders, as a further incentive to make such orders. Child victims will be allowed to give evidence on a live video link—something which even the Labour party, in its most perverse form, could not find the bare face to argue against. That is assistance to victims.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith asked why more is not being done in the Bill for victims. We do not need a Bill to do what we have just done for victim support schemes. We gave them £9 million to provide full-time co-ordinators. It was only when the Government were elected that any assistance was given to victim support, yet victim support schemes began in Bristol in 1974. For five years of a Labour Government, not a penny piece of public funds was given to assist victim support.

The Labour party talks about crime prevention. What has the Labour party done to further the development of the 16,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in the country? Labour Members have acted like the local council of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), which charged £53 for granting planning permission to put up a sign saying, "Neighbourhood watch scheme." We are tackling this matter in a practical way. We do not need the powers of Parliament to allow us to get the Manpower Services Commission to put £22 million of public money and 5,000 youngsters into schemes, to put locks on old people's homes, to help them to get involved in property marking, and so on. Such provisions are not in the Bill because we can do them anyway and are doing so. The Labour party has, as always, given too little and come too late to this issue.

Those who warmly welcome and support the Bill nevertheless have some reservations. That is inevitable

with a Bill of 128 clauses and 10 schedules. History books will show that peremptory challenge has been in retreat for some centuries. It was introduced in 1509 and subsequently ratified in 1530, despite strong, passionate speeches against by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), who was younger in those days! Thirty-five peremptory challenges were reduced to 20. In 1825, that figure of 20 was ratified. In 1948, a Labour Government reduced the number of peremptory challenges to seven, and in 1977 another Labour Government reduced the number to three. Now the proposal is that peremptory challenges should be abolished altogether. I believe that that is right in principle.

As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) said, the contortions that lawyers have to go through to justify what is essentially an arbitrary exercise are demeaning and degrading. He said that it is like treating jurors as stock at a cattle market, and I cannot help but agree with him. I do not criticise—let me make this clear—those lawyers who make use of the existing powers. That is the law, and they are entitled to do it. Is it really an ornament to our legal system?

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) included in an early-day motion a description by a solicitor of a meeting during the Cyprus secrets trial. I gather that that description has never been challenged. The early-day motion states:

"Robin Simpson said we wanted a young working-class jury. Michael Hill said he really wanted an anti-establishment jury but that we were better off to have a young middle-aged, middle-class jury. Robert Harman said there was a dichotomy of views that we will just take what we get. John Alliott said we couldn't improve on fate."

There is a philosopher for hon. Members.

"Gilbert Gray said if the jury is not too well-educated and of too low an intelligence they may take more note of the judge and therefore we ought to go for people who were young, not unsmart but no women. Victor Durand said that if the jury were young they may be unpatriotic."

I do not know whether that happened. It is clear that it cannot be anything other than an entirely arbitrary and rather demeaning exercise for people to speculate in that way to justify flinging someone off a jury because he is not dressed as seems appropriate or because he has a copy of the *Daily Telegraph* sticking out of his pocket.

If there is good cause for a juror to be taken off a jury, a challenge for cause can be sustained. The retreat over the past 40 years in the peremptory challenge is because of the increasing recognition that it is no longer an ornament to our criminal justice system.

Mr. Ashby: My hon. Friend is a barrister. Would he like to comment on the type of person who makes statements about a confidential meeting? That is totally unprofessional. Would he trust anyone who has made such statements?

Mr. Jessel: But no one has denied it.

Mr. Ashby: How could other people? They were not there.

Mr. Mellor: I do not think that that point goes to the heart of my objections. We take this position on a point of principle, but the work done by the Crown prosecution service and the Director of Public Prosecutions on the use of the peremptory challenge makes it clear that it is largely a south-east, mainly Central Criminal Court, phenomenon. The rest of the country is able to get by perfectly well without using it.

Other measures have been called into question. I appreciate the point made by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) about confiscation but I think that it was misconceived. There cannot be something wrong with a provision when its exclusive aim is to remove from the criminal that which a court has found is the extent of the moneys and property he gained from criminal activities. It has never been the law of Britain that that should not be done.

Alas, the previous attempts by the House to deal with this matter have been largely unsuccessful. The criminal bankruptcy provisions in particular, unfortunately, have not been the success that they were intended to be in 1972. Anyone who doubts the need for this provision should look at the revelations in the Noye case. A man made many millions of pounds from processing the gold bullion from the Brinks-Mat robbery. There was no effective way, other than a large fine, to deal with that. There would be such a means if that case were to be tried after the Bill became law.

I have noted the attack by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), which was far more broadly based than any attack by the Labour Front Bench, on proposals to reclassify offences. He cannot have it both ways. He is a practical man. He knows that the criminal justice system is practical. He cannot complain about long waiting lists and the time we must wait before trials come on, if he does not permit measures of reclassification, which carry with them reductions in the maximum penalties. Crown court business has grown by more than 50 per cent. in recent years. Despite an increase in the number of court rooms and judges, it has not been possible to keep pace. I believe that reclassification is a sensible proposal to meet that problem. Lawyers, especially those used to appearing in the higher courts, should avoid being over-patronising about the quality of justice meted out by the magistrates who deal perfectly satisfactorily with more than 90 per cent. of criminal cases.

I note what was said about the review of lenient sentences, but there is a problem that will not go away. We know that it must be met in a constitutionally proper respect, allowing the Attorney-General to say that there is a wider public interest than just a particular sentence that is not thought appropriate. That wider public interest, if confirmed by the Court of Appeal on application to it, would enable the court to look at sentencing principles in the light of a particular case. I am sure that that will prove to be helpful. It is a principled response, which in no sense brings the prosecution into the sentencing process.

I also noted what was said about firearms offences. While I appreciate the sincerity of the view of those who think that the Bill will not help, I must say that if we mean business for those who carry firearms, we must seriously address the point about the penalties that we offer, which should stand outside what is otherwise thought normal for any other sort of offence. But there is within the proposal a flexibility that should commend it to the House. It will not be usual that someone merely carrying a firearm will get life imprisonment, but if he has a bad record and has been doing that repeatedly, life imprisonment might be the appropriate sentence.

It is clear that if someone uses that firearm, if he kills, he will certainly get a life sentence. That will be mandatory. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of

[Mr. Mellor]

State has made it clear that those who murder in the course of theft, by using a firearm, will serve a minimum of 20 years' imprisonment. So there is a differential.

Those who say that we are in danger of removing a properly structured sentencing system must consider the case of rape. No one says that rape should not carry the maximum of a life sentence, yet the same applies. A man could say to himself, "I shall murder the victim. I am no worse off than if I merely rape her." In the real world we do not believe that people say that, but we believe that in certain circumstances the rapist deserves to be sentenced to life imprisonment, and so do those who carry firearms in pursuit of crime.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds properly raised the point about the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. He knows that only a limited number of accidental injuries have fallen within the scheme in recent years—only those where there is an exceptional risk reasonably taken. In no sense have all accidental injuries in the course of duty been covered. That seemed to be a revelation to the right hon. Member for Gorton, who seemed puzzled when my hon. Friend made that point to him. The fact is that that proposal was made in good faith by the interdepartmental committee of officials who believed that an exceptional risk reasonably taken was a difficult justiciable point. But my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that he listens to and hears what is said. He will meet the Police Federation shortly. Indeed, he set up the meeting before the debate. I hope very much that there will be a sensible outcome.

We are in no sense hesitant about reconsidering the proposal because it does not go to the heart of the matter. The heart of the matter is our commitment to the criminal injuries compensation scheme, which means that there has been an increase of over 80 per cent. in real terms in the resources that are made available to it, an extra £114 million more than anything that was ever done by the Labour party—*[Interruption.]* There is no question of that. More people will be applying for compensation. In no sense have we ever increased the bottom limit of compensation by 300 per cent. But what we see from Opposition Members is the typical tactic of making a range of essentially spurious charges backed up by barracking when those spurious charges are answered. No amount of effort by Labour Members will overcome the sales resistance of the British public to any criminal justice scheme put forward by the Labour party, which is tainted and contaminated by some of those who are tolerated within its ranks and have positions of influence.

I am astonished that even the right hon. Member for Gorton had the bare-facedness to say that it was the Labour party's intention, on crime, to unite the nation and to bring the people together in a partnership against crime. That is what he said. Is that what is happening in Haringey, Lambeth, Brent, Liverpool or, indeed, Manchester? It is about time that we had a look at what the Labour party means by uniting the people together in a partnership against crime when it has the power to do so.

Let us have a look at Labour's file of shame. Let us have a look at the Lambeth council police committee publication. It had a cartoon of a policeman beating in the head of a citizen. It is entitled

"Policeman suddenly remembering human awareness training".

As the policeman beats the citizen black and blue he says,

"Oh—and have a nice day, sir!"

Or there are the Labour boroughs that have combined to produce with GLC money a leaflet called,

"How to make a complaint against the police".

That is an innocent enough assertion. The cartoon's caption reads:

"Note the identity of the officer"

It shows a citizen, lying flat out on the floor with a policeman's boot on his head and scribbling "PC 37". Will any Labour Front Bench Members repudiate those things tonight? Of course not, because it is deselection that worries most of them and those are the sort of people who have taken over the Labour party.

The taint spreads from London to Nottingham. A Labour councillor from Nottingham has become a prospective Labour parliamentary candidate. The Forest ward Labour party produced a poster for a formal picket to picket a liaison committee meeting between the police and the community. It shows a policeman with a sledgehammer in his right hand and a black youth in an armlock in his left saying,

"Come on Sonny, Let's go and Consult."

Is that drawing the community together? Is that what the Labour party aspires to do on a large scale when in government?

The right hon. Member for Gorton would like to be the Home Secretary, yet his own Manchester city council produces this glossy rubbish, "Police Watch"—anti-police propaganda—at a cost of £200,000 a year to the taxpayers. It spends £200,000 on that publication, £500,000 on its European nuclear-free zone proposals, and £250,000 to back a Left-wing trendy newspaper. That makes £1 million of public money tipped down the drain by an authority which sends its representatives to Westminster to say that it is poverty and lack of public resources that cause crime on the streets of Manchester. That is the most disgraceful cant, and the Labour party should be ashamed of it.

The Labour party has belatedly become ashamed of those people. It is not ashamed of their views, but of other people learning about their views and being embarrassed in public. That is why the leader of the Labour party had to give a private wigging, not telling people to change their policies, but telling them to be quiet. That is why the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), under attack from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, came up with the astonishing assertion that the vast majority of Labour councillors were beyond reproach and that the Left-wing threat came from

"fewer than 0·1 of 1 per cent." [*Official Report*, 17 November 1986; Vol. 105, c. 340.]

There are 9,000 Labour councillors in England and Wales and 0·1 of 1 per cent. of that number is nine. Which are the nine the hon. Member for Copeland is troubled about in this context? Is it nine of the 40 Labour councillors in Lambeth? Is it nine of the 43 Labour councillors in Brent? Is it nine of the 86 Labour councillors in Manchester, or nine of the 60 Labour councillors in Newham who do not want the police to talk about drugs in schools and charge £53 for neighbourhood watch signs? Is it nine of the 53 Labour councillors in Hackney which has the most appalling record of relations with the police

of any Labour council? Is it nine of the 42 in Haringey or nine of the 29 in Nottingham? We have reached 353 already and we have hardly scratched the surface.

The Government have brought forward a principled and continuing response as part of a steady policy to deal with the problems of law enforcement and criminal justice in Britain. The Bill will be effective in adding a further line of bricks to the wall that the community is building in partnership with the Government and the police against the criminal.

In reality there is always a choice and one thing is perfectly clear: if those who vote tonight to try to deny the Bill a Second Reading are let loose upon the country in Government, they will let loose a devastation of the relationship between the police and the community that will utterly demoralise our community's response to crime, exactly as Labour did when it was last in office.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 160, Noes 219.

Division No. 12] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Monig'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard

Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Straff'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mellor, David
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Powley, John
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Michael Portillo.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading), and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purpose of any Act resulting from the Criminal Justice Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament—

(a) of any expenses incurred under that Act by a Minister of the Crown; and

(b) of any increases attributable to the provisions of that Act in the sums payable out of such money under any other Act; and

(2) any increase attributable to the provisions of that Act in the sums falling to be paid into the Consolidated Fund under section 61 of the Justices of the Peace Act 1979.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community Documents.)

Motor Cycle Noise

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 9148/84 and 6766/85 on motor cycle noise; and supports the Government's efforts to obtain stricter noise limits for motor cycles.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

Question agreed to.

Mr. John Stalker

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

10.13 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The House will remember that during the summer the nation was agog. The suspension from duty of the deputy chief constable of Manchester was national and, because of its context, international news. Sadly, those events have passed into the realms of history. For a host of reasons, it is important that we should not forget the important issues that were raised then — the way in which serious allegations against police officers are investigated and the context in which John Stalker was operating.

The case was both tortuous and twisted. John Stalker was treated very unfairly. For almost a month he was unaware of the charges that had been laid against him. I ask the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department to take particular note of that point, having regard to any review of procedures. Furthermore, one has to remember the effect upon his family of the massive press speculation. I do not complain about the press speculation. Had it not been for the high profile investigation, I fear that John Stalker would not today be doing his job. He would have disappeared without trace. I, and many others, believe that that would have been a travesty of justice.

John Stalker has been left with a large bill to pay as a result of the legal costs that he ran up during that period. I hope that the Minister will consider seriously whether those legal costs should be defrayed from public funds. I regret that the Greater Manchester police authority has chosen not to pay those funds. Although I understand some of the reasons that were put forward for that decision, it was a mistake which penalises one person and his family out of all proportion. If he had not incurred those costs, this affair would not have had the satisfactory conclusion—in so far as it is satisfactory—that it has had.

Mr. Stalker was first asked to go to Northern Ireland in 1982 when the Royal Ulster Constabulary went on what has been described as a "killing spree". The shooting of Michael Tighe has attracted a lot of publicity in recent months and serious allegations, either that RUC officers, out of loyalty, were covering up, or that there was a deliberate shoot-to-kill policy, have been made.

We do not yet know the conclusion of the reports that have been laid before the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Director of Public Prosecutions there, but it is important to recognise that while John Stalker was involved in Northern Ireland his relations with the Chief Constable there were well known to be extremely strained. The complaint was that co-operation was not forthcoming. We know that, when the interim report was laid before the powers that be—the Chief Constable—with a view to matters being eventually raised with the Director of Public Prosecutions, the report was sat on for approximately six months. The House is entitled to know why six months had to go by before that report went from the Chief Constable to Barry Shaw, the Director of Public Prosecutions. It is critical that that question should be answered. The conclusion that must be drawn is that that was a deliberate delaying tactic in the hope that the problem would go away.

We know that that interim report contained a severe criticism and a request that Mr. Stalker should be allowed to interview the Chief Constable. We know that he was particularly interested in the whereabouts of the tape that was made of the events when Michael Tighe died. We also know that there was implicit criticism of Sir Philip Myers, the Inspector of Constabulary. All those are serious matters, so the fact that there was a delay reinforces the seriousness of the situation.

I am happy to say that, if there is one person other than the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester who comes out with considerable credit, it is Barry Shaw, the Director of Public Prosecutions, who acted quickly. Because he acted so quickly, we are entitled to know why delays occurred after he had sanctioned Mr. Stalker's requests. He specifically sanctioned the interview of the Chief Constable and his deputy and instructed the Chief Constable to make available the tape or its transcript.

At that time, as I understand it, the deputy chief constable, Mr. Stalker, sought to return to Northern Ireland to pursue his inquiries, but was told by Sir Philip Myers that that was inopportune at that stage. Eventually, after two requests had been turned down, he was booked on to a flight that would have taken him to Ireland on 2 June, but, on 29 May, Mr. Stalker was taken off the inquiry as a result of allegations against him. From that moment he was effectively taken off the inquiry into the RUC. Many continue to believe that there was dirty work at the crossroads.

The reasons put forward for Mr. Stalker being taken off the inquiry essentially related to four matters. One was that a personal associate of his was under investigation for fraud. I must make it clear that even to this day that individual has not been charged with any criminal offence. It was suggested that Mr. Stalker associated with the same individual, and possibly other known criminals and that there was photographic evidence of people in the same room. It was suggested that, while he was on holiday with Kevin Taylor, the yacht on which they were sailing was under observation by the American authorities. The implication was that they were involved in drugs or some other criminal activity.

It was also suggested that Kevin Taylor, through his solicitor, had threatened that if he was charged with offences he would, I think it was said, blow Stalker and his associates out.

Why did matters come to a head then, some five days before Stalker was due to return to Ireland? Why did not these matters arise earlier? In a written answer on 24 October, the Minister said:

> "Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary was advised in October 1985 of the existence of information alleging that a relationship might exist between the deputy chief constable and certain persons whose activities were under investigation in Greater Manchester. No evidence was available to justify any action in respect of this information until May 1986." —*[Official Report,* 24 October 1986; Vol. 102, c. *1018]*

It is widely believed, and my information is, that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary knew of those allegations long before October 1985. The only evidence that became available in May 1986 was the photograph that I have mentioned. The inquiry into the RUC was certainly serious, and it is important that we should know what new evidence became available. If it was only one photograph, that cannot be taken very seriously as the damning piece of evidence that would seriously damage Mr. Stalker's career and an important inquiry.

[Mr. Tony Lloyd]

These events took place following a raid on the home of Kevin Taylor. As there are doubts about the background to the matter, we are entitled to know who was aware that the raid was due to take place, who ordered it, and what he expected to find. The allegations about Mr. Stalker's friendship were reported to the chief constable by senior police officers in Greater Manchester as long ago as July 1984. The yacht affair took place in 1981 and was apparently well known in police circles for all that time. Consequently, it is important to know what new evidence became available.

If I was being kind about the Sampson report, I would have to describe it as extremely amateurish. Although it is confidential, I have seen it, as these things always have a wider circulation than intended. At one point in particular, it contains innuendo of the most unpleasant sort, which is unfitting for such a report. The report is simply not up to scratch. At one stage, it talks about an anonymous allegation that the police dropped a criminal action against a person whom Mr. Stalker knew. The Sampson report says:

"No further action was taken . . . the papers have been destroyed . . . the matter cannot be taken further nor can any comment be made."

There should be further investigation into the claim in *The Observer* that its inquiries showed that the case was prosecuted in the normal way. Such a fundamental mistake damns that report. Why was there no pre-screening of the charges? There was one charge of particular significance. It was alleged that Chief Superintendent Roberts had informed his senior colleagues that Kevin Taylor's solicitor had threatened to blow John Stalker and his associates out. I am assured that Chief Superintendent Roberts vigorously denies that that happened. It would have been simple to ask him then whether that was the case.

John Stalker asked at one stage whether his friendship with Kevin Taylor was prejudicing him. We are led to believe that he was assured at that time that that was not the position and that there was no major criminal investigation into the affairs of Kevin Taylor that would affect Mr. Stalker. We are told—this is something that must be answered—that the Chief Constable was quoted as having mentioned the incident on the Diogenes in 1981 as a matter of some importance and later denied that it was raised by him. All these matters are extremely serious and it is necessary for them to be dealt with.

As for the inquiry into the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the result of the summer interlude was a massive delay. The Minister may say that the delay was reasonable because Mr. Sampson could not conduct an inquiry into John Stalker while at the same time carrying out an inquiry into the RUC, but no progress was made with the RUC inquiry while John Stalker was under investigation. If that is the position, we are entitled to ask why he was not reinstated to conduct the inquiry at the end of his own investigation. If he was crippled by the marginal charges that were laid against him in the end, surely the chief constable of West Yorkshire, given the serious doubts about his own credibility following the report, was even more crippled. I do not think that many people in the North of Ireland will accept the report on that basis.

It seems that Mr. Stalker's deputy, Mr. Thorburn, was almost a victim of guilt by association. He was taken out of the inquiry, but no charge was laid against him. His position was marginal in terms of the RUC. Was Mr. Thorburn involved in the interviews? Surely he would have been involved in the interviews with the Chief Constable of the RUC and his deputy. I ask the Minister specifically whether those interviews ever took place. That is an inportant part of Mr. Stalker's interim report. Was the Chief Constable of the RUC questioned about the tape? That is a matter of great concern. If he was so questioned, were answers received on where the tape was, or was it discovered who destroyed the tape and under whose orders? These are vital issues in terms of public reassurance.

I am conscious that I have paid tribute to the Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland. I know that his health is not in the finest form and I say specifically that if the Government or anyone else wants to wait for his health to collapse to prevent a trial, that would be a most foolish way of proceeding. I do not think for one second that that is the position, but it must be placed on record that it is critical that all haste is made with the report.

I shall deal with the follow-up to Mr. Stalker's position in Greater Manchester, which is still unsatisfactory. A heavy debt burden has been placed upon him and the personnel committee of the policy authority is talking about attempting to have inquiries conform to the sub judice ruling, which would exclude the press and the kind of publicity that plays such an important role in issues of this sort. I ask the Minister to give a guarantee that that is not in the Government's mind. It is important that in matters such as this the public are aware of what is going on.

At the end of the day, the public will believe in all the conspiracy theories at which I have hinted, in some instances directly and in others not. There is much circumstantial evidence that suggests that there were those who had a motive that caused them to want John Stalker to be somewhere else. Mr. Stalker said at one stage that if "they"—presumably the powers that be—"wanted a whitewash, they had picked the wrong man". It is a matter of great concern that, having recognised that they had picked the wrong man, they chose to remove that man and get someone else to do the job.

Conspiracy theories will not go away unless we have answers to the questions that have been raised this evening and on previous occasions by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Unless those answers are forthcoming, the public will think that something extremely serious has gone amiss in an attempt effectively to pervert the course of justice, involving more than one man.

10.29 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) deserves congratulation on having raised a matter of considerable importance. He has raised a whole variety of questions, and I am sure that he will understand if in my short speech I can deal with only a small number of them.

I wish to begin by dealing with the question of costs. As the hon. Member for Stretford pointed out, Mr. Stalker has incurred a substantial bill in costs. It amounts to about £21,000. Mr. Stalker has sought the assistance of the Greater Manchester police authority in meeting the legal costs he incurred in the course of the investigation of the

allegations of misconduct made against him. The hon. Member for Stretford will know well of the provisions of the Police Discipline (Senior Officers) Regulations 1985 which provide that if a case of this kind goes to a formal disciplinary inquiry the accused officers' costs, subject to taxation, are met from the police fund. The police authority decided not to initiate formal disciplinary proceedings. Therefore, the costs cannot be met under the regulations.

Moreover—this is a matter for the authority—the authority has declined to make a discretionary payment to Mr. Stalker. However, as the hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do, members of the public have contributed to a fund to assist Mr. Stalker to meet his legal costs. Mr. Stalker has applied for the consent of the police authority to accept the money and the police authority has agreed. That is as far as the Home Office can go. Ultimately, it is for the police authority to decide whether it is right for Mr. Stalker to accept money from the public in the way I have described, and the authority has decided that it is right.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Is my hon. Friend aware that Mr. Stalker is a constituent of mine? I think that most people would agree that he has gone through an unfortunate time, not just for himself but for his family, and to be faced with a bill of almost £22,000 when, as far as we can understand, he has done nothing wrong is absolutely monstrous. If we believe that British justice is the best in the world, surely there is something that can be done to lift some of the burden from him.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is to be congratulated on the way he has protected the interests of his constituent Mr. Stalker. I am glad to see him here tonight. It is a tribute to the attention he has paid to his constituent's interests. I cannot help him quite as much as he would like. Ultimately this is a matter that lies within the discretion of the police authority, and it has made its decision. I do not think that I can say anything positive that would assist my hon. Friend.

The conspiracy theory lies behind the speech of the hon. Member for Stretford. The hon. Gentleman is implying—indeed, I think that he screwed himself up to the extent of saying expressly—that there were forces within the Province that contributed, or may have contributed, to the allegations made against Mr. Stalker.

Mr. Sampson, as the hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do, was responsible for what is known as the Stalker inquiry and the inquiry into allegations of misconduct by the RUC. The fact that he was in charge of both inquiries gave him the best possible opportunity to decide whether there were any links between the two inquiries. Mr. Sampson stated in his report that he had found no evidence that officers of the RUC or members of the security services had in any way been responsible for the instigation of allegations against Mr. Stalker. That is the current position.

I understand that the hon. Member for Stretford may go further than that. He may suggest, indeed perhaps does suggest, that there should be a further inquiry to determine whether there was a link between the Province and Mr. Stalker. This issue has been considered by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. My right hon. and learned Friend takes the view that a further inquiry at this stage could be prejudicial to any criminal proceedings which might arise from the investigation of the conduct of officers of the RUC, which Mr. Sampson was taking over.

The hon. Member for Stretford will appreciate that there are two inquiries and in one sense by far the most important inquiry is the RUC inquiry. It would be a great misfortune, and something that we would not contemplate, if people were to take action now which could prejudice the outcome of the RUC end of the inquiries.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The vital element in these links as to whether the RUC was involved in the Stalker affair is the point about whether Mr. Stalker asked the head of the RUC for tapes which were made at the time of the death of Michael Tighe in Northern Ireland. There have been widespread allegations that the tapes were not handed over and were subsequently destroyed. What has Mr. Sampson to say about that? Who takes the responsibility for the tapes that allegedly were destroyed?

Mr. Hogg: I am not in the least surprised that the hon. Gentleman should ask such questions. However, that emphasises the wisdom of what I have just said. There are two inquiries—the inquiry regarding Mr. Stalker and that regarding the RUC. Of the two, the latter is by far the most important. I will neither say nor do anything that may prejudice the outcome of the RUC inquiry. Although I do not want to be discourteous to the hon. Gentleman, his questions are not in the wider interests of anyone. Perhaps in some other place, in the future, another opportunity will arise, but it should not arise now. Questions of the sort being asked now are simply not helpful to the wider issues.

Mr. Cohen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hogg: No. I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman again, as this is a very short debate and I have a number of points to make.

We must keep our eye on the ball, and the ball is now the RUC end of the inquiry. I will do nothing to prejudice the outcome of that inquiry or anything that may flow from it. However, I have a nasty feeling that the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) may not be so careful.

It might be helpful if I were to set out in some detail in the few minutes that are left to me exactly what happened. In May 1986, the Greater Manchester police authority had drawn to its attention by the chief constable allegations that, during the past six years, the deputy chief constable, Mr. John Stalker had associated with persons in circumstances that were undesirable and that might have placed him under an obligation to them. The police authority appointed the chief constable of West Yorkshire, Mr. Colin Sampson, to investigate the allegations under the supervision of Mr. Ronald Moyle, a deputy chairman of the Police Complaints Authority.

On 26 June, Mr. Sampson sent the Police Complaints Authority an interim report on his investigation. Against a background of press reports that Mr. Stalker was unaware of what had been alleged against him and that the allegations were in any event trivial—points echoed by the hon. Member for Stretford—the authority issued a statement to the effect that it was satisfied with the progress which had been made with the investigation, that the allegations were of sufficient substance to deserve further careful consideration, and that Mr. Stalker had been adequately apprised of their nature. On 2 July the

[Mr. Hogg]

Greater Manchester police authority suspended Mr. Stalker, having obtained the Police Complaints Authority's agreement to that course of action.

Mr. Sampson completed his report on his investigation on 14 August when he submitted it to the Greater Manchester police authority. Although he recommended that formal disciplinary proceedings be taken in respect of Mr. Stalker's associations with certain individuals and of the alleged misuse of police cars, on 22 August the police authority decided against taking formal disciplinary action and instead advised Mr. Stalker to be

"more circumspect in his political and criminal associations."

Thereafter, he was reinstated as deputy chief constable.

What was done was strictly in accordance with the rules and regulations. Great care was taken by the Home Office to ensure that. The hon. Member for Stretford said that Mr. Stalker was unfairly treated, but I leave that to history. However, the police authority was satisfied that there were matters to be investigated. The hon. Gentleman knows what the authority said when it reached a conclusion. If no investigation had been undertaken, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would have been the first to suggest a cover-up. In a sense, we were on the horns of an impossible dilemma. By "we", I mean the police authority and any other interested body. Allegations were made which, prima facie, were of a kind that needed investigation — and that happened in accordance with the ordinary rules and regulations.

Had that not happened, the hon. Gentleman would have complained. He would have said that allegations had been made against a very senior police officer suggesting that he was not a man of integrity but that nothing had been done about them. I would have understood the force of that argument. However, in reality, something was done in that the Manchester police authority was acquainted with the allegations, made the determination that it did, undertook an inquiry and reached a conclusion. It was a matter for the authority. It and everyone else was acting in strict accordance with the rules and regulations.

In any case, I do not think that criticisms can be made of the Home Office. One of the interesting points about the hon. Gentleman's speech was that he did not make any substantial allegations against the Home Office. Although in the early stages of the discussion, the press debate and so on, allegations were made against the Home Office and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, as the matter has developed people have realised that the Home Office has acted wholly and utterly properly in this matter.

It is interesting that tonight no substantive allegations have been made. My conclusion is that the Labour party now recognises that the allegations made were wholly unfounded. Much as I like the hon. Gentleman, I should like him even more if he had prefaced his speech with a profound apology to the Home Office. Underpinning his speech was a recognition that what was done had to be done and that there was no criticism to be made by the Government——

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at seventeen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 28 November 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BILL PRESENTED

TEACHERS' PAY AND CONDITIONS

Mr. Secretary Baker, supported by Mr. Secretary Edwards, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mrs. Angela Rumbold and Mr. Bob Dunn presented a Bill to repeal the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965; to make temporary provision with respect to the remuneration and other conditions of employment of school teachers; and for connected purposes.

And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Monday next and to be printed. [Bill 10.]

Orders of the Day

Banking Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.35 am

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This debate comes almost exactly eight years after the Second Reading of the first Banking Bill, introduced by the then Labour Government, which became the Act of 1979. On that occasion my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) and I, speaking for the then Opposition, drew attention to the difficulties which we thought would arise from the two-tier structure of authorisation — of recognised banks and of licensed deposit-takers — on which that Bill was based. Unfortunately, our misgivings did not prove unfounded, and I welcome the opportunity to introduce a Bill to revise, update and improve the original legislation.

Like the 1979 Act, the present Bill is primarily devoted to supervision in the interests of depositors, and certain related matters. It does not deal with questions concerning transactions between banks and their customers, with consumer protection, or with the consequences of technological change on the provision of banking and other financial services. Simultaneously with the publication of the Bill, I announced in a written answer on 14 November the Government's intention to set up a committee to review these matters.

There are, at the latest count, about 290 recognised banks and just over 300 licensed deposit-takers in the United Kingdom. Most of the major foreign banks around the world are represented here. Even since 1979 the international dimension of the City of London has become significantly more important. The volume of transactions conducted in London in foreign exchange, in Eurocurrency deposits, in new issues and underwriting, in stocks and shares, in options and futures and in commodities and insurance has been growing rapidly, confirming London's leading position among European financial centres.

At the same time, global markets have come into being with continuous trading around the world and around the clock from the far east through London to the United States. At a time of such rapid and fundamental change in financial markets, it is important that we should have appropriate legislation in place for the regulation of financial institutions.

One purpose of the Bill is accordingly to ensure that the supervisory regime for the banking sector is compatible with the systems which have been established for investment and securities business and for building societies by the Financial Services Act 1986 and the Building Societies Act 1986, which were passed by Parliament in the previous Session.

To be comprehensive, the regulatory framework for the supervision of financial institutions requires an appropriate degree of consistency between the three pieces of legislation in a number of different areas such as the role

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of auditors, disclosure of information between supervisors, and the application of new offences and penalties. In particular, supervisors need to be able to communicate and co-operate without needless red tape.

Furthermore, the legislation needs to be flexible enough to cope with rapid change in market behaviour and structure and, just as under the Financial Services Act 1986 the definition of investments can be adjusted to meet changing circumstances, so will that of deposits be under the present Bill. The next purpose of the Bill is to update and improve the arrangements for authorisation and supervision of deposit-taking businesses in the light of experience gained since the Banking Act 1979 came into operation.

The remaining and most fundamental purpose is to introduce a number of policy changes which are desirable either to take account of developments in the banking sector, or to remedy deficiencies in the previous Act.

In those respects, the Bill draws especially on the lessons learnt from the collapse of Johnson Matthey Bankers in 1984. As hon. Members will recall, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer set up a committee under the chairmanship of the Governor of the Bank of England, and including representatives of the Treasury and the commercial banking sector, to review the operation of the Banking Act, taking account of the implications of the Johnson Matthey Bankers affair, and to make recommendations with a view to a new Banking Bill. The committee reported in June 1985, and last December the Government published a White Paper foreshadowing the present Bill. During this entire period these matters were the subject of extensive consultation, and I express my thanks to all those who have contributed constructively to this process, including the Bank of England, the British Bankers Association, the Committee of London and Scottish Bankers, the Finance Houses Association, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, and many individual persons and institutions who have submitted their comments.

The Johnson Matthey Bankers case showed vividly the need to strengthen the powers of the supervisors and to impose more exacting duties on supervised institutions. It also exposed serious defects in the 1979 Act relating to the availability and accuracy of information provided to the supervisors, and the Bill is addressed especially to those points.

The main changes should come as no surprise, since they follow closely the proposals set out in the White Paper a year ago. The White Paper itself received a general welcome and I hope that the Bill will meet the same response. The Bill provides for a new Board of Banking Supervision to advise the Bank of England in its exercise of the powers conferred upon it, and the majority of the members of the board will be independent of the Bank of England. The distinction between recognised banks and licensed deposit-takers will be ended, and with it the separate systems of supervision and regulation which applied to the two categories. The provision of information to the supervisor will be subject to statutory reserve powers, and there will be specific requirements in relation to the notification of large exposures. The legal constraints on dialogue between supervisor and auditors will be removed, and the submission by an institution of incorrect information will put those responsible at risk of conviction for a new offence of misleading the supervisors.

In other respects, the Bill for the most part follows the main provisions of the 1979 Act. Thus, the Bill continues the arrangements for deposit protection, the control of advertising, arrangements for authorisation, revocation and exemption.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): My hon. Friend mentioned deposit protection. Can he explain why the limits for deposit protection in this Bill remain exactly the same as in the previous legislation, which is effectively a reduction in protection? Is there not a case for a significant increase?

Mr. Stewart: The present limits have proved entirely adequate in practice and there is provision to change them if necessary. That is the short answer. If other hon. Members wish to take up that point during the debate and I am fortunate enough to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall have more to say about it.

A new form of conditional authorisation is proposed, and there are some modifications to the appeal system, but the substance of the technical provisions in the 1979 Act is incorporated in the Bill without major differences. In theory, it might have been possible to introduce an amending Bill, but, in practice, because the separate treatment under the two-tier system is so pervasive throughout the 1979 Act, the case for rewriting the Bill was overwhelming. However, since so many of the provisions are repeated from the existing legislation, and as a comprehensive explanatory memorandum is attached to the Bill, I do not propose to go through its contents item by item. Instead, I shall concentrate on the three important areas where changes are being introduced: the position of the supervisor, the arrangements relating to authorisation and the provision of information.

Through the 1979 Act, Parliament entrusted the supervision of the banking sector to the Bank of England. It would be wrong to suggest that the Johnson Matthey Bankers affair did not reveal the need for some changes within the Bank of England itself. Following the Leigh-Pemberton committee's report, therefore, the Bank of England introduced several changes in the organisation of its banking supervision division, set out in its 1986 report under the Banking Act. Staff numbers have been increased by more than 60 per cent. and the number of institutions for which each manager has responsibility has been reduced. More frequent supervisory visits to institutions will, therefore, be possible, and a programme of inward and outward secondments to strengthen the commercial experience of supervisory staff has been introduced.

Although in some countries banking supervision is conducted by bodies independent of the central bank and the Government, international practice varies widely and it is clear that each country should make the arrangements most suited to its circumstances. For many years before the 1979 Act, the Bank of England was engaged in informal supervision and since 1979 this has been put on to a statutory basis. Following the decision to establish an independent board to deal with other financial activities, the Government considered whether it would be sensible to establish a separate supervisory body for the banking sector. However, given the knowledge and experience of banking supervision built up within the Bank of England

in recent years, we concluded that the bank should continue to be the supervisory authority in this area but that the system should be strengthened by introducing an element of independent advice and judgment into the process.

Therefore, the Bill establishes a new Board of Banking Supervision, which provides for advice to be given to the governor and his senior colleagues on supervisory matters. The board will consider individual cases and more general matters of supervisory policy. The rules for the board will require that its outside members are always in a majority at its meetings and the board will make its report to Parliament through the annual report of the Bank of England. If, in any case, the Bank of England decides not to follow the advice of the independent members, the ex-officio members of the board will be required to notify the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The conduct of supervision will be subject to continual review by the board, which the Government believe will add greatly to the experience available to the Bank of England in taking what are inevitably sometimes extremely difficult decisions. The board will perform a function in relation to the banking sector which is in many ways comparable to that of the Building Societies Commission, and just as the commission began to operate informally before the Building Societies Bill was enacted, so the Board of Banking Supervision is already functioning on a non-statutory basis.

The process of supervision will need to respond to developments both at home and abroad. Like the 1979 Act, the new Bill is based on regulation of the activity of deposit-taking. The definitions of "deposit" and of a "deposit-taking business" are broadly as in the existing Act, but to enable the statutory framework to adjust to the changing market place, provision is made for those definitions to be amended by statutory instrument if it proves necessary to do so.

At the international level there has been greater discussion between the supervisory authorities in different countries in the last few years than ever before. The question is attracting keen interest in Europe, and nothing in the Bill cuts across current developments or thinking in the European Community. Several major countries, including the United States and Canada, are examining closely their systems of supervision, and we believe that it will be important in the years ahead to ensure closer understanding and co-operation between national supervisory authorities and to aim for the application of similar standards in different financial centres.

Subject to the abolition of the two-tier system, the principles and most of the procedures relating to the authorisation of deposit-taking institutions will remain substantially the same as they were in the 1979 Act. An institution will have to demonstrate that its management is not concentrated in the hands of one person, that its directors and managers are fit and proper persons to carry out their functions, and that the business is generally conducted in a prudent and responsible fashion. All institutions meeting the criteria set out in the Bill will fall into a single category of "authorised institutions" and be subject to the same system of supervision.

The 1979 Act concentrated the Bank of England's statutory powers of supervision on licensed deposit-takers, while the supervision of recognised banks continued to operate more informally. We should not forget that JMB, as a recognised bank, was accordingly subject to a less stringent statutory regime than a licensed deposit-taker. Indeed, one of the effects of the two-tier system was often to encourage over rapid diversification and expansion of balance sheet totals in order to qualify an institution for recognition in the higher tier. With the benefit of hindsight, as well as foresight, it can be seen that the two-tier structure of the 1979 Act was fundamentally misconceived.

One of the difficulties which the two-tier system created was in the use of banking names and descriptions, which since 1979 have been available only to recognised banks. Under the Bill, the only requirement for the use of a banking name by an authorised institution will be a minimum paid-up equity capital or its equivalent of £5 million, while all authorised institutions will be allowed to use banking descriptions. For authorisation, the minimum qualifying capital will be £1 million. Institutions already authorised under the 1979 Act will retain their authorisation.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): My hon. Friend will be aware of the burden of my questions to him. Why is there to be a distinction between the £1 million figure for authorisation and the £5 million figure for the use of the name "bank"?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend's intervention is not entirely unexpected, as we have already communicated on the subject. The case for having a substantial capital qualification for the use of the name "bank" rests on the need to ensure that only bodies of considerable substance should be regarded as banks and allowed to describe themselves specifically as such. There is also a case for saying that institutions should not be prevented from taking deposits, thus obtaining authorisation, even if they fall far short of the level deemed appopriate for that. I know my hon. Friend's views about that in relation to certain institutions, but there are considerable pressures from another direction, suggesting that the threshold for the use of banking names should be higher than £5 million. I think that the figure we have chosen is the right one. We can return to that subject if my hon. Friend wants to pursue it further.

In order to increase the Bank of England's flexibility in dealing with cases where it is dissatisfied with the position of a particular institution, it will be able to impose conditions on authorisation without having to go through the full process of revocation. We have also decided that the appeal system should be modified, so that decisions of the tribunal will in future be binding, rather than in the form of advice to the Chancellor of the Exhequer, and that the right of appeal will be extended to individuals whose fitness and properness, to use the technical terms, may be questioned by the supervisors.

The Bill also provides a new power enabling the Bank of England to block a proposed merger or takeover on prudential grounds. Anyone proposing to acquire, or substantially increase, a controlling interest in a deposit-taking business will have to give adequate notice to the Bank of England, which will then have the power to object to the transaction if the intended controller does not meet its prudential standards. Failure to notify the Bank of England under such circumstances will be a criminal offence, and powers are included in the Bill for restrictions to be applied to the shares in question if these procedures are contravened. The Bill itself contains no reciprocity

[Mr. Stewart]

provisions, but this is because the Financial Services Act already covers deposit-taking businesses as well as investment businesses in this respect. Under that Act the Government will have the power to refuse, restrict or withdraw the authorisation of a foreign-owned deposit-taker, if equivalent opportunities are not available to British firms in its country of origin in either the banking or the securities sector.

The whole supervisory process depends upon relevant, accurate and timely information being provided by institutions to the Bank of England. Although most of such information will continue to be supplied on a voluntary basis, the Bill, unlike the 1979 Act, enables the Bank of England to obtain the necessary information under statutory powers from all authorised institutions, if need be on a regular basis, and backed up by criminal penalties for non-compliance. The supervisors will also have a right of entry to obtain such information on the spot, where a request to provide it has not been complied with, or, in exceptional cases, if it is suspected that papers might be tampered with or destroyed.

As in the JMB case, large exposures to the same or connected borrowers are a characteristic feature of banking problems. The Bill, therefore, contains new proposals requiring exposures above 10 per cent. of an institution's capital base to be reported to the supervisors post hoc, and the supervisors must be notified in advance before an exposure exceeding 25 per cent. of the capital base is undertaken. Criminal sanctions will attach to deliberate non-compliance with these provisions, in addition to the new criminal offence of knowingly or recklessly providing any information to the supervisors which is false or misleading in a material particular.

Under the existing Act, the Bank of England's powers to investigate cases of suspected illegal deposit-taking are virtually non-existent. The Bill greatly strengthens the powers of the supervisor in this area and, because of the ease with which evidence can be destroyed, it is proposed that there should, again as a last resort, be a power of entry for this purpose. The Bill also contains new provisions to help depositors recover funds held by illegal deposit-takers.

There is, and will continue to be, an overriding obligation of secrecy on supervisors and those who acquire supervisory information. As in the 1979 Act, it will continue to be a criminal offence to break this trust, but the Bill contains new provisions to enable information to be disclosed through strictly controlled gateways to other supervisors. This is essential if supervisors in the new framework are to be able to cope adequately with the affairs of financial conglomerates and with the global nature of financial and banking services today.

The provisions concerning auditors are parallel to those contained in the Building Societies and Financial Services Acts. The Bill provides that auditors and reporting accountants may communicate information about their client company to the Bank of England without breaching any obligation of confidentiality or loyalty which they would otherwise owe to their clients. We hope that the accountancy profession will bring forward satisfactory rules or guidance specifying the circumstances in which such information should be communicated, but the Bill contains a reserve power for the Treasury to bring forward regulations imposing such a system if the profession fails to do so.

Those are the main provisions of a Bill which will complete the trio of statutes covering the regulation of banking and financial institutions. During recent years the business of the City of London has increased in scope and multiplied in volume.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): My hon. Friend has summarised well the provisions included in the Bill. As financial supermarkets are growing, can he tell us why the Bill does not include an amendment to the Consumer Credit Act 1974 to facilitate the development of electronic fund transfer at the point of sale, which he has rightly outlined? I wholly support the controls and monitoring of banks. However, that measure, which would be favourable to the banks and would increase their security, is not included. Can my hon. Friend explain why?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend will recall that at the outset of my speech I announced that, along with publication of the Bill, the Government plan to set up a committee to review that and related subjects. I appreciate that my hon. Friend's point is one that the banks may regard as being more important and more urgent than certain other items in that area. I have therefore asked them to let me have further evidence showing what progress the banking sector is making in that direction and to let me know whether they feel that there is an absolute case for saying that such a matter should be brought forward and separated from the rest of the related subjects that are due to be dealt with under that review.

During recent years the business of the City of London has increased in scope and multiplied in volume. In 1979, when the first Banking Bill was enacted, it yielded an estimated £1·6 billion in foreign earnings. Last year it reached the huge figure of £7·6 billion. The banking sector has played a significant part in this contribution to our national economy and to our balance of payments from foreign business. If the British banking system is to continue to serve its customers satisfactorily at home and to command confidence abroad, we must ensure that the framework of supervision within which it operates is realistic, comprehensive and up to date. That is the purpose of the Bill and I hope that it will command general support. I commend it to the House.

10.11 am

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): The Economic Secretary to the Treasury rightly referred in his speech to the background against which we should consider the Bill. I have two aspects to add to that background. The first is the post-big bang City of London. The second is the context of the JMB affair. I begin by referring to the first.

In the changing financial world, banks, particularly the smaller banks, will naturally feel encouraged to go for areas of lending that initially show high rates of return. In recent years, the banks have greatly extended both personal credit and mortgage lending. Since 1979 there has been an enormous expansion of personal credit. Up to the end of 1985, growth was of the order of 85 per cent. in real terms. By the end of the second quarter in 1986, outstanding consumer credit amounted to almost £28 billion. That means that the growth in the ratio of household debt to annual household income has increased

very considerably. During the period of the Barber boom in the early 1970s, it reached a peak of 45 per cent. Since 1980, it has risen very sharply to almost 70 per cent. That represents an enormous explosion of consumer credit, some of which is causing a great deal of concern.

I regret that it is not causing any great concern on the Government Benches, but it is causing great concern outside the House of Commons, particularly to those agencies that seek to assist, either voluntarily or as their statutory duty, families who are now in very serious debt. All this is being allowed to run in order to feed the pre-election boom and to make people feel well off in the run-up to the next general election. One sees exactly what the Government are doing by allowing this consumer boom to run in that way.

It has also led to comment by the Governor of the Bank of England. In his recent Loughborough speech he outlined many of the changes in banking practices and bank lending. Having reviewed the extent of the changes in bank lending he said that two years ago he

"envisaged the possibility that the unpredictability of the relationship between money and nominal incomes could reach a point . . . at which we would do better to dispense with money targetry altogether, and I shall be considering with the Chancellor whether that point has arrived in relation to broad money when we come to review the MTFS framework around the turn of the year."

it is therefore causing concern outside, but apparently it is of no concern to the Government.

The Economic Secretary rightly referred to the review that was announced in a written answer on Friday 14 November. There is to be a review of various ancient Acts that apply to the provision of banking services. He said:

"The law should provide the necessary legal framework for the provision of banking services"—

which would include consumer credit—

"on fair and efficient terms." — [*Official Report*, 14 November 1986; Vol. 105, c. 8.]

I welcome that review. However, I should like to know when the Economic Secretary expects it to be completed. Perhaps it is unfair to ask, as the full report is not yet available, but does he not consider that proposals for legislation should be made? Reference has already been made to the need for electronic services. The provision of consumer credit and the way in which cheques are treated by banks have already caused concern. Therefore we need to be told about the Economic Secretary's legislative plans.

Consumer credit has been allowed to grow apace, as has mortgage lending. The Economic Secretary knows that the Governor of the Bank of England has already expressed concern in one of the Bank of England reviews about the extent of bank lending going into property and about the terms upon which that money is lent, which leads to difficulties for certain families. In the past, there has been very little repossession of homes by building societies, banks or other lending institutions. That percentage, admittedly from a very low base, is increasing rapidly.

In a written answer this week the Department of the Environment said that at the end of June 1986 over 60,000 households were over six months in arrears with mortgage payments. That is worrying, and some of the Government's plans in other areas are not helping to overcome that problem. I refer to the proposal to delay the payment of mortgage interest to those receiving supplementary benefit for the first three months of unemployment. The Government's actions are making the problem worse. Both sides of the House want people to be able to buy their homes. Nevertheless, the Opposition do not want people to have to struggle to make high mortgage repayments, and we do not want them to be cast out of their homes because the building societies or banks have repossessed.

The extension of mortgage lending and personal credit has been at the expense of bank lending in other areas. For example, in 1979 London clearing banks and their subsidiaries lent 27·4 per cent. of their total lending to manufacturing industry. By August 1985 the percentage had fallen to 14·7. That is a substantial drop and no doubt partially explains why the levels of investment in manufacturing industry have not yet reached the levels of 1979. There may be temporary reasons for that, such as the phasing out of capital allowances and the fact that in 1985, company profitability began to rise sharply and companies began to invest out of retained profit rather than by way of bank borrowing. However, it is a significant trend.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Dr. McDonald: No, I do not need to give way on that point. We are worried about the changes in bank lending and about the way in which consumer credit and mortgage lending is being expanded so rapidly. At some point, especially in the case of personal credit, that sort of lending must grind to a halt because we all know that at some point we have to stop borrowing and pay back the money that has been obtained through personal loans or credit cards. That is an area of concern.

My third point is about the big bang. As the Minister rightly said, this is the third part of the regulatory system that the Government put in place through the Financial Services Act 1986 and the Building Societies Act 1986. In this new situation we are faced with severe problems of regulation. As we know, all financial institutions, including banks and building societies, are extending their range of services and in so doing each institution falls under a range of self-regulatory organisations and under one or other lead regulator.

Rules are now being drawn up. For example, the Securities Investments Board and the banks are in the process of agreeing the rules under which banks may advise people about insurance and sell insurance policies, and under which they may advise on and sell securities. We are all anxious about precisely how this will work. In the case of financial conglomerates, which banks are obviously becoming, as are many other institutions, the legislation lays down that there will be a lead regulator and that the various self-regulatory organisations, including the lead regulator, will be able to exchange information. The Financial Services Act 1986 enables such an exchange of information to take place.

The Opposition have expressed their anxiety about the whole system because it depends on a range of self-regulatory organisations knowing what sort of information to convey to each other and when. How can they ensure that it is convey.d quickly enough and with sufficient urgency, because a failure in one area of a financial conglomerate can affect the business of the whole? Since the big bang, the City has faced major scandals. Insider trading was discovered in the case of Morgan Grenfell and we are still waiting to know the full implications for trading in this country as well as in America of the Boesky affair.

[Dr. McDonald]

The last Bank of England report was published in May. In the course of describing the bank's activities the report spoke of the enormous scale and nature of their involvement in facilitating large mergers and acquisitions in the United Kingdom corporate sector and noted that a number of banks or banking groups had arranged to acquire significant strategic shareholdings in the companies involved. The report commented on how these will be viewed in terms of the capital adequacy of banks. However, I do not wish to pursue that point at the moment.

It may well be that if some banks, and especially the ones that are sometimes called bucket shop banks, engage in buying shares like this, insider trading will go on. Obviously, the Bank of England will be alert to that because it will be on the lookout to ensure that insider trading does not take place. If it does take place what will happen? Will the individual or the bank itself carry the can if insider trading is discovered?

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Surely the hon. Lady appreciates that we dealt with insider trading in the Financial Services Act 1986 which has only just been passed. That answers all the queries that the hon. Lady has raised.

Dr. McDonald: Of course that topic was discussed during the course of the Financial Services Bill, but a fortnight after the big bang there was a scandal involving a reputable company. That is why I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree that when discussing banking supervision and noting that banks are engaged in buying shares in companies and in advising people about what shares they should buy, it is entirely proper to raise the whole issue of insider trading again and to ask not just whether the individual will carry the can but what will happen to the bank concerned.

I spoke specifically about the small bucket shop type of bank. Will the Bank of England take such a bank under its wing by issuing directions about how it should conduct its business, or will it withdraw authorisation from a bank discovered to be engaging in extensive insider trading? Quite naturally, people are extremely worried about what is happening in the City, and to suggest that all the problems have been solved by the Financial Services Act 1986 is taking too optimistic a view.

Mr. John Browne: Will the hon. Lady give way.

Dr. McDonald: No, I should like to move on.

The third point about which the Minister spoke was the Johnson Matthey Bankers affair. As he quite rightly recognised, that affair illustrated the gross incompetence of JMB in the conduct of its affairs and the failure to supervise by the Bank of England. The JMB affair was much debated in the House. I was careful to accuse the Bank of England simply of a failure to supervise and I suggested that the extraordinary and gross incompetence of JMB was the cause of the affair.

I should like the Minister to bring us up to date on the last Bank of England report which shows that police investigations are continuing into the lending business undertaken by JMB in the period before October 1984. If the Minister knows, I hope that he will tell us the up-to-date results of the police investigations. Will he also give us the latest view, beyond the £25 million that is mentioned in the report, on the losses involved in the acquisition of JMB following its collapse?

I shall now address myself to the Bill. The Opposition will be looking for improvements in the depositor protection scheme.

Mr. John Browne: The hon. Lady was talking about liability for insider trading between the institution and the individual. Surely, as my hon Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) said, the issue has been catered for by the Financial Services Act, which was enacted last Session. If the insider trading is for the benefit of the personal account of the individual, why should the institution suffer? If the insider trading is for the benefit of the institution, it is clear that the institution should be liable.

Dr. McDonald: I do not think that it is considered satisfactory that when insider trading is taking place one person alone should carry the can. We do not know the full implications for Britain of the events of the past few weeks. These events have caused some of us to think again. It may be that the hon. Gentleman and others are perfectly happy with matters as they stand, but there is disquiet elsewhere, and it is proper that it should be raised from the Opposition Front Bench.

The Minister has referred to foreign takovers, and we want it spelt out much more clearly in the Bill that such takeovers should not be allowed where there are no reciprocal arrangements. For example, a Japanese bank may seek to take over a British merchant bank or even one of the major clearing banks. We know that there are extremely substantial financial organisations in Japan and we contend that such institutions should not be allowed to take over a British bank when our institutions cannot get into the Japanese market.

Secondly, considerations of national interest should be taken into account. The major clearers play an important part in the management of the British economy and we intend to raise this issue in Committee——

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): And on Report.

Dr. McDonald: Undoubtedly we shall return to it when that stage is reached.

The Bill deals with the reporting of large exposures. There is voluntary reporting of exposures of 10 per cent. or less, and the reporting of a 25 per cent. proposed exposure to a single person or collective persons to the Bank of England will have to take place before the event.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Perhaps the hon. Lady made a slip of the tongue when she said that there would be voluntary reporting at 10 per cent. That reporting will be after the event and will not be voluntary.

Dr. McDonald: Yes, the Minister is right. That reporting will be after the event, and that is what I have in my notes. I was thinking of other remarks that the Minister made.

We shall be examining carefully the reporting provisions in Committee. I hope that the balance is right and that the 25 per cent. provision is not too much of a relaxation and is not over generous. Two of the main sources of the problems with JMB was its failure to report on time and its under-reporting. The bank allowed JMB to report late and then to postpone a meeting between the bank's directors and the Bank of England from July to

August. That was followed by under-reporting, which was quite substantial. In its 1985 annual report, the Bank of England claimed that the reported figures for the two exposures at the end of June 1985 were 15 per cent. and 12 per cent. of capital and that the true figures were 26 per cent. and 17 per cent. respectively. At the end of June 1984 the reported figures were 38 per cent. and 34 per cent. while the true figures were 76 per cent. and 39 per cent. There were enormous disparities and sloppy reporting.

There are two areas of concern. The first is whether such misreporting can be detected by the Bank of England's supervisors. The Minister has referred to the increase in the Bank's staff, and I understand that the staff now stands at 160. A considerable recruitment programme has taken place over the past year or so and, interestingly enough, it has been directed largely to graduates. I should like to see more secondments from the banking industry into the Bank and for those secondees to act as supervisors. That would be a way of getting practical experience into the Bank's own supervision.

Secondly, there is a problem with the banks detecting the degree of exposure to connected persons, which was the position with JMB. I do not think that JMB was necessarily aware of the extent of its loans to companies run by Shamji because it did not necessarily know, or did not look too hard to see what the connections were. The Bank of England should ensure that banks' internal control systems are designed so that they can pick up exposure to connected persons. We shall need to examine closely the reporting of large exposures when we come to consider the Bill in Committee.

I still find enormous problems in auditors being expected to inform the Bank of England's supervisors about the conduct of business by the bank of which they are auditors. This is understandable for two reasons. First, an auditor's final duty is to the shareholders. Secondly, large accountancy firms provide auditors and act as management consultants to the same bank. There is obviously a conflict of interest if an auditor's firm has provided advice on internal control systems and management systems, perhaps assisting the bank with the installation of a new computer system, and then finds that he is expected to say to the Bank of England's supervisors, "I do not think that the internal control systems of the bank are working effectively." It seems that there is a conflict of interest and I do not think that auditors who are appointed to a particular bank should be expected to act in the way that I have described, except in the last resort, and as any of us would, if we saw that there were clear examples of serious negligence and fraud. It is obvious that the Bank of England has a right to expect that of auditors. The role assigned to auditors in the Bill is not only the last resort role of reporting gross negligence or whatever but also the role of alerting Bank of England supervisors to possible problems. Of course, one needs a mechanism for that, but the auditors do not provide the right one.

Obviously, the Opposition welcome any strengthening of banking supervision, particularly in a rapidly changing financial world. We all want the City to be seen to be operating honestly and fairly, as it is detrimental to its business if it is not. In Committee, we shall examine every aspect of the Bill closely to ensure that it succeeds in its aim of making sure that banking supervision is carried out fully, properly and exhaustively, and that it goes as far as possible towards preventing the occurrence of fraud and towards alerting people to the possibility of collapse.

10.30 am

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I join the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) in what I understand to be her general welcome for the Bill. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary and his Treasury colleagues on introducing it, and on giving careful consideration to the recommendations of the Leigh-Pemberton committee and to the considerable representations made subsequently by many organisations.

The Bill is important. It follows scandals in the banking sector and a great deal of public concern that needs to be allayed. In introducing the Bill, my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary struck an important balance between the need for financial institutions and banks to continue to prosper in the new era of financial services, and ensuring that depositor protection is enhanced. Customers of banks should continue as such, secure in the knowledge that there is an adequate regulatory framework, means of redressing grievances, and obtaining compensation.

About 600 recognised banks operate in this country. They make a vital contribution to our economy, to industry, and to our balance of payments. They are increasingly important both in terms of employment and the provision of financial services. The Bill is the last of a trilogy of measures to try to ensure that the major expansion in financial services and banking generally in the City and elsewhere in Britain is subjected to a new, more adequate and up-to-date system of regulation.

We may all have ideas as to minor areas in which the provisions of this legislation could be improved or amended, but we must generally give the Bill a warm welcome. It was prompted by periods of crisis and banking scandals. However, it is important to emphasise that the Treasury has an obligation to frame legislation not just in response to the most recent scandal but for future circumstances that may arise. It is generally recognised that some of the inadequacies now apparent in the Banking Act 1979 are due to the fact that it was designed specifically to redress the problems of the fringe banking crisis of the early 1970s. Similarly, if this legislation were designed largely to redress the inadequacies that became apparent through the collapse of JMB, it might not be well framed for dealing with the next crisis, whether that involves a default in a bank's foreign exchange department, a fraudulent activity within a bank, or problems of loan concentration or of overlending in the future.

The problems of competition and credit control that partly led to the banking collapses of the 1970s, and the problems of culpable credit analyses and exposure that led to the collapse of JMB, should be born in mind, but they are not the only criteria on which to judge this legislation. The main reason for JMB's failure was the high concentration of loans to relatively few borrowers. Its loans increased nearly tenfold, to £296 million by 1984, and the bulk of them went to the connected companies of one shipping group.

The Banking Act 1979, which introduced the two-tier system of recognised banks and licensed deposit takers, was shown to be deficient when it came to supervising large exposures monitoring the financial adequacy of

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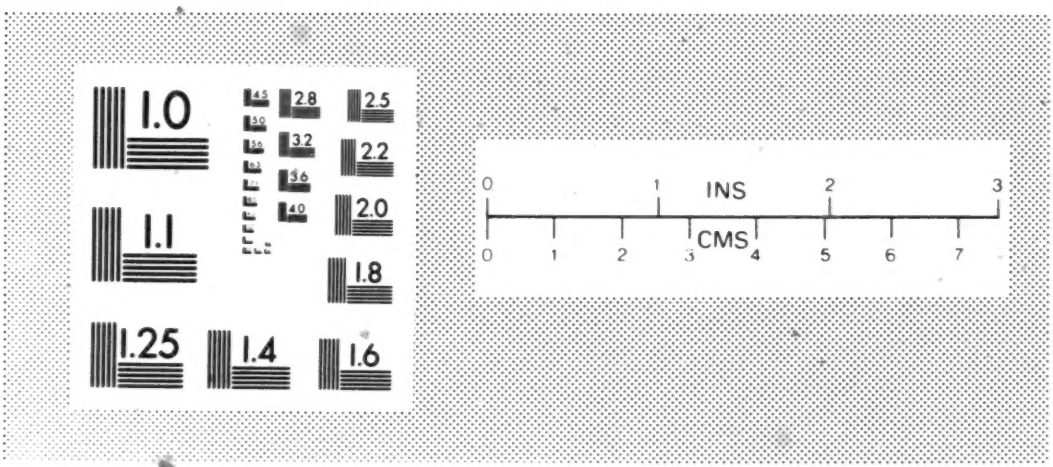

[Mr. Anthony Nelson]

banks and the general probity with which they fulfilled their responsibilities. The new structures in the Bill go a long way towards dealing with those problems.

Nevertheless, the Bill covers several important issues that should be addressed on Second Reading. The most important of those issues is the judgment of the Leigh-Pemberton committee, and the Government in their response to that document and in the framing of their legislation, that there should be no fundamental change in banking supervision. Given the problems that have occurred and the possible risks for the future, it is only proper that Parliament should ask whether a more stringent system of banking supervision should be introduced. It is not that I have serious misgivings, but I am not yet entirely clear why, if the interests of depositors are to remain paramount, it will be necessary to change the definitions of deposit and deposit-taking businesses.

I am worried about the possibility of secondary legislation being used in this regard, as is proposed in the Bill. I should not wish to see any undermining of our principal objective of securing the interests of depositors. Some hon. Members now in the Chamber took an active interest in the passage of the Financial Services Act, and just as in that Bill our principal criterion was to protect the interests of investors, so in this Bill we must always keep uppermost in our minds the need to protect the interests of depositors. Everything else should flow from that.

The Bill is not necessarily concerned with making the City work better or with making banks more profitable, although we hope that those things will come to pass, but is principally concerned with seeking better protection for depositors. I have therefore asked a question rather than expressed a misgiving about the proposal to change the definition of deposit and deposit-taking businesses.

The fundamental judgment that there should be no change in the structure of banking supervision involves a major decision to set up the Board of Banking Supervision within the Bank of England. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary addressed the issue of whether there should be a supervisory authority that is separate from the central bank. That question exercised both the Leigh-Pemberton committee and many others. The eventual decision seems to be that there should be no separation along the lines that have been developed in many other countries. However, there are some arguments in favour of at least strengthening the independence and role of a supervisory authority within the central bank, even if it is not to be entirely separate.

It is suggested that where a supervisory authority is within the central bank, and where the Board of Banking Supervision is within the Bank of England, conflicts of interest could arise between the regulatory responsibilities of the board, and the central bank's prudential role. Some people would argue that the separation of a supervisory authority might promote the building of a professional core of supervisors with an ability to investigate and to hold to account those banks that were moving outside the lines of legislation or of prudential activities. That might prevent problems from arising and save having to deal with them once they had become apparent.

It is clear that the more separate a supervisory authority is from the central bank, the more accountable it is to Parliament. That is something that we should consider carefully. Sadly when things go wrong in the banking sector, a lot of egg lands on the face of the Government of the day, rightly or wrongly, and people come to Parliament to seek redress. Therefore, we should be able to exert some control and accountability and should have the right to question a supervisory authority, and that is obviously diminished by the extent to which it remains part of the central bank, the Bank of England, which we are not able to question, as my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will know.

There is something to learn from foreign comparisons. What we are proposing to continue in this legislation seems to run counter to the experience of many other countries in terms of separating the roles of the central bank and the supervisory authorities. The arguments against that and in favour of keeping the two roles together seem a little weak in that they give priority to the administrative upheaval that would be involved in separating the two.

I do not seek to make a strong case for separating the new board from the Bank of England. However, in the House and in Committee we should look carefully at ways of trying to ensure that the new board fulfils the purposes that we have in mind for it. It seems to me that there is a danger that if the governor is able to appoint the members of the committee — indeed the governor, the deputy governor and the executive director have ex officio places on the board — there could by a rather cosy club. The board will have an advisory role to the governor. This may give the impression to the public and the City that there is a board and that it is doing something, but, in fact, it will be business as usual. The people who will be taking the executive decisions about banking supervision will be the Governor of the Bank of England and the Banking Supervision Division of the Bank of England, not the new board which will have a purely advisory role.

Mr. Cash: In the context of the significance that has been placed on the independence of the board's supervisory role and, having experienced sitting with my hon. Friend on the Financial Services Bill recently, does he agree that it is not simply a question of having people who are apparently independent? We should be quite sure that the functions that they are given and the criteria by which they are chosen ensure that they really are in a position to exercise that element of independent judgment which will be certain to avoid any question of there being a cosy club.

Mr. Nelson: I am obliged to my hon. Friend. I take his intervention to be broadly in support of the sentiments I expressed. Of course, this is not uncharted territory. I understand that a shadow Board of Banking Supervision has already been set up with a membership, apart from the governor, the deputy governor and the director, of some five independent members. When one looks at the list of those members and their backgrounds, one sees that, far from being lay members, they are very much people involved in the banking sector. I make no complaint about that. To have the chairman of Standard Chartered Bank and a director of Kleinwort, Benson Lonsdale is probably a very good thing. One needs experts. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) was saying, one needs a lay element, a common-sense element, to provide some input. I fear that we might end up with a cosy club of governor appointees; of people with whom he

is doing business on a day-to-day basis. That will not necessarily ensure what we want, which is better depositor protection.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Is there not one safeguard in that, although the governor will propose, it will be for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to agree? To that extent, I would have thought that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and his successors would ensure that a cosy club was not created by the banking industry and that some proper outside independent advice was available to the board.

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is right. The Chancellor of the Exchequer does have to agree. However, it is interesting that in the case of the Securities and Investment Board — I think that this is a fair analogy — which supervises the investment sector as opposed to the banking sector, the chairmanship and the membership has to be agreed not just by the Chancellor of the Exchequer but by the Governor of the Bank of England acting jointly with him. There is no reciprocal requirement that members of the Board of Banking Supervision should be agreed with the chairman of the Securities and Investment Board. I do not necessarily suggest that there should be such a requirement.

However, although the Chancellor has an effective veto, which is what my hon. Friend was saying, he does not, as I understand it, have the right to nominate, propose and insist upon a certain membership. I feel that this is an issue that is worth some debate at a later stage in the Bill's progress.

There is the question of whether the Governor of the Bank of England should be able to disregard the advice of the Board of Banking Supervision. As I have said, it will have a purely advisory role and it will still be for the governor to decide what he wants to do. What will the relationship of that board be, not only to the banking supervisory division within the Bank of England, but to the new Standing Committee and the Standing Committee of Court which have been set up?

I welcome the board's establishment and the work that it is doing. However, I question whether we are involved in the cosmetic exercise of setting up a supervisory board to persuade people that something is happening but, in the end, it will be business as usual. We want to ensure through legislation and what we say in the House that the governor — he is a sensitive and able governor, in my judgment — is aware of the need for the board to fulfil the independent incisive role of scrutiny and that there should be compelling reasons before the governor rejects its advice.

There are some 300 foreign banks in the City of London alone. We have more foreign banks than any other capital of the world. They are welcome here and they make an important contribution to our invisibles, to employment and to our economy generally. However, there are serious difficulties in excercising prudential control of foreign banks. The governor is not able to exrcise the same degree of control and supervision over them as he is over United Kingdom banks.

As I understand it, foreign institutional banks are able to set up branches and do business in London provided only that they give two months' notice of their intention to do so to the governor. Indeed, there is not necessarily a need for them to seek authorisation in the same way as a domestic United Kingdom bank. That is fine in the case of some of the major international banks. However, in recent years we have seen the establishment of some banks in the Cayman Islands and in other tax havens abroad which use their foreign banking status as a means to set up branches in this country and elsewhere which become the main centres of their activities. If those become a means of circumventing the authorisation provisions of this or other legislation or the prudential control that the governor has to exercise, it is a legitimate matter for concern.

My concern extends beyond that. The overriding feature of the development of the banking industry in recent years has been the enormous increase in the activities and the deposit-taking business of the foreign banks in London. They are the ones now, and in the future, who will wield massive financial muscle power. The ability of the governor and the regulatory bodies to control them and to ensure that their asset base and the nature of their activities complies with the stringent requirement placed on United Kingdom authorised banks is a matter about which we need to be satisfied. Of course, I acknowledge immediately that this is not an easy matter.

In this connection, I should like to see—I hope that the legislation will bring it forward—a contingent right to prevent foreign banks from coming in and taking over British banks. Of course, such takeovers can already be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, but in the new financial environment in which banks will be operating, there are legitimate concerns about the objectives of some overseas predators coming into the United Kingdom market and taking over long-established and important United Kingdom banking companies. At the very least, we should have a clause in the Bill that allows the Chancellor of the Exchequer to make a judgment on whether such a takeover is in the public interest and I am not sure that clause 21 goes this far.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend agree that we would need to be circumspect in the way in which we dealt with that? One of the aspects of the development of British banks of late has been that they have themselves made substantial overseas acquisitions, notably in the United States of America, and we would not want to put anything into British legislation that would inhibit that process. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree with that.

Mr. Nelson: I agree with my hon. Friend. That is why I tried to couch my proposals in a tempered way. I mention the words "contingent" and "in the public interest". I reassert that there may be instances when major British banks or important companies in the financial sector should not suddenly be taken over by a little-known foreign predator, the objectives of which may be wholly different from the public interest. I do not think that what I am proposing in that regard need mean that the important investment of foreign banks over here will diminish or that there will be a reciprocal restriction on British banks making acquisitions abroad. My hon. Friend is right to say that British banks have been active in acquiring interests in banks abroad, but it has not been easy for many of them. When the Americans have wanted to restrict our investments in financial and other sectors in the United States, they have been willing and able to do so.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend also note that whereas, up to fairly recently, we tended to talk very much in terms of the United States of America, now when we are talking about financial markets and the sheer volume of money circulating in the world, and where much of it is controlled, we talk of Japan? It is extremely important to bear in mind the role of the Bank of Japan. We do not want to preclude the Japanese from coming here. We want quite the opposite. We want to be sure that there is reciprocity in the liberalisation of the financial markets as they affect the entrepot in the City of London, as between ourselves, Japan and other parts of the world.

Mr. Nelson: I readily accept what my hon. Friend says. I, too, believe that there is a need for more global co-operation between reserve and central banks. Both the Department of Trade and Industry, in its negotiations with the Japanese Government, and the Treasury have been exemplary in the way in which they have tried to promote this.

I should like to underline the point that I made in an intervention about the need to improve the level of depositors' protection that is allowed. In 1979, under the Banking Act, the maximum level of a depositor's protected deposit with one institution was set at £10,000. The deposit protection scheme set up in that legislation offered compensation of 75 per cent. of the deposit up to £10,000 so that, for example, a depositor with £5,000 would receive £3,750. Under the new Banking Bill, the money limits in the scheme remain exactly the same. That represents a considerable reduction in the real level of protection available to depositors now compared with 1979.

Over the past year, there have been considerable discussions on investor protection schemes, mainly in regard to financial services. The compensation scheme to be drawn up by the SIB is likely to offer maximum compensation of between £30,000 and £50,000. the Stock Exchange offers compensation of up to £250,000. It seems anomalous that the banking sector, which is regarded as being so much safer, should offer so much less. I hope very much that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, during the passage of the Bill or later, will have an opportunity to review the matter, on the advice of, and taking into account, the comments of other hon. Members who wish to participate.

Having made those remarks, which I hope are not taken in any way as undermining my support for the Bill, I reiterate my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary on bringing forward this much-needed legislation, with the important contribution that it will make towards keeping our banking system secure and respected.

10.55 am

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): The speech by the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) was extremely interesting. I suspect from his general approach that his knowledge of how banks work and function is a shade in excess of mine. I hope that he can continue to make contributions of that nature in the House.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the necessity for real independence on the body when we set it up. That is true not just in the Bill but in quite a lot of legislation. I certainly support him on that. I could not help remembering listening to the radio nearly 20 years ago when it was said that in a council in south Wales 16 people were standing as Labour candidates, 16 as Independents and the Rev. somebody or other as an independent Independent. We need independent independents with some real knowledge. It is easy to pick somebody who is just independent of all interests, but one has to find that peculiar combination of someone who is genuinely independent but who has real knowledge as well, otherwise he is nothing more than baggage, looking good and respectable, and giving people confidence when in reality it is not justified.

The combination of the Banking Bill and Friday is not exactly Utopian for me. However, the Bill is important and deserves a great deal of consideration.

I get the feeling that it may well get that, at least from those who have some expert knowledge.

I welcome the independent review announced by the Economic Secretary to the Treasury. Several issues are raised by electronic banking, which give one reason for concern. I say that as much from what I have received in my mailbag as for any other reason. I am sure that many hon. Members at one time or other have had a constituent complaining that money has been taken from his credit account when the constituent claims that he never went to the bank and withdrew it. The bank claims that it can never be wrong. One writes to the bank and to the constituent, and after a week or two one admits that one is hopelessly confused about the rights and wrongs. At the moment there is no satisfactory resolution of the problem. One hopes that the Committee will apply its mind to that.

I should appreciate it if the Economic Secretary explained what consumer representation there will be on the body. It is important to me that the consumer interest is fairly strongly represented. I should appreciate hearing whether the Government have it specifically in mind to cover that aspect.

The whole Bill is an attempt to maintain some freedom in banking as well as regulation. Many would argue that one cannot have a system of freedom with regulation. I am not convinced we can but the Government are right to try and I support their efforts. Many of the advantages that accrue to Britain arise from our ability to maintain freedom with some regulation, and this has not been altogether unsuccessful over the years, although it is not difficult to think of one or two cases that give reason for deep concern. Trying to maintain that contradiction is at the root of many of our difficulties.

Of all the careers augmented by the Bill, the career of auditor has been raised at least 30 steps on a 10-step ladder. It will be interesting to see whether someone is willing to take on the responsibilities involved. The role of the auditors is desperately important and significant.

The clause telling auditors of a bank that they have a duty from hereon to report to the Bank of England supervisory board whatever they see is of key importance. It could be argued that auditors have had that duty for some time by implication, because their responsibility is to audit, but from this moment on they will be liable to be sued by the third party interest if it believes that the auditors have failed to inform and carry out their responsibilities. It must be said——

11 am

Mr. Peter Lilley (St. Albans): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It arises out of early-day motion 195, which is on the Order Paper today. Several times this week, Mr. Speaker has pointed to the misuse of early-day

motions to vilify people who have no right of reply. This early-day motion, by contrast, makes serious and important allegations about the Leader of the Opposition. The right hon. Gentleman has the right of reply, and I ask you whether we can ensure that he makes a statement responding to the accusations that he, his office and his colleagues, have been in contact with and have been offering and receiving advice to and from, an opponent of the Crown in a court case in Australia, and that senior members of his entourage have been out in Australia collaborating with people there. These are important matters, and the House has a right to a serious reply from somebody who has the right to reply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. If the early-day motion is on the Order Paper, it is in order. However, the making of a statement is not a matter for me, and I think the hon. Gentleman realises that.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate your ruling that these matters are not for you, but this is of such grave national importance that a number of us have made it clear, and I have written to the Leader of the Opposition this morning saying, that we wish to have a statement from him. Have you received no notification from him that he proposes to make a statement about what is in the newspapers?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have received no sign from any right hon. or hon. Member that he wishes to make a statement.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. An allegation of this sort against a Privy Councillor, setting out in considerable detail what appears to be unprecedented, irresponsible and, on the face of it, unpatriotic behaviour, surely calls for a personal statement from the right hon. Gentleman, who is present in the Chamber.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that when the occupant of the Chair is on his feet all hon. Members must resume their seats. These matters may be of intense importance, as they are, but it is clearly understood that the making of a statement is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps I can shorten these proceedings and ensure that the business of the House is resumed. As you may have observed, I have with me a statement which I deliberately brought into the House as a consequence of an early-day motion put on the Order Paper yesterday for malign and mischievous reasons that have no connection with matters relating to national security, and everything to do with efforts on the part of Government Back Benchers to cover the Government's exposed tail.

The events of this morning and the news that has become generally available through the BBC about the evidence given by Sir Robert Armstrong ensures that additional attention will be given to this case, and therefore to matters relating to national security. In these circumstances, it is important that I make this point of order to give hon. Gentlemen an opportunity to withdraw their early-day motion.

I would be more than happy Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you were to find it acceptable, to provide, either in written form or before the House, a full statement of exactly what has transpired, the reasons for what has transpired and the extent to which I have used quotations, which I drew to the attention of the House on Monday last, of the transcript of the case in Australia.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If this is a personal statement, the right hon. Gentleman should send it to Mr. Speaker.

Sir John Biggs Davison: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That was the purpose of the point of order that I wished to put to you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Then we need not pursue the matter and we can return to the important debate.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the Leader of the Opposition is to make a personal statement, will it be in order to question him? Would it——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot have heard what I said. If this is a personal statement, it should be sent to Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Marlow: On a further point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will know from "Erskine May", on page 342, paragraph 9, that it is always the habit, quite properly, of Governments not to answer questions on security ppears that a lickspittle of the Leader of the Opposition's private office, Miss Helen Hayman, a member of the Australian establisiment, is in Australia because the Leader of the Opposition——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are in the middle of an important debate, and the hon. Gentleman is raising matters that could easily be raised at some other time.

Mr. Kinnock: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I feel that the comments made by the hon. Gentleman—I suppose that I have to use that term —are unworthy of the House, and that the House is in danger of being misled as a consequence of the specious and, to say the least, ungentlemanly, comment made by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). The person to whom he referred, erroneously, using the wrong name, is no lickspittle. Miss Patricia Hewitt, who does work for me, is not in Australia. At this moment, I presume that she is at home, tending to her baby of a few months' age.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Withdraw.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Withdraw. A gentleman would.

Mr. Browne: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We should now proceed with the debate on the Banking Bill. Mr. Penhaligon.

Mr. Penhaligon: I was trying to discuss the role of auditors in banking. We could do with a few auditors within the confines of the House sometimes. By applying my mind to the Bill rather than to the more interesting

[Mr. Penhaligon]

shenanigans that may or may not be taking place somewhere else I have clearly missed the main news story of the day.

Auditors are gradually being given a new role, which is being given strength and meaning by the ability of third parties to sue the auditor should the bank collapse. The argument will be that the auditor should have warned the system that something odd and peculiar was happening in the bank, as he should have had reason to know that. Therefore, if something goes wrong and he has failed in his role, he is responsible for a person's unfortunate financial position.

This is an important and significant job. The hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) suggested that the job should go to someone else, because the auditor is paid by the people on whom it could be alleged that he is spying. I am not certain that that is right. It is important that these responsibilities and jobs go to someone who is likely to know what is happening. Two parallel systems of auditing would have to be set up, one reporting to the bank and one reporting to somebody else when the sheer cost of auditing and checking is terrifying in any case.

However, there is a risk that, in difficult circumstances, the auditor will reach the point of semi-hysteria and feel that the only thing that he can do is report everything that comes to him just to protect himself. If that situation should arise would the supervisory board have the capacity to deal with the information with the necessary speed to alleviate people's worries? It may well trundle along rather nicely, but how would it deal with an emergency? I have no solution to that problem. However, because of the legal responsibilities on the auditor he may feel that the only way to protect himself is to report everything. At times when confidence is not high, there is a real danger of the whole system simply and absolutely becoming overwhelmed.

My next point relates to the role of the independent members of the supervisory board. I note that the legislation states that if the independent members disagree with the Bank of England members, they can report to the Chancellor. Does that mean that they meet separately and independently? As a member of a single political thrust that is divided into two entities, I can advise them not to meet separately too often. Sane, intelligent and rational people meeting separately have a tendency to reach marginally separate conclusions. If they do not meet separately, how can independent members show that they take a different view to non-independent members? They should make representations, as the Bill permits.

It is important to have independent members because it is crucial that the system is seen to be operated well by people of high calibre. I would like a litte more information about how the Minister thinks that the system will work in practice. Several hon. Members referred to the deposit protection scheme which is inadequate. There cannot be any justification for not indexing it at the earliest possible opportunity. The only satisfaction is the statutory instrument regulation means that it may be changed fairly easily.

I can think of no reason why the opportunity could not be taken to increase the £10,000, 75 per cent. limit. I am sure that many of my constituents do not realise that if they have £30,000 deposited in a bank and that bank gets into difficulties, the most that they can hope to recoup under the scheme is £7,500. If they understood that, the banks might find themselves slightly lighter on one or two deposits. We must be concerned mainly about the small depositor. Millionaires receive advice and know the risks, although it is obvious from the odd cases that they do not always get it right. For those investing £30,000, possibly from a life insurance policy or savings, the safeguards are inadequate. Why did the Government decide not to do anything about that?

I cannot help but take a rather cynical approach to the clauses that prevent people from taking over our banks. By training I am an engineer and I make no apologies for that admission in a debate on banking. Sometimes a person with no direct involvement in the matter can make an important contribution. The powers to which the Minister referred already apply to Japan for engineering. Everyone said at the time that they would ensure that trade was fair, but in reality they did nothing about it. We have allowed a great slice of our industry to be undermined — admittedly by superb engineering, but with pretty dubious practices at the fringe.

Following the big bang, the fear in the City is that the Japanese will obey every rule, like no one has ever obeyed them, until they get too big for anyone to do anything about it and they will then act in the way that I have described. I am very worried about that. We should have an absolute assurance that the Japanese will not be involved in British banks until there is a considerable change in their attitude. By no involvement I mean no involvement. I wonder whether we are really wise to allow them to operate within the City, given their attitude and history. I put that point on the record.

My final point has nothing to do with the Bill. However, the hon. Member for Thurrock raised it, so I cannot see why I should not do so as well. It is the current consumer credit boom. That has enormous political attractions for the Government. For example, if someone borrows £1,000 and buys a television set — a rather expensive television set — the Chancellor immediately receives 15 per cent. in VAT. It is highly probable that the company that sold the £1,000 worth of goods will be profitable and the Chancellor will receive another cut from it. If it was purchased from a shop, someone would have served the customer, so there is an element of job creation. That is Utopia — a circle of events designed to please everyone, but it will in the end collapse and there are many reasons why we should worry about that. Clearly, many individuals are becoming so deeply involved in credit that often the only result is repossession.

I am not sure what the hon. Member for Thurrock was proposing. It appeared that she was getting very close to suggesting that the Government should in some way set up a supervisory board to examine the problem of individual debt. Certainly that would be an intrusion into the rights of individuals to organise their affairs as they want to, is over the top.

Dr. McDonald: The hon. Gentleman engaged in a flight of fancy when he described what I am alleged to have proposed. My point was that social workers, citizens advice bureaux and other bodies already assist people who are deeply in debt. Those agencies, as the hon. Gentleman must know, are very worried about the extent of debt that some people have taken on and their liability to fall into the hands of loan sharks. I made nothing like the proposals that the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

Mr. Penhaligon: I accept that the hon. Lady did not say what I thought she had said. Of course, the hon. Lady did not offer any solutions to the problem. I hope that she will take another opportunity to tell us what the Labour party proposes to do about the problem.

As a layman, I believe that the Bill is useful. I think that those who are not laymen also think that it is useful. We accept the legislation in principle, but we are worried as to how it will stand up to the test of time. When it has stood the test of time, it might be that some modification will be needed.

The role of independent observation is crucial to the whole operation, as is the role and the marginally peculiar position in which the auditor finds himself. Those are two of the major keystones that hold the legislation together, if it is held together. The Minister today should give us some information on the independent role, even if the questions that I have raised regarding auditors are not easy to answer. They are vital to the whole matter. If that part goes wrong, my fear is that we will produce a Bill which, in five or six years, we will have to replace. We must get it right.

My party will not oppose the Bill. Indeed, we cannot oppose any Bill on a Friday as we disperse to our various parts of the country. As is well known, however, the usual channels would not have put the Bill down for a Friday if there were fundamental opposition to it. As there is broad agreement, the Committee stage may be a fruitful one, as is so often the case in these circumstances.

11.20 am

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): First, I must declare a financial interest in the finance industry.

The key importance of the banks in both international and national economies is well known. As my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) and others have said, people trust the banks with their entire savings. the Government therefore have a duty to ensure the maximum prudent protection by preventing banks from taking imprudent risks, as was done, for example, in the case of the international debt crisis.

A number of key changes have affected the banking industry in recent months and years. First, there has been the growth of financial supermarkets. This has been enhanced by the big bang, of which I entirely approve. Now, instead of just being lenders, banks are becoming dealers in securities.

Mr. Weetch: And underwriters.

Mr. Browne: Yes, although that happened to some extent in the past.

Two other developments have greatly changed the whole environment in which banks work. To use two buzz words, they are securitisation and globalisation. The first means that more and more debt obligations are not just between two parties but are traded as securities among many parties, so that in the world system there is a huge inherent and increasing risk of a settlement default and the ripple effect that such a problem would cause.

Globalisation means not only that a problem in one country could spin into many others, as in the tin market crisis, but that one has to consider the effect of cross-border transactions. A dealer in Thailand may not fully understand financial instruments in the London and New York markets. There are also physical settlement risks.

The international legal system may also not be keeping up with the speed at which cross-border transactions are developing throughout the world.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Browne: I should love to give way to my hon. Friend, but I cannot do so as I am trying to be brief.

Commercial and financial risks are well known and have existed for years, although they are now larger. However, the commercial banks got themselves into a great new area of risk by moving into international lending. That is still a very serious risk. They are now getting into yet another area of risk — quasi-security markets. As a result of financial engineering over the past two or three years, the banks are now not just in the futures market, but in the options market and the swaps market. Indeed,they are now getting into future options on swaps! That involves very great risk, which the bank regulatory authorities may be willing to tackle, but are not yet able to tackle.

Three years ago the swaps market turnover amounted to about $15 billion. It now involves some $300 billion per year. The image of that market is that everyone makes a profit and huge salaries are paid to swaps dealers, but who is making the losses to provide those profits? It is also believed that everyone, from corporate treasurers to banks, avoids all risks. In that case, who is taking on the risks? Most swaps are done through banks, so banks are becoming increasingly involved in the underlying synthetic quasi-security dealings. Indeed, often they do not match the current transactions of the parties but warehouse the unmatched trades. In other words, the banks are now getting into the warehousing of security risks rather merely warehousing securities.

There are forward swaps, zero coupon swaps and even put-and-call swaps. The main risks are risks of practice and agency and the legal, systemic and process risks.

First, the practice risk arises because there is a genuine lack of understanding of this new, complex and fast-moving cross-border market. People may not understand what the transaction is about and what their commitment really is in a future swap or a put-and-call swap. They may be advised to engage in such dealings without any bona fide understanding of what exposure is involved. There is also the risk of malpractice. I do not say that this is taking off in a big way, but we know that it occurs, and in this market it can have an exponential effect involving many innocent people who may have no idea of the underlying transaction.

Secondly, there is the agency risk. A person involved in malpractice may dash from one firm to another, out of the business altogether or across to another country, taking with him the computer discs on which the trades were recorded. How can we catch that individual and the on-line records? Some of the transactions are extremely large.

Thirdly, there is the legal risk. I have yet to find a legal definition of a swap, yet this forms the basis of a $300 billion market. One thinks of London and New York, but what about the Japanese, Chinese or Australian definitions of cross-border swap transactions? There is also uncertainty as to the legal practices involved in all the quasi-security operations undertaken by the banks. Then there are the new markets in which there is little or no legal precedent for transactions of this kind. There is also the

[Mr. Browne]

cross-border problem arising because international legal accords are way behind the actual transactions taking place, especially by electronic means.

Fourthly, there is the systemic risk. Spreads of seven basis points on average for a swap deal seem to me, as a virtual outsider, too small to cater for the inherent risk of warehousing risks rather than securities; just as one may argue with hindsight that Lloyd's charges for the risks that it was undertaking three or four years ago were not high enough, or that some banks in the international debt market were not charging high enough spreads for the risks they were undertaking. There is also an over-concentration of risk in the hands of major banks and investment banks in the big capital markets, especially London and New York. The risk taken on by financial supermarkets represent big risks for the public and for the economy generally. With the systemic risk, to, there is the cross-border problem.

Fifthly, there is the process risk, or back office settlement risk. There may be a lack of genuine understanding, not just by those doing the deals, but by the back office people who have even less ability to understand the theory, let alone the practice and the physical settlement aspect. That, too, is a very high risk. It is an exploding market and involves high turnover, so it will load the back offices heavily in an area which they might not fully understand. We must also consider the cross-border problem, there being different ideas about and methods of settling.

I strongly support the Bill. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary and the Government on their initiative, but I believe that, in some areas, the Bill does not go far enough with regard to supervision of the banks. We must ensure that the banking regulatory authorities are brought more up to speed with today's trades, and do not just follow and react to reports of yesterday's trades. That is urgent, and the Government must face it for the national and international good.

11.30 am

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): The House has heard some interesting speeches this morning and I have followed them with great attention, especially that made by the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson). As a result of listening to his speech, I scrapped a good deal of the text that I had prepared. It is now rolled up on the floor at my feet.

I sincerely hope that the hon. Gentleman follows through much of what he said and that we shall see him in Committee. He made some valid points which should be expanded a great deal.

I could not follow the intricacies of the swap market, to which the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) referred. It is an arcane area which I have never followed, and I shall need more guidance on it.

On 20 June, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said:

"serious shortcomings in the management of JMB led to its collapse — over-rapid expansion of the loan book, heavy concentration of exposures, and lack of adequate control systems. JMB was also guilty of serious misreporting to the supervisory authority." — [*Official Report*, 20 June 1985; Vol. 81, c. 452.]

Is there enough in the Bill to give us a strong assurance that the same crisis will not be upon us again? That is the key question. My contacts in the City are limited in number, but I can tell the Economic Secretary that many of them think that the Bill is not drawn stringently enough. I share that view.

It is a sad fact of recent banking legislation in Britain that regulation comes only in response to serious breakdowns in the financial system. To a non-professional such as me, banking legislation in modern times seems to have been only a response to serious events rather than a grasped opportunity to give a strong and effective lead to the banking fraternity and the City of London. We have lagged behind events, and not put down strong markers.

It seems that banking legislation has been only a few notches down from ad hoc problem management. Surely that is not right. We have had two good examples recently. In the mid-1970s, the City of London was rocked by the fringe banking crisis which occurred in the wake of the collapse in property values, and some fringe banks went to the wall. That disreputable episode was largely responsible for the Banking Act 1979.

In a similar way, the Johnson Matthey scandal has had much to do with prompting this Bill. Just as the 1979 Act related to previous omissions and gaps in official financial control, the present Bill relates to omissions that have been discovered since 1979, not least of which are critical weaknesses in control systems. Once again, we are reacting to events rather than trying to shape the future.

I am the first to admit that, when the Treasury approaches these problems, it is in difficulties because it must try to reach a compromise between flexibility, so that the City can develop to meet the needs of growing financial markets, and firm regulation. It is never easy to strike that balance.

There will always be banking collapses. The Government can lay down as many regulations as they like but, in the end, banking, like much else, depends on the quality of the individuals involved. How much regulation can there be against an incompetent who makes ill-judged investments? How much regulation can there be against people whose conception of everyday ethics is pretty flexible?

As my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) said, after the big bang the City of London contains a diverse range of people from old world financial rectitude to financial riff-raff. The Economic Secretary does not have an easy task, but a more rigorous approach than is evident in the Bill is needed.

I support the Bill as far as it goes. It says something new and something old in that we have debated some issues before. There is to be the Board of Banking Supervision. I appreciate everything that the hon. Member for Chichester said about that. I listened to him carefully. A good deal of what he said should be explored thoroughly when we examine the Bill line by line.

I am not convinced that abolition of the two-tier system is the right way forward. I am not saying that it is not, but I shall require a great deal more convincing before I believe that it should be abandoned. I accept the proposals concerning authorisation criteria, large exposures, relations between supervisors and auditors and banking names and descriptions. We are arguing about what will happen in practice rather than what is set down on paper.

The House should support the Bill, but in Committee we should scrutinise it carefully to make it as strong and effective as possible. However, that should not prevent us from asking some critical questions about the make-up of the Bill now.

One of my criticisms about financial legislation is that it leans far too heavily on informal understandings as a basis for control and on the old-boy network in the City, which is always assumed to understand such matters. I am the first to accept that the hallmark of the developments in the City and in the banking system has been a heavy emphasis on informal and intuitive understandings among people who know the system. The standard argument is that informality has always been the strength of the system, but that argument can be pushed too far. It is all very well to have informal understandings, but when something goes seriously wrong, we reach for the levers of formal control. We are pushed into reacting to serious events when we should have tried a little foresight.

In banking, we have always relied on the minimum legislation necessary. The formal powers given to the Bank of England in the Banking Act 1946 were seldom used. That may be a strength, but over the years it has also become a weakness. After the big bang in the City, there will be more opportunities for those who have speculative intentions, which will do no good to the City and its earning capacity in invisible exports or to the long-term purpose of financing British industry and commerce. There is considerable potential for a casino in the new system just down the road. That applies, to some extent, to the banking framework as well as to operations in other financial markets.

The Bill is not rigorous enough. It should take steps to establish a stronger framework of statutory regulations. I do not intend to make a Committee-style speech, because I shall pursue that point in Committee and examine the Bill line by line, but I should say now that the Bill is not formal enough, as I have said. Nor is it rigorous enough. It is still permeated by the mentality of a nod and a wink, as was obvious from the tone and temper of the report of the committee set up to consider banking supervision.

The old-boy network and the informal understanding are still very much with us, to the detriment of more effective regulation. With the new financial jet set in the City, that approach is clearly not enough. I was not impressed by the report of the committee. It was weakly argued, it was casual in its approach, it lacked a sense of urgency and it belonged to the easy world of yesterday rather than to the competitive jungle of today and tomorrow. The hon. Member for Winchester described part of that competitive jungle, and I was interested to listen to him. I do not know how we could ever regulate against that, but I strongly agree with him that we should at least think seriously about it and try to follow developments in the new operation, which throws up stark challenges to us.

The hon. Member for Chichester mentioned the Board of Banking Supervision and the independent advice on it. It is my experience that, if they are not careful, non-executive directors are always out-manoeuvred in serious matters and are often short-circuited when it comes to providing information. The hon. Gentleman mentioned a banking establishment. There was no greater banking establishment than this committee, three members of which came from the Bank of England. Indeed, 50 per cent. of the committe members came from institutions whose previous supervisory activities and records were not exactly covered in glory.

After the Johnson Matthey Bankers fiasco, we need more regulation, not less. Therefore, I wish to know more about why the previously considered protective device of two-tier regulation has been dismantled. From what I have heard, I understand that it was dismantled more because of its operation and mangement that because of inherent difficulties in its nature, and I remain to be persuaded on that point. The committee's report was certainly unconvincing. The suggestion that the two tiers made supervision more difficult was stated repeatedly in the report—indeed, it was stated repeatedly today—rather than convincingly argued. As a layman—one of the laymen welcomed by the hon. Member for Chichester—I know that there is a public perception of the word bank. To ordinary people, it suggests caution, prudence, safety, financial rectitude and soundness, much more than does an ordinary licensed deposit institution. The report said that two-tier supervision caused administrative difficulties. Administrative difficulties are meant to be solved. Administration is a tool of Government, not a end in itself. The fact that there were administrative difficulties, as a conceptual argument, is neither here nor there.

Nor was I impressed by the argument about lowering the status of banks to that of licensed deposit-takers. The report said that this was a useless tool of discipline because it questioned confidence in the institution, which could cause a run on the bank. If, after fair warning from the supervisory authority, a financial institution or bank does not mend its ways, it must face the financial consequences. That is the purpose and part of the mechanism of financial regulation. A major criticism of the informal system of regulation before 1979 was that it was too easy to become a bank. The 1979 legislation responded to that criticism and made it more difficult to become a bank. I ask the Economic Secretary a question. There has been a serious banking collapse and a desperate rescue operation. Why then should we change the criteria now when the situation is becoming more serious, not less, and will need more regulation, not less?

I am not convinced about the safeguards in the provisions on exposures. Can the Minister tell us whether the provisions of clause 35(1)*(a)* and *(b)* mean less regulation of exposures or more? Are the criteria being more tightly drawn, or less? If they are less tightly drawn, we are moving in the wrong direction. Clause 35 states that a report shall be given to the Bank of England if a bank under supervision intends to enter into transactions that will lead to an exposure to risk of losses in excess of 25 per cent. of the capital base. Is that less regulation than before, or more? I understand that the Bank's current guidance on exposure is related to 10 per cent. of the capital base. I have not had a chance to compare the proportions of exposure to the capital base in the United Kingdom with those of the European Community and elsewhere. Are our regulations more tightly drawn?

The Minister was right to emphasise the adequacy, calibre and quality of control systems together with the nature of the supervisory personnel who will have to operate those mechanisms. Some vital questions must be answered and I hope that we shall explore this matter further in Committee. What steps will be taken to change and improve the flow of information from supervised banks? The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that one of the things that went wrong in the JMB case was that the Government received duff information from the bank when they were trying to exercise some supervision. What is there in the Minister's statement today to assure us that

[Mr. Ken Weetch]

we shall tighten up on the quality of information that is given to supervisors, so that we can rest more easily in our beds?

There is need to explore much further the nature of the relationships betwen supervisors and auditors. My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock has promised a close scrutiny of that and other matters when the Bill is examined line by line. I support her in that, especially as at present both financial procedures and financial ethics in the City of London are becoming much more flexible.

11.53 am

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): The House must be grateful to two cathedral cities of England. My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) spoke with great authority and perception and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will wish to reply to his various points. My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) made a highly technical and impressive speech which, to use one of his phrases, will overload the back office of my hon. Friend the Minister.

I was surprised at the speech of the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon), although I agreed with his central point. He said that whatever else we do, the Japanese must be kept out. That is an odd view for a Liberal. I do not propose to comment on the speech of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald), because I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will do so. However, I hope that the Labour party will avoid reacting to the immediate headline. There are problems in the City of London and they deserve to be condemned, but a Bill of this nature which fits into the Government's general strategy deserves to be examined more maturely than on the basis of the most recent scandal—deplorable though it certainly is.

As a non-banker, I understand the Government's broad strategy to be, first, to liberalise, deregulate and free the environment in which our financial institutions operate — that objective is to be commended warmly — and, secondly, to provide more competition and open wider the gates of the City of London to small new firms and perhaps more specialised, diversified firms so that the range of services is broader, discipline keener and the choice to the consumer wider. That second objective is also entirely right.

But as this Bill and others demonstrate, the Government also seek to provide a clearer, simpler and, hopefully, more effective system of control and supervision. That cannot be put more effectively than it was by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his foreword to the White Paper when he said:

> "An effective system of banking supervision is as important as the banking system itself. For without it there will not be the confidence on which sound banking depends — from the confidence of the individual depositor that his money is safe, to confidence in Britain as one of the foremost financial centres in the world."

I, too, warmly welcome the Bill. I remind the House that only last night we agreed to the establishment of the new serious fraud office under the Attorney-General. That was a wholly proper response to the recent rash of improprieties which have disfigured the City. It will be welcome to the hard-pressed fraud squads of the City of London police and the Metropolitan police.

There is only one main flaw in the Bill. I see that my hon. Friend the Minister is wearing his Hawks club tie, which on other occasions I am proud to wear. He will therefore be aware of the matter worrying me. The worm in the wood is part III, particularly clause 63. This would prevent licensed deposit-taking institutions from using the name "bank" and from giving any indication in their names that they undertake banking business unless they have more than £5 million paid-up capital. Foreign-owned banks however are to be excepted and the Bank of England will be able to do nothing about them as they do not fall under clause 63.

The Government's cut-off figure of £5 million for the use of bank names will have a damaging effect on many of our small institutions, especially the Reliance Trust—the Salvation Army's bank — and the Manchester Exchange Trust. I have no personal interest in either, but it is right that the anxieties of both these institutions should be known. Their complaint is, first, that there was insufficient consultation and, secondly, that it is inconsistent to set a figure of £1 million as the net assets criterion for deposit taking and a figure of £5 million to use the name bank. Thirdly, there is, as a result, the prospect of our continuing with two tiers of financial institutions that are to be separated by no more than the arbitrary prohibition of the smaller ones from describing themselves as banks. There will be sheep and goats—those above £5 million who can call themselves banks and those below £5 million who cannot. This is bound to damage the public reputation and business of well-established smaller institutions, whose customers henceforth will be unable to indentify them as banks.

As to the failure to consult, the basis of the Bill is the report of the Leigh-Pemberton committee. I do not accept the strictures of the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) about this committee. It did a first-class job and ought to be commended, not reprehended in this House, but as far as I can discover, the smaller institutions were given no formal consultation opportunity to make known their objections when the Government decided to shift from the Leigh-Pemberton recommendation regarding the figure that would be appropriate for banking names to the White Paper recommendation that changed that proposal.

My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary has been most courteous in listening to me in private on this matter. He told me that it was open both to Manex and Reliance to make known their feelings at any time after the publication of the White Paper. Manex did so, directly to the Bank of England. Perhaps the Bank of England was unable to convey this to my hon. Friend or to the Treasury, in which case there may have been a failure of communication between the City and Westminster.

Howsoever that may be, both these companies are deeply affronted. Rightly or wrongly, they have drawn the inference that the Treasury sought opinions on this matter only from those larger institutions that have, the House might think, an obvious interest in preventing their smaller competitors from calling themselves banks.

I turn from consultation to the substance of the complaints made by these smaller but highly reputable institutions. Both Leigh-Pemberton and the White Paper are united in believing that there should be a single threshold of £1 million as the basis for authorisation of deposit-taking institutions. What baffles me is the decision to raise the threshold for the use of the name bank to a level that is five times higher than this.

The tests that are set out in the White Paper, as by Leigh-Pemberton, to justify any financial institution being authorised are very clear: adequate capital and liquidity, a high reputation and standing, prudent operation by appropriate persons and the provision of a wide range of banking services. These are very proper criteria. And Manchester Exchange Trust and Reliance Trust unquestionably meet these criteria. Indeed, I would argue that they do so more effectively than certain institutions whose equity exceeds the £5 million mark, which is to be used to exclude Manex and Reliance from describing themselves as banks.

I remind the House that a very large number of overseas banks will continue to be established in the City of London and will not be caught by the £5 million cut-off for use of the name "bank". Many of them—I hope not to cast aspersions on them—certainly cannot be described as having greater probity, better quality staff or a higher reputation than Manex or Reliance. That is why I find it impossible to reconcile the insistence in the Bill that a £5 million threshold must be used to justify the use of the term bank with the statement in the White Paper, paragraph 7.13, that

"It is important to avoid the requirement which frustrates market entry and the benefits of competition . . . Adequate substance is only one and not the first of the requirements for a prudent deposit-taking institution."

I believe that Manex and Reliance are entirely prudent deposit-taking institutions and that it is wrong to deny to them the right to describe themselves as banks.

Let me now quote very precisely to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary the clear recommendation of the Leigh-Pemberton committee. Recommendation 13.2 says that

"The present two-tier system of authorisation should be replaced by a single authorisation . . . All the powers given to the Bank under the Act should apply to all authorised institutions and all authorised institutions should be entitled to use banking names".

I do not think that Leigh-Pemberton could have put it more clearly and precisely than that, but the Bill abandons that advice.

The White Paper offers a variety of reasons but it comes to the clear conclusion that

"The popular understanding of the word 'bank' lends a more substantial aura to certain institutions than their size and standing merit."

I suppose it was this that led the Government to limit the use of the word bank to institutions with paid-up capital of more than £5 million. But my hon. Friend has accepted in the White Paper and in his converstations with me that this figures is wholly arbitrary. It is bound to be.

I am well aware that there was pressure for the figure to be higher as well as pressure for it to be lower. However, it is unjust to the Salvation Army's bank and to Manex to suggest that their size and standing are such as to make them unsuitable to enjoy what the Government describe as the "aura" that the word bank lends to their operations.

One result of my hon. Friend's proposals will be to recreate two tiers: £1 million for licensing and £5 million for nomenclature. The consequence of this, in practical terms, is bound to be that two lists will be kept by the Bank of England and, no doubt, by the Securities and Investment Board and the other institutions. One list will be headed "banks". The other will be headed by some other term of art. For shorthand purposes, I shall use the term non-banks. So there will be the authorised banks—over £5 million—and the others under £5 million.

By my calculation, there will be only a few British institutions which fall below the £5 million threshold—save for the large number of foreign banks that are operating in this country—and two of them will be Reliance and Manex. This will surely damage them. For whereas until now there has been a fairly large number of licensed deposit-taking institutions in the second category, henceforth that minority will be very small indeed.

From the point of view of corporate treasurers, local authority treasurers and building societies, there will assuredly be the tendency not to treat those on the second list—the non-banks—in the same way in the market place as those who can use the term bank.

Fund managers with cash to deposit for a short period will be reluctant, to put it mildly, to place their funds with institutions which are statutorily denied the use of banking names. As a consequence the competitive position of Manex and Reliance may well be damaged. We shall be making it less easy for small new institutions to add to the competitive environment of the City.

I turn now to my suggestions for tackling this problem. My hon. Friend the Minister is aware of at least two of them, but the third may be rather better. One possibility would be to reduce the proposed £5 million to perhaps £2·5 million. I understand the difficulties that the Government would face over that, but it is certainly a possibility.

Secondly, the Minister could allow the Bank of England or the supervisory board to exercise a measure of discretion. That is to say, if they were satisfied that an institution was up to the mark in every respect in probity and reputation they could allow it to use the name bank even though its capital was somewhat below what my hon. Friend himself acknowledges is the purely arbitrary figure of £5 million. That second option of the supervisory board being able to use its discretion has a great deal to be said for it, but since discussing this with my hon. Friend I have come up with a third possibility. It is what I would call broadly the grandfather approach. As my hon. Friend knows, since the Banking Act 1979, institutions entitled to use banking names have been limited. I propose that this Bill should accept another category, namely authorised institutions that used banking names prior to the 1979 Act.

My hon. Friend may wonder why I wish to go back to the position that existed before that Act. I make no bones about it. He has acknowledged, and I think it is common ground in the House, that the 1979 Act did not do the job properly. We are getting rid of most of it. For that reason, there can be nothing sacred about the arrangements made under that Act to distinguish between the licensed deposit takers and the banks.

As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, the 1979 Act has serious weaknesses. That was one of them and it would be quite reasonable to return to the situation in which authorised institutions which used the name bank prior to the 1979 Act should again be allowed to do so. That would certainly solve the problems of the Salvation Army's bank and Manex.

My hon. Friend has already undertaken to consider carefully the following points. First, small institutions which by any measure meet all the relevant tests of competence, high reputation and demonstrated achievement in the market place, ought not to be damaged solely because they do not possess the arbitrarily established figure of £5 million of equity capital. It is the quality and not simply the quantity of a bank's assets that ought to determine its standing.

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

Secondly, if we believe, as I do, in fair competition, it cannot be right to handicap our smaller financial institutions vis-à-vis their larger competitors, simply because they do not meet some purely arbitrary figure for their paid-up equity capital.

Third — and the House may think that my third point is most important — it is wrong to allow the subsidiaries of foreign institutions operating in Britain to call themselves banks, despite the fact that in Britain they own considerably less than the £5 million required, while at the same time denying this advantage to our own well-established indigenous licensed deposit taking institutions.

Finally, it is unreasonable to legislate to prevent a respectable and properly constituted business from incorporating into its name an accurate description of the nature of its activities, especially when it has been specifically authorised by the Bank of England — as it will have to be — as being competent to undertake that business.

As a civilised and astute Minister, my hon. Friend will recognise that there is no point in deeply offending by this Bill two small but immediately reputable institutions one of which, the Salvation Army's Bank, has a specially wide appeal, and the other, Manex, which for 103 years, since 1876, called itself a bank without any adverse consequences whatsoever. I should like the Minister to make good the damage that the 1979 Act caused to those institutions, in other words to make reparation to them for a mischief that was never right.

12.16 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): One of the disadvantages of catching your eye at a late stage in a debate such as this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that many of the points that one would have made have been by other hon. Members, and in many cases they have been made much more eloquently than one could make them oneself. I pay tribute to the contributions of my hon. Friends the Members for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) and for Winchester (Mr. Browne), whose knowledge of the subject is quite outstanding.

The hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) could not resist having a swipe at Government economic policy, but I was encouraged to hear her say that, for any Government, there comes a time when borrowing has to stop. That is a refreshing change of heart by the Labour party, especially when one looks at the future spending plans outlined by the shadow cabinet. It also causes one to recollect the time when the borrowing had to stop under the last Labour Government, when the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) was recalled from the airport to talk to the IMF.

The hon. Member for Thurrock said that she was worried about insider dealing. Perhaps I can assist her. She played a distinguished part on the Committee which considered the Financial Services Bill, as did many hon. Members who have spoken in the debate. Perhaps I can refresh her memory by referring her to sections 173 to 178 of the Act. She suggested that there was a problem in that under the Act only individuals would be subject to sanctions, and that there was a need for further action. Section 174(2) deals with market makers. It refers to

"a person (whether an individual partnership or company)".

The Act goes on to detail the penalties that can be applied to companies and individuals and specifically sets out what they can be. They include imprisonment for individuals and removal of authorisation for companies.

Dr. McDonald: I am aware of the legislation that already exists, but we are worried about the use of such legislation. All too often it appears that when insider trading is discovered an individual is found guilty of the offence and he or she resigns from the company or organisation, and that seems to be the end of the matter. We need to make sure that organisations which benefit from such dealing are penalised as well. We have already had two cases of insider dealing, one of which probably affects Britain, and many commentators expect many more cases of such dealing to occur. We do not want individuals merely to resign gracefully from the organisation involved, to suffer their own penalties and for nothing further to happen.

Mr. Butterfill: We would all agree entirely with the hon. Lady on that score. That was the purpose of our debates on what is now the Financial Services Act 1986. It has been law for only a matter of weeks, but I am sure that it will be enforced rigorously. The signs that are coming from the Securities and Investment Board are that that will be the case.

I endorse what has been said about the importance of the banking sector to the economy and to the prosperity of us all. It is especially important in my constituency, where many clearing banks have established major offices. We are fortunate that the European headquarters of Chase Manhatten are being established there. This diversification is providing welcome employment opportunities for those of my constituents who have, sadly, been finding themselves the victims of the relatively high levels of unemployment that have existed in Britain over the past few years.

The Bill will build upon what we have already done with the Building Societies Act 1986 and the Financial Services Act 1986. The discussions that we have had so far are encouraging and suggest that our discussions in Committee will be as constructive as those that took place in Committee when we considered what was then the Financial Services Bill. I echo what my hon. Friends have said about the Board of Banking Supervision. We know that there will be five independent members of the board, and we appreciate that they will need to have a high level of expertise in, and knowledge of, the banking system. I am sure we all hope that they will accurately and fairly represent the lay public. It would be helpful if my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury could set out the sort of criteria that he envisages will be required for membership of the board.

The immunity provisions for the Bank of England in exercise of it supervisory and regulatory functions echo very much the debates that we had on what is now the Financial Services Act. I was pleased to see that it was proposed to give immunity to the bank as an institution and to its employees. It would be impossible for the bank to carry on adeqately its supervisory function unless it and its employees had immunity.

I welcome the revised basis of supervision and the powers of direction that will exist. Undoubtedly there were deficiencies in the 1979 Act. It seemed rather anomalous that the requirements for licensed takers of deposits were

in many instances a good deal more strigent than for those who were able to call themselves banks. It is right that included in the Bill is the right of appeal to an independent tribunal for any person who is aggrieved by an action of the supervisor.

I am interested to see in clauses 30 to 33 that the Treasury will have power to place restrictions on advertising and cold calling. These were subjects to which we turned when considering what was the Financial Services Bill. I am a little concerned, however, that it is merely a general power. I appreciate that it is right to reserve the ability to deal with situations that arise in future, but I hope that it will be possible in Committee at least to consider what the criteria should be in the exercise of those functions. I hope that we will be able to have a detailed discussion on the types of advertising that might be objectionable, and especially on the controversial issue of cold calling.

The extension of the role of auditors in passing information to the Bank of England is a vital extension of the protection that will be given to depositors. The exemption that they will enjoy from the normal requirements of client confidentially is an essential adjunct. We are placing heavy responsibilities on auditors in a variety of Acts, and it may be that a general consideration of their profession in relation to a number of pieces of legislation might be appropriate at some time in the near future.

The provisions in clauses 78 to 93, which relate to the lifting of restrictions on disclosure by certain persons, contain an interesting omission from the schedule of the circumstances in which disclosure may be made. I note that, although the Director General of Fair Trading, in exercising his functions under the Consumer Credit Act 1974, can make disclosure, there is no provision — I understand why this may be — for disclosure direct to the commissioners of Inland Revenue. I know that such disclosure would cause great concern in the banking sector, and when we examine these clauses more closely we realise that that might be disclosure.

There is a provision in clause 80 for disclosure in the "public interest". The "public interest" might be deemed in future, and perhaps should be, to include the collection of taxes. Furthermore, disclosure is permitted

"with a view to the institution of, or otherwise for the purposes of, any criminal proceedings".

As cases involving the Inland Revenue might involve the institution of criminal proceedings, perhaps my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will refer to the Government's view on that when he responds to the debate, or alternatively in Committee.

I am slightly worried by clause 35 and the exposure provisions, and my concerns have been amply demonstrated by my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester. With the esoteric instruments which now exist in international banking, and with the globalisation and securitisation which he so ably described, it will become extremely difficult for a supervisor or for a bank to make an accurate assessment of the degree of exposure. It seems that the concept behind clause 35 needs to be examined in much more depth. There are differences in international practice and in many instances American banks are more closely regulated than our banks. There are particular regulations dealing with loans to developing countries. That is not covered by the Bill, but it is something that should be considered for the future.

I put my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary on notice that I hope to move a modest amendment to the Bill, dealing with the Cheques Act 1957. This Bill's primary purpose is to protect depositors, but the Cheques Act fails, in part, to fulfil that desirable objective. A constituent of mine, an elderly widow, had a deposit with a local authority in the north of England, and wrote to it asking if she could withdraw £1,500. The local authority sent her a cheque for that amount, but sadly it was stolen in Bournemouth by somebody who took the mail bag containing the letter. The thief opened the mail, saw the cheque, and decided to appropriate the money. He went to a branch of a well-known clearing bank, opened an account with it, and paid in the money. Shortly afterwards, he drew it all out.

When he opened the account, the thief gave as his name the name of the person to whom the cheque had been made payable. My constituent's solicitors said that under section 4 of the Cheques Act the bank could claim immunity. That section states that a banker is protected where he acts

"in good faith and without negligence".

Nobody would suggest that the reputable clearing bank involved had acted in anything other than good faith. One must therefore consider whether it was negligent. In that respect history is unfortunate, as several cases dating from the early part of this century reflect an attitude towards consumer protection that is no longer prevalent. The tests of negligence then imposed by the judiciary were extremely severe.

As a result, it has been held that a bank does not necessarily have to establish the strict identity of the person opening an account with it. I believe that we should amend the Cheques Act to say that negligence would be deemed unless a bank had taken reasonable measures to establish the identity of a customer who was previously unknown to it.

Having said that, I very much welcome the Bill. It will perform a valuable function in regulating banks and in instilling much greater confidence in the market. That will be to the nation's benefit, and I wish the Bill well.

12.32 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I welcome the Bill, and congratulate my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary and his team on it. Perhaps this is the opportunity to look not merely at the Bill's technical aspects, which have been dealt with so expertly by other hon. Members, but at its objectives, given the explosion that has taken place in financial services and the opportunities offered in the new international markets in which we shall be operating.

To some extent, we could become bogged down in the technicalities of the issues before us. There can be no doubt that the majority of commentators have given the Bill a fair wind. However, we must strike a balance between the opportunity that is offered and the controls that are to be imposed. I have confidence in the Government's ability to make the right choices, but I must stress the importance of the role of the independent members of the Board of Banking Supervision. That is important, and I have no doubt that the matters that have been mentioned so frequently in this debate will be observed by those who have responsibilities in that regard.

During the past few centuries some of the swings in the banking system have reflected new opportunities. I hope that I have got my history right, as I think particularly of the time when the Bank of England was first instituted in

[Mr. William Cash]

the 1690s. There were opportunities in the East Indies and other countries. We were effectively providing an entrepot financial service for the world. Merchants wanted to come here and we were in competition with other countries. I believe that the position of the banks in this country, complementary to the banks of other countries now seeking to use the entrepot facilities provided in this country, gives us an opportunity to provide a worldwide service which will be extremely good for the prosperity and enterprise of this country. However, there is an inherent risk in having a large proportion of foreign investment and foreign money in this country, which is the balance of the other argument I put forward between opportunity and control. The need for control—if I recollect aright, I think that this is dealt with in sections 21 and 35—needs to be looked at in Committee so that, in line with the remarks of other hon. Gentlemen, we ensure that the foreign companies which come in do so on a basis which is not only reciprocated in their own countries but is fair on those banking institutions which already exist in this country. There is a balance to be struck there.

There are extremely important reasons why we need an effective banking service. Of course the banks must be technically sound. However, we must also concentrate on why the bank is there at all. It is there to provide a good financial service. Banks providing banking services for other banks would not be terribly productive. Banks are not provided in order to help themselves, but are there as a service for the manufacturing and commercial interests of the country and they have grown up on a mutaul and complementary basis to them. Therefore, it is essential that we keep the long-term interests of prosperity and enterprise of this country in the forefront of the consideration of a Bill of this kind.

Looking back into the 19th century one remembers the Glasgow banking case in the mid-19th century, the collapse of the country banks, the over-speculation in South American banks in the 1820s mirrored only by the over-speculation of the United States banks in South America in the past 15 or so years. All those things came down to one essential question, which is the need to ensure that things which could go wrong do not go wrong. I hesitate to mention Johnson Matthey. I think that there were special circumstances in that case which have been reviewed by the Bank of England and others very successfully. I also feel that there is much misguided criticism of the banking system in this country.

I welcome the Bill because the balance provided in it is just about right. At the end of the day, banks have to be there to provide an opportunity to spot the winners, to provide stability and to provide a back-up to companies, whether they are in manufacturing, farming, commerce or whatever, where we are going to have quality enterprise in this country. As I see it, there is no way in which we will be able to go on with the old idea that volume production is what is required. The banks are there to provide the means for liquidity in the capital markets to enable investment for quality companies. I believe that it is the ability to spot the winners that will be the acid test for the banking system.

A further point cropped up in the area of financial services when I had the honour to serve on the Committee on the Financial Services Bill with other hon. Members who have spoken in this debate. There was an enormous explosion of capital, for example in the building of the railways in the 19th Century. My family founded the London-Brighton railway in the early 1830s. They needed capital, and they went off to the then bankers and got the money to provide the network of communications, and now there are the new technologies, information technology and so on. Money must also be provided for this country's present manufacturing core.

The manner in which regulation is exercised in conjunction with the opportunities for enterprise which the banking system offers has to be weighed against the people who will run the regulation. I do not want to make a meal of this, and I certainly do not want to moralise—that is absurd—but at the end of the day, as with financial services, the professions and all the self-regulatory organisations — whether it is banking, Lloyd's, the Law Society, the accountancy bodies, medicine, journalism, or broadcasting—in providing the service, there is the opportunity to give an objective assessment and to make the right decision. In self-regulation one not merely spots the winners, but ensures that there is no monopoly, no cosy club, and that proper standards of impartiality are observed.

All along there is one main, consistent theme. It is that the people who are running those organisations, who have obtained pivotal positions in them, or who are providing those services, are themselves aware of the fact that they are not just engaged in a technical exercise, but are providing a service, which is a balance between the private and public interest.

Some of the scandals that we have heard of recently are characteristic of a new speculative entrepreneurial age, which I entirely welcome because of the opportunities that it offers for changing our economic direction. At the same time, we must be sure that the people who are engaged in the business of regulation and self-regulation are aware that they will need to be pretty tough with the aberrant situations that occur from time to time.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay a tribute to Sir Kenneth Berrill, who is in financial services, which will complement and dovetail this sector, for the line that he has taken to ensure that the rules are properly observed. I welcome the Bill because I believe that the people who will be chosen to run the banking system will need also to have regard to those important factors. I have no doubt that they will.

Of course, there is at the bottom of such a Bill a protection in law for the banking system. That is precisely what such a Bill provides. In other words, not only does it protect the consumer who comes into the bank, but it protects the banking interest. As with all cartel monopolies—we do not need to avoid that point—one needs to protect one's banking system, because only by doing so can one provide sound money and confidence for the investor and a sound, enterprising society. So I welcome the basic underpinning of the Bill, which is protection of the banking system itself.

The Japanese have made remarkable progress in capital markets. They were fairly described as being backward in their capitalisation and capital market programme, but contrary to the position in this country and the United States, where the stock exchanges have tended to lead in those areas, Japan has now moved into an era when the targeting of capital markets within a much more liberal international market is becoming increasingly important. If one looks at the back page of *The Economist* in any given

week and compares the Japanese performance with that of the United States, one sees the extent to which the Japanese have taken off. We have a great deal to learn from them.

I spoke earlier about the pivotal role of the Bank of Japan. Although we cannot copycat the Japanese in any way, we should look carefully at the way in which they have oriented their markets, because they provide, both through the way in which they have established their market structure and through the establishment of the Bank of Japan, a strategic role. There is an umbrella system, of which the centre pole is the bank, and the struts and the fabric are extended.

There are no hostile bids in Japan. There may be differences of opinion about hostile bids, but the banks themselves play a mutual or complementary role between industry and the banking system. The banks play a positive and enterprising role in the Japanese system and we find a reluctance there to engage in short-term profits. There is a greater insistence on research, which leads to a stable economy, and we could learn much from that. The break up of the Japanese cartels which is in progress is a sign of the way in which the Japanese are responding to the greater liberalisation in the world.

The back pages of *The Economist* also show the strength of the West German economy and the central role of the Bundesbank. West German bankers also play a significant part in industrial management and sit on the boards of industrial companies. In other words, there is a complementary relationship between the banking system, investment, research and the capacity for enterprise in those countries, which is developing here. I wish to encourage more of that. Banks are not there just to make money. They provide investment for their shareholders, but they must also be a mechanism and an opportunity for the making of money as engines of wealth.

Over-provision of financial services may seem a strange subject to mention, as we now have a trilogy of Acts, concerning banks, building societies and financial services. However, I am concerned that if banks go, as I hope they will, into the financial services sector on a significant scale, they will be competent and provide a high quality service. We dealt with this matter on what is now the Administration of Justice Act as well, in the context of conveyancing. I served on the Committee that considered that measure. Although it is important that the banks should be going into a variety of different services, quality and competence are more important.

Mr. Butterfill: Would we not do well to look at the United States of America, where banks are precluded from certain sectors where it is perceived that a conflict of interests might arise, and that includes the insurance market?

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend makes a valid point, and conflicts of interest, Chinese walls and other such matters must be kept closely under control. I welcome the Bill because the opportunity for regulation, within the enterprising framework and in relation to financial services, is the key to the whole thing. Nothing is more absurd than to have rice paper thin Chinese walls. We must make sure that we have an effective system of proper supervision. The manner in which the regulatory system is followed will largely depend on information — the speed of information, spotting when things go wrong and new technologies. I think that it was Bacon who said, "Knowledge is power."

There is an opportunity now to use the new technologies to ensure that the principle "Who guards the guardian?" is genuinely understood in the City of London and in banking circles. We have a tremendous opportunity, with the entrepot of financial services, to ensure an engine of wealth for this country. We must ensure that everyone—the domestic banking market and the foreign banking market entering this country — is properly regulated, without too much smothering control, but with the means to ensure that enterprise and the spotting of winners are the key criteria. I welcome the Bill and I wish the big bang and all that accompanies it every possible success.

12.51 pm

Dr. McDonald: With the leave, of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to reply. I shall not delay the House for long at this stage of what has been a full and useful debate, but I should like to comment on one or two points that have emerged from the debate.

Reference has been made to the use of new financial instruments, such as swap arrangements, and to the problems created by bad debts. Of course, it was right that such reference should be made. As I understand it, schedule 3 gives the Bank of England, as the supervisory body, greater powers to advise and guide banks over new financial instruments. It would plainly be difficult to specify these in legislation, because that would appear as an exclusive list and banks might be encouraged to believe that they were free—with the imagination and ingenuity characteristic of many banks—promptly to invent new financial instruments which the Bank of England, as the supervisory body, would find it difficult to control. Obviously that must be left, as at present, to the guidance of the Bank of England and to the assessment that it continually makes of new financial instruments and capital adequacy.

The only doubts that I have lie in the speed of the operation, and possibly about some of the judgments that have been made — for example, concerning capital adequacy. I also understand that the Bank of England, as a member of the Group of 30, is in fairly constant contact with other central banks over issues such as bed debt and the use and spread of new financial instruments. Perhaps the Minister would comment on that when he replies.

The other issues that have plainly emerged concern the independence of the supervisory board. We intend to table amendments to give the supervisory board a certain degree of independence. However, at least in terms of representation on the board, the question of how far it should be independent of the Bank of England is a matter that should be discussed thoroughly in Committee.

Reference has also been made to large exposures, and doubts were raised on that matter from both sides of the House. I have my own doubts about the role assigned to auditors. When we examine the Bill in detail in Committee, we shall have much constructive work to do. The intention is to have an efficient supervisory body and sufficient supervisory arrangements for banks operating in this country.

12.54 pm

Mr. Ian Stewart: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to reply to this brief but interesting debate. I shall certainly welcome further discussions in Committee, because many of the detailed technical provisions are of general relevance and will determine the way in which the arrangements work in practice.

I listened with much sympathy to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) about his unfortunate constituent, but I think that it may be difficult for him to table an amendment on that point that will be in order, as the Bill is devoted to other matters. Nevertheless, it is just the kind of point that should be taken into account in the review of other legislation relating to the provision of banking services. As the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) pointed out, not only the Cheques Act 1957 but various other statutes, some dating from the 19th century, are not up to date in every respect with today's practices. I therefore take note of my hon. Friend's point, although I cannot encourage him in the thought that the Bill might be the right place to put it right.

We have had a wide-ranging and interesting debate, but in my reply I shall concentrate on matters specifically related to the Bill. The review deals with a number of matters outside the scope of the Bill, but I was rightly asked about the likely timetable. We want to get the review under way as soon as possible, by the beginning of next year or very shortly thereafter, but I think that it would be optimistic to expect it to take less than a year, or perhaps a little more, to cover the very complicated area that it has to consider. I cannot say at this stage whether it will make recommendations for legislation. Some of the matters covered are embodied in statute, but others are questions of practice which might be better dealt with by rules, codes of conduct, and so on. Moreover, if the review made recommendations for legislation, they would not necessarily be for a single piece of legislation, as they might be items which could be dealt with in other Bills.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) referred to consumer interests. Perhaps I could make a general reply to that. I hope that the review team will be a small one dealing with technical matters, and not a large body of people representing particular interests. I envisage that those interests would make representations to the reivew body. It would otherwise be impossible to draw a line and I believe that it would complicate the technical and legal task of the review body if it comprised representatives of all the various interests. The review body will, however, want the widest possible representations from all interested parties, as the range of activities related to general legislation on banking services is enormously wide.

Mr. Penhaligon: I did not suggest that there should be a consumer representative on the review body. I sought the assurance that when the small number of people are selected, there would be someone with specific knowledge and responsibility for that aspect of the review. I seek not the appointment of a "statutory consumer", but the appointment of someone with specific knowledge in that area.

Mr. Stewart: I am sorry if I misunderstood the hon. Gentleman's exact point.

The hon. Member for Thurrock raised one or two matters in relation to JMB. I believe that police investigations are continuing. I have no means of knowing, either personally or through my post, whether those investigations relate to JMB itself or to its customers—those are matters for the police and not for me—but most of the matters raised in the House a year or so ago, and which have been subject to investigation, related to customers of JMB rather than to JMB itself.

The hon. Lady also asked about the £25 million—the potential ultimate cost to the bank. I gather that the figure is not likely to be higher, and could be lower, depending on recoveries for the outstanding business and the outcome of the court case.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson), the hon. Member for Truro and others asked about deposit protection provisions which are carried forward from the 1979 Act. The Minister at the time said that £10,000 was a high figure, which he thought would last for a long time. If we thought that it was too low, we would consider changing it by using means in the Bill and existing legislation. More than 90 per cent. of the accounts affected in the relatively few cases when the fund has been called upon have been below £10,000, and 80 per cent. of accounts are below £5,000. We would have to demonstrate the need for change.

The figures covered in the Financial Services Act 1986, such as the £30,000 for investments, relate not to the failure of the investment, but to fraud or breaches of rules. They are not comparable to the limits in the Bill. That matter must be reviewed from time to time, but I am not convinced that a higher figure is appropriate.

As was fully debated when we considered what became the Banking Act 1979, the vast majority of resources put up for deposit protection are put up by large banks, especially high street banks, which are the least likely, we hope, to run into financial trouble and therefore to cause difficulty for depositors. The two-tier system, as established by the 1979 Act, meant that many of the smaller institutions received protection from the new fund to which the clearing banks were contributing, but they did not have the advantages of using banking names and had more stringent regulations which applied to licensed deposit takers.

If we sweep the two-tier system away, the argument points rather in the opposite direction. Almost all authorised institutions would be able to use banking names, whereas the protection which was afforded as part of the quid pro quo for setting up the protection fund would be taken away.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) suggested two or three means by which to get round the inability of institutions with capital of between £1 million and £5 million to use banking names. He used the word "henceforth", implying that the change was adverse. I think that he gave that impression accidentally, because he clearly recognised that it was the 1979 Act, not the Bill, which caused the original difficulty.

No institution will be worse off in regard to banking names if the new Bill is enacted. Indeed, institutions will be better off, because provision for using banking descriptions is substantially more liberal under the Bill. I shall consider the points that my hon. Friend has made today, although I do not wish to give an instant answer. I shall need much convincing that even what I accept is an arbitrary figure should be changed. As he will accept, there is a difference between the Leigh-Pemberton committee's recommendations and the White Paper, because this and

other matters were extensively discussed and many representations were made. We resisted putting the figure as high as many of those representations suggested.

By no means do we accept the position of the big battalions as against that of the small battalions. We have tried to take into account both sorts of representations. I shall reconsider the matter, but I do not wish to encourage my hon. Friend to think that, at this stage, there is a good case for departing from the provisions in the Bill.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: My hon. Friend said, fairly, that no one would be worse off than he was before, and I understand his point. However, there is this difference: henceforth — to use my own term — the deposit-taking institutions which are excluded from using the name "bank" will be many fewer in number and will be part of a much tinier minority. They will have less sway and recognition in the market place and, to that extent, they will be disadvantaged.

Mr. Stewart: That shows the unwisdom of giving way, even if one is in the most generous of moods. I was about to deal with my hon. Friend's point about separate lists of authorised institutions which could be described as banks and those which could not. There were two lists of recognised banks and licensed deposit-takers because entirely separate regimes operated in relation to each of them. There is no point in putting into a single list those institutions which do not or are not permitted to use the name "bank". It has no operational significance for the normal purposes for which such a list would be prepared.

That is my immediate reaction to the question, without having considered the background. From the point of view of other investors who might decide to place their money in an institution, I do not believe that such a public separation would be required. Indeed, many reputable banks—most of the accepting houses—do not have the word "bank" in their titles. It has never been a central feature of the system that a bank must be called a bank. Many have got on without it. However, the matter obviously requires attention and I am glad that my hon. Friend raised it today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester asked about takeovers and the national interest. I noted that my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West and the hon. Member for Truro took a slightly contrary view. We should pause before introducing provisions on general grounds such as those suggested in relation to foreign takeovers. I remind hon. Members that a range of powers will relate to foreign takeovers. First, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission must take into account the public interest. Trade Ministers are conducting a review of the policy of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It has concentrated heavily on domestic competition, but other factors could be taken into account. Secondly, new provisions in the Bill will enable the Bank of England to say no to a takeover if it is not satisfied with the credentials of the potential controller. Those are important provisions.

Thirdly, there are the provisions on reciprocity in the Financial Services Act 1986 which cover the banking sector and other types of financial institutions. Taken together, that is a formidable group of provisions. I shall not elaborate further on that now because we can consider it at a later stage, but, by way of prelimary remark, I should say that one should not underestimate the weapons that are already at hand.

Large exposures have attracted a good deal of interest. As the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) said — he was courteous enough to tell me that he could not be present for the reply — the JMB case involved serious misreporting. That is one of the factors which have informed our decisions on what to include in the Bill. The large exposure provisions which cover exposures to connected persons are rather important. If the Bill had been enacted before the JMB case, those responsible in the management of the institution would clearly have been at grave risk of being convicted for misleading the supervisor. That is a new offence that we are introducing. It is only with hindsight that one can see how important such a provision is. That is an important improvement.

I was asked whether the exposure provisions in clause 35 operated more tightly than previous provisions. They do. First, the offence is established, and secondly, whereas in the past there has been a requirement to report after the event only, whatever the size of the exposure, now anything over 25 per cent. will have to be notified to the Bank of England in advance and there will be specific statutory provision for reporting any exposure over 10 per cent. Those figures are somewhat arbitrary, but they are appropriate and can be changed by statutory instrument if they are found not to be so.

Mr. Cash: I agree that those provisions are important, and my hon. Friend is right in saying that they represent a tightening in the regulations. However, clause 35 does not apply to those whose businesses are outside the United Kingdom. I recognise the difficulties involved, but could my hon. Friend comment on that residual question, now or later?

Mr. Stewart: As that would take us into another area of technical questions, I shall leave it to another occasion.

The large exposure provisions are a means of concentrating on one of the particular areas where difficulties have arisen. It is right that they should be spelt out in statute, because of their importance.

I listened with interest to what my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) said about swaps, options and futures. I do not know whether it is likely that either the hon. Member for Thurrock or I will leave the Chamber, go to our banks and fix swaps, options or futures. They are not frequently the business of ordinary personal customers of banks; they are at the professional end of the scale. It is right to say that all banking supervisors in the world, especially the Bank of England, which, often to its great credit, takes the lead in these matters, are paying much more attention to general off balance sheet commitments. The contingent risk in those transactions is considerable and needs to be taken into account in assessing general management and the overall exposure of the institutions concerned. I was, indeed, interested in what my hon. Friend had to say.

The next general area that commanded great attention was auditors. The general principle is that we want to unblock the lines of communication between auditors and supervisors. It remains to be seen whether the profession will be able to work out a satisfactory basis. I hope that it will be able to do so, but we should not forget that the institution being supervised will usually be present at any discussion that involves the auditor. It would only be in exceptional cases, perhaps involving suspected fraud or serious developments, where there needed to be a direct

[Mr. Stewart]

dialogue between the auditor and the supervisor without the knowledge of the institution, that the provision would be brought into effect. One will only be able to tell how that works as it is tried out in practice, but one hopes that occasions of that kind will be relatively infrequent.

Mr. John Browne: I thank my hon. Friend for what he has said, but I emphasise that the person at the retail end does not normally engage in these relatively sophisticated financial transactions. However, this is a large professional market of $300 billion a year which involves the banks in inherent risks. If, therefore, the banks are involved in this risk, their retail customers are involved because the security of their deposits is at risk — as is the whole economy. Will the Government please look urgently at this problem, because it is extremely difficult to monitor?

Mr. Stewart: I had hoped that I had reassured my hon. Friend that these matters are being looked at very carefully by the supervisors. They appreciate the importance, for the stability of institutions, of not being drawn too much into this type of contingent risk. The contingent risk is not usually the value of the whole transaction. It is usually the difference between the rate at which it was taken on and the closing rate. Nevertheless, the scale on which this business is now being undertaken make it very important that these matters should be recognised in policy terms, particularly in relation to the supervisor's assessment of the management competence of particular institutions.

Mr. Browne: In this case one is trying to get at the risk of settlement, particularly cross-border settlement. If there is a failure in settlement, the whole transaction is at risk.

Mr. Stewart: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point, and I am sure that the supervisors will do so also.

On the general question of regulation and the Board of Banking Supervision, a matter which was covered in more of the contributions to this debate than any other, my hon. Friends the Members for Chichester, for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and for Bournemouth, West and also the hon. Member for Ipswich referred to the importance of independence. The Bill provides quite deliberately that the majority of the members of the Board of Banking Supervision will be outside members. They will be in a position to exercise independent judgment and an independent view.

The hon. Member for Truro asked me whether the board members would have separate meetings. I imagine that if there were a difference of view between the ex officio Bank of England members of the board and the outside members, that would rapidly become apparent in the course of the affairs of the Board of Banking Supervision. They might then decide among themselves whether they wanted to press the matter more strongly. If they did and agreement was not reached, the bank would have to report to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This matter would be recorded in the report to Parliament and to the Board of Banking Supervision. That introduces a considerable element of independence to the affairs of the board, and it is designed to do so. It is the counterpart to the fact that, on balance, we felt it was right that the responsibility for supervision should remain with the Bank of England rather than be transferred to a new and separate organisation.

The hon. Member for Ipswich asked about that and said that it appeared to be only for administrative convenience. It goes a good deal further than that, because, quite apart from not wanting to break up an existing structure unless one is absolutely certain that another structure would be better, and not wanting to cause a lot of upheaveal, if one removes supervision from the Bank of England there would be a lack of general cross-fertilisation of banking information.

Financial services and banking are changing. They are evolving so rapidly that there is a positive advantage in an understanding between the other parts of the Bank of England and the banking supervision division, and it is advantageous to have this happening within the one institution. The Board of Banking Supervision will give an actual and visible independence to the process of ensuring that the provisions of the Bill are implemented as Parliament would wish. I shall be glad to discuss the matter further when we debate the clauses in Committee. The idea is right, and we have probably struck the right balance in the method that we have followed.

Our general approach to supervision is to build on successful parts of what has already been developed, while at the same time trying to make corrections in areas where problems have arisen.

I was asked whether we were reacting to the past or trying to shape the future of supervision. We are certainly reacting to experience, but the fact that we set up a wide-ranging review of the whole subject means that we took into account the developments that are likely to take place in future. One can never anticipate exactly what will happen or what sort of supervision will be needed for future developments. We have tried to make the Bill flexible so that we can take account of changes in the market place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester asked why we proposed to alter the definitions of a deposit-taking business. It is being done for the very purpose of flexibility. My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester asked about securitisation and the changes that that will bring about. It may not always be possible exactly to define in advance what should be regarded for this purpose as deposit taking. For example, when we introduced the provisions to permit industrial and commercial companies to issue commercial paper we had to look at how that would accord with the definitions in the Banking Act 1979 of deposits and deposit-taking businesses.

As instruments change, and as new techniques are developed, we will have to make changes, but we hope that the legislation will be flexible and that in general it will strengthen, improve and modernise the system of banking supervision. That is important, given the rapid growth of that sector in the economy and in the City of London.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Thurrock and to other Opposition Members for welcoming the general purpose of the Bill.

Mr. Butterfill: Can my hon. Friend give me some advice about the point that I raised on permitted disclosure and whether this will be extended to include the commissioners of Inland Revenue under sections 80 and 81? Is that envisaged? Perhaps my hon. Friend intends to comment on that later.

Mr. Stewart: The provision specifically refers to the Secretary of State and does not include the Inland

Revenue. The matter of disclosure is rather detailed and technical, and perhaps we could refer to it at another stage. There are many detailed matters which we shall have to consider further, an example being the issue which my hon. Friend has raised, and I hope that we shall be able to do so in Committee. Meanwhile, I commend the Bill to the House and hope that it will be given an unopposed Second Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BANKING BILL [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation have been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Banking Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of moneys provided by Parliament of fees, allowances and expenses in respect of tribunals constituted under that Act;

(2) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of such moneys under any other Act. —*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

BANKING BILL

WAYS AND MEANS

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Banking Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the imposition of charges to income tax and corporation tax by provisions of that Act relating to the treatment for the purposes of the Tax Acts of any payments made to institutions by the Deposit Protection Board;

(2) payments into the Consolidated Fund. — *[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Mr. Speaker: Motions 4 to 10 are in the name of the Chairman of the Committee of Selection. If the House agrees, they will be taken together.

COMMITTEE OF SELECTION

Agriculture

Ordered,

That Mr. Derek Conway and Mr. Richard Livsey be added to the Agriculture Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Education, Science and Arts

Ordered,

That Mr. Robert Key be discharged from the Education, Science and Arts Committee and Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson be added. — *[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Energy

Ordered,

That Mr. Michael Portillo be discharged from the Energy Committee and Mr. Michael Brown be added. — *[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Environment

Ordered,

That Mr. Robert B. Jones be discharged from the Environment Committee and Mr. Andrew Hunter be added. — *[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Scottish Affairs

Ordered,

That Mr. William McKelvey be discharged from the Scottish Affairs Committee and Mr. Ron Brown be added. — *[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Treasury and Civil Service

Ordered,

That Mr. Mark Fisher be dicharged from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee. — *[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Defence

Ordered,

That Mr. John Cartwright be added to the Defence Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Bexley Health Authority (Funding)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

1.25 pm

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I am most grateful for the opportunity to raise on the Adjournment the important subject of the funding of the Bexley health authority. I do so because it affects the health care that is being provided to my constituents, those of my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) and those of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), and because, to date, there has been a noticeable lack of response to the crisis in Bexley, especially from the Government and the South East Thames regional health authority. This lack of response, in spite of the efforts of my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself, has been bitterly disappointing to the people of Bexley, who feel disinclined to accept the Government's exhortations that the Health Service is in good hands when they see both a lack of facilities in their area and the curtailment of the limited existing facilities in an effort to balance the underfunded budget in Bexley. Regardless of whatever happens elsewhere in the country, my constituents are experiencing a reduction in the all-important area of health care.

For my part, I accept that the Government have achieved a great deal in their management of the National Health Service. I know that there has been a major investment in the NHS and that nationally there are more doctors and more nurses than before; that more patients are being treated, and that more surgery is being performed than ever before. All this costs a great deal of money, so no one can argue that the funds are not being made available to the NHS, yet somehow in Bexley we are not reaping the benefits of this spending. In Bexley, we are not experiencing these advances. We are not even in a position where the standards of care are being maintained from year to year. We are experiencing a reduction in service caused by the closure of wards, the closure of operating theatres and clinics and the curtailment or reduction of other services.

Locally, the service has declined to the point where the district health authority's aim is to try to provide a service at the level that prevailed in 1984-85. Therefore, we are definitely not seeing any advance. Instead, we are seeing rather a regression. Despite the appointment of a new and enthusiastic health authority chairman, why are we experiencing such difficulties in Bexley? That is a question that I ask myself regularly, as I am sure my colleagues ask themselves. It is one that my constituents regularly raise, and to date I have received no satisfactory answer. I can point to a number of factors that contribute to the underprovision which exists, but I cannot explain, either to my own satisfaction or to that of my increasingly sceptical constituents, why action has not been taken to remedy the situation.

I accept that one reason is geographical location. Bexley is on the edge of Greater London, and the fact that it is near to the centre of London and the main teaching hospitals clearly is of significance. There is a tendency for people to say, "If facilities locally are not that good, we can always travel into town." What they forget is that for most people in my constituency central London is at least an hour away. It is a journey which can be trying at the best of times. To make that journey is the last thing that ill people would wish to do, especially as follow-up treatment at outpatient clinics would probanly mean making the journey during the rush hour. That attitude also takes no account of families or of the difficulties that hospitalisation brings, including the problems of travelling long distances by the elderly relatives of patients.

Bexley is not an inner-city area and is not that near to central London. It is not an area of declining population. On the contrary, it is a area of population growth, and a significant part of that growth is formed by an increase in the number of elderly people. In my constituency, there is a great deal of housebuilding, not only in Thamesmead and Crayford, but in Belvedere, where I have a home. That growth, and the fact that people quite rightly expect to receive local health care when they are sick or injured—unless they require some highly specialised treatment that can obviously be provided only at a limited number of locations — demand that the district's health care provision should increase, not decrease.

Regrettably, the reality is different, and the poor state of the district's budget has meant that many essential services have had to be cut to make ends meet. That must be wrong. Bexley's proximity to central London, and the fact that it is within the South-East Thames region, mean that it is within the resource allocationworking party formula a "losing" part of the country. The effect of RAWP, as we know, is regularly raised in the House by many right hon. and hon. Members, along with its effect on health care provision in their constituencies. In respect of RAWP and of the Bexley health authority, my colleagues in Bexley and I have raised this matter in the House and with the previous Minister several times. However, so far, we have received little response. It is true that we have been given tea and sympathy and a lot of shoulder-shrugging, but that is why RAWP is an acronym that I have come to dread.

This debate is not the occasion to discuss the wider merits of the NHS's resource allocation policies. But the concept behind RAWP was basically acceptable and I have supported it in the past. It is only right that we should ensure that there is a parity of service in all parts of the country. However, I do not support the reality of the manner in which that concept is put into operation or the effect that the allocation of resources under RAWP has had on health districts such as Bexley.

In Bexley, the effect of RAWP is that perfectly good wards and operating theatres in an up-to-date hospital are out of commission because of a lack of money with which to run them. There can be absolutely no sense in a policy that allows vast sums to be spent on capital projects, such as hospital building, if the revenue is not provided to run these services.

If we are looking for national parity—what RAWP is supposedly all about—it must be achieved by levelling up and by improving the service provided across the board. There should not be a reduction in, or levelling down of services, and parity should never involve the closure or mothballing of modern hospital facilities. We should be looking to match health care facilities nationwide, and not the lack of them. Some of Bexley health district's problems are also historical. Before the recent Health Service reorganisation, Bexley health district was part of the larger Greenwich and Bexley health authority. That area authority had two modern authorities at either end of the area: one in Greenwich and one in

Sidcup, together with the Brook hospital, Woolwich, and a number of other smaller hospitals scattered within the area boundaries.

When the area was split into two districts, with boundaries conterminous with the London boroughs of Greenwich and Bexley, the facilities in each district were uneven. The bulk of the area's hospitals was sited in Greenwich, with the result that Bexley has only three hospitals, two of which are within its geographic area. I refer to Queen Mary's, Sidcup, Erith and District hospital, and Bexley hospital, which is a psychiatric hospital. Thus the facilities in Bexley are limited. Queen Mary's hospital, which is in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, is the district general hospital and the other mainstream hospital is Erith and District hospital, which is in my constituency, and which is a very small hospital with limited facilities. Erith hospital has been an important part of the local community for many years. It is much loved and much needed by my constituents and I have raised the precarious future of that hospital in a previous debate in the House.

Queen Mary's hospital is a modern hospital about 10 years old with 556 beds. It houses many specialist departments, including the district's maternity unit and an excellent accident and emergency department. By contrast, Erith and District hospital, a small unit, was originally built, as a cottage hospital, from public subscriptions. It has 31 beds, provides many out-patient clinics and what is best termed as a walking wounded accident unit.

Proposals for the upgrading of Erith hospital have existed for some time now, but so far no work has been carried out because of the district's financial predicament. Indeed, the local people have now come to doubt not only that Erith hospital is to be upgraded but that it will survive at all. In fact, its closure has been mooted in the recent past as another way of saving money. I have fundamentally disagreed with and opposed such proposals for closure and I shall continue to do so. For many of my constituents the temporary shelving of the upgrading proposals appears to be indefinite and they rightly cannot see any difference between indefinite and permanent.

As I have said, those hospitals are the only mainstream hospitals within Bexley and they both play a vital role. Obviously Queen Mary's hospital, as the district general hospital, meets the bulk of the demand for health care within the district. However, Erith also has a vital role to play, especially since Queen Mary's is in the south of the district while Erith is in the north and the roads, railways and bus routes tend to run from east to west to and from central London.

Although the two hospitals are just about sufficient to provide adequate care to meet the needs of the local people when full use can be made of all their facilities, reductions in services such as we are experiencing at present strain resources to the limit and mean that some people are undoubtedly not receiving the treatment they should be, that we want them to receive, and that I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister would agree that we should be providing. We must never forget that we are dealing with the health, welfare and well-being of individuals, not bald statistics.

The financial predicament of Bexley health authority is such that in May of this year the authority had drastically to cut services in an effort to save money. The list of cuts is extensive and includes the closure of an operating theatre and a ward at Queen Mary's, a limitation on out-patient prescribing, a reduction in out-patient bookings, dental clinic services, assessment clinics and family planning clinics, including family planning surgery. It also included the closure of an operating theatre and consultant beds at Erith hospital, a reduction in the number of general practitioner beds at Erith hospital, a reduction in the casualty services and a number of other reductions.

Anyone who doubts that that catalogue of reductions can have only disastrous consequences, need merely consider one item on the list to see what damage is being done. The closure of an operating theatre at Queen Mary's hospital has reduced the amount of surgery that can be performed in the district by up to 20 per cent. As the annual total for surgical procedures performed in the district is about 9,000, it means that the closure of that one theatre will cause up to 1,800 operations to be cancelled or delayed. That means that 1,800 people will have to wait even longer for surgery possibly in pain, probably in discomfort. Those 1,800 people will be added to a waiting list that is already too long in Bexley and which the Government are committed to reducing. In other parts of the country we have seen waiting lists successfully reduced.

That is the result of only one item on the list of closures and reductions. The combined effect of the cuts in services is too awful to contemplate but it can mean only one thing, we in Bexley have a poorer standard of health care than we had or we want.

The obvious question is what more can the district do to save money or provide more treatment by increasing efficiency. It is a question I have put to the present chairman and the previous chairman of the district health authority.

However, the finger cannot be pointed at Bexley in respect of a failure to improve efficiency. Far from it. The authority has very low costs per patient and manages to maintain a high number of patients treated per bed. Bexley health district is probably one of the most efficient and cost-effective authorities that there is, and the authority has rigorously applied every effort to achieve all the efficiency savings that it can, but the one obstacle that its efforts cannot and will not overcome is a basic lack of funds from the South East Thames Regional health authority.

The district is under funded. I received a letter about a year ago from Sir Peter Baldwin, the chairman of South East Thames regional health authority. He said, in admitting that Bexley is underfunded, that

> "My Authority is, as you know, constrained by the overall level of revenue resources allocated by the Secretary of State. In comparison with many other Regions the South East Thames Region is deemed to be better provided and therefore has received, and will continue to receive, revenue reductions year on year until national parity is reached. Similarly within this Region there is an unequal distribution of revenue resources and I am committed to making this distribution more equitable. Bexley District should have more revenue. It is presently receiving only some 89 per cent. of the revenue which we believe it should have; by 1993-94 this will have risen to 95 per cent."

The regional chairman's commitment to seeing Bexley receive the funding that it should is commendable, but regional finances seem to be such that all that the regional health authority can do is promise to try to improve the level to 95 per cent. by 1993-94. What the state of the Health Service in Bexley will be then I do not know. I feel that such comments are unacceptable, as do my constituents.

[Mr. David Evennett]

The Health Service cannot be run on promises of jam tomorrow. Tomorrow may never come.

Against that background, the authority had little option but to agree the package of service reductions that I mentioned which were implemented earlier this year. The authority was faced with an overall deficit of around £750,000 for 1986-87. Unless the authority had cut services to patients the district would be facing a deficit of £1·5 million by 1989-90. Balancing the books by reducing services has meant that the authority will be lucky to provide the same services as in 1984-85, so instead of services being improved, they are being reduced.

Bexley health authority's annual expenditure is about £35 million. That is a great deal of money, but in real terms spending in the district is lower than it was in 1982. The exciting and imaginative scheme put forward for the redevelopment of Erith hospital, a scheme that would revitalise that hospital as a centre for health care in the north of the district, would have cost about £3 million. It takes little arithmetical ability to work out that the 11 per cent. deficit in regional funding would be sufficient to pay for that scheme if only the money were forthcoming. What Bexley health authority needs is sufficient funds to operate Queen Mary's hospital fully and to begin the redevelopment of Erith hospital.

Earlier this week I asked my hon. Friend the Minister for Health in a written question whether he would come to Bexley to see the situation for himself and, in particular, visit Erith and district and Queen Mary's hospital. I am delighted that my hon. Friend has agreed to visit us early in the new year. I thank him for that most sincerely.

I know that my hon. Friend is concerned about the Health Service and its patients and is determined to see that those in real need obtain the best facilities and services from the NHS. I beg him to look long and hard at the funding of Bexley health authority, to observe the consequences of the situation that I have outlined and to take action to remedy what is at present a depressing state of affairs.

1.43 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) and the Minister for allowing me to intervene in the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford rightly points to the problems that are affecting the health authority in his constituency and says that they derive basically from the policy of the resource allocation working party. He is right. He is also right to say that it affects the four Thames regions. What he has said is that what was introduced by the Labour Government, one of whose Ministers is now a leading Social Democrat, is now under attack. Some of us have attacked it from the beginning. What saddens me is the hypocritical way in which the Labour party now decides that it does not like the system about which it made no comment when it was introduced.

My hon. Friend the Minister knows how grievously this RAWP issue is affecting my constituency. I might have applied for an Adjournment debate and had a long one, matching what my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford has said, but I did not want to do that for two reasons. First, I know from my experience how grossly overworked Ministers in this Department are, unlike many of my colleagues in other Departments, and I do not want to impose the burden of yet another Adjournment debate. Secondly, I ask my hon. Friend, in considering what he will say about Bexley, to try to accept that there is an enormous gulf in perceptions of the NHS. He and I know that we are spending an enormous amount more in real terms on the National Health Service, nearly 30 per cent., but the public's perception is different. In Bexley, as in Camden, closed wards in new hospitals make it virtually impossible to make any real breakthrough in public perception.

I shall not ask my hon. Friend the Minister to visit me, because he knows the problem, but I hope that he can assure the House that the review that has been undertaken on RAWP will soon be completed and that it will recognise that the time has come to stop RAWP. I hope that he will accept that if one is improving services within the Health Service, one can no longer reduce the good ones to improve the poorer ones, nor decide that the standards of excellence in the London teaching hospitals can be carved away.

1.47 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): I begin by expressing, perhaps with some wryness, my gratitude to my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) for not threatening me with yet another Adjournment debate. That move may reflect his long experience as a Minister in the Department, and one who probably stood at the Dispatch Box replying to such debates more often than anybody else, except possibly his immediate predecessor as a Health Minister. I have noted what my hon. Friend said.

My hon. Friends the Members for Hampstead and Highgate and for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) will know that I am the Member of Parliament for part of one of the Thames regions, so I am more than familiar with some of the comments about the problems perceived to exist in the Thames regions. Beyond that, I would not wish to be drawn at this stage into a wide-ranging discussion on the RAWP formula, not least because it is clearly one of the issues of what is known, in this dreadful jargonised world, as sub-regional RAWP, which is in some respects a distinct issue from national RAWP.

I would probably carry both my hon. Friends with me in acknowledging that while it is not a particularly pleasant acronym, RAWP, when translated into common-sense English, simply represents a policy of trying to ensure equity of access to health services throughout the country. As a general proposition nobody would wish to depart from that, although there is a great deal of argument about how that general proposition is carried through into practical reality, and in particular about the financial allocations that go with it.

I begin conventionally, although perhaps more than that, by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford on having secured this Adjournment debate and the opportunity to put, as he has done with great force and clarity, the concerns of his constituents. I hope and expect that his constituents fully realise how much effort he has put in over the months to make sure that their interests are so strongly and clearly represented in the House. In that, of course, his hard work is shared by his colleagues, to whom he referred—my right hon.

Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend).

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, in the debate on 16 June, eloquently described the difficulties and challenges of funding Bexley health authority. That attracted considerable attention, not least among Ministers—my predecessors in the Department. Earlier this year my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath led a deputation to Ministers from the Bexley community health council, at which many of these issues were addressed. I ought perhaps to mention the fact that I know that some of the issues are of concern to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), who, although his constituency is across the border from Bexley health authority, is concerned about his constituents who receive treatment within that authority. My hon. Friend has gone out of his way to speak to me about those matters during the past week or two.

I wish briefly to put some of the issues into context. Obviously, because of the time factor, I shall not be able to speak at length about the national background. However, in 1987-88 the allocation to the hospital community health service is no less than £10,963 million —in other words, very nearly £11 billion. That is an increase of more than £600 million over the total funds available in the current year and includes—and this point is of considerable importance to any discussion on this matter—two special funds.

One fund is worth £50 million over two years, and is to tackle waiting lists. This problem was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford, and is clearly related to the general concerns expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate. The other fund is for £30 million over two years to provide transitional help for regions receiving less than the national average growth rate, which we are calling—in the Department's shorthand—the RAWP bridging fund. That is directed at alleviating some of the anxieties that have been expressed here today.

That latter new fund will be directed principally at the four Thames regions, although not exclusively, because there are similar problems in one or two other places. It will help those regions bridge transitional costs and undertake schemes to unlock resources for the future. That does not undermine the principles of RAWP. It is directed towards some of the problems that have been raised. I must emphasise that the extra money, whether the general extra money, waiting list money or the RAWP bridging fund money, will be given to regional health authorities, which, in turn, will fund their various districts.

It is my judgment—and I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate will endorse this —that it would be hopeless for Ministers to second-guess everything throughout the Health Service in trying to decide the exact pattern of services locally. It is a matter for regional health authorities to determine allocations to districts. Our objective is to ensure that regional health authorities have adequate funding to run an expanding Health Service and make it possible for them to allocate funds between their districts in a way that is then reflected at every level.

The other point that I wish briefly to make was curiously reflected in some of the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford. In terms of access to hospital treatment for Bexley residents as acute in-patients and day-patients, the district's record is actually good when compared with the national average. I understand that it is among the best 20 per cent. in the country. Throughput for major acute specialties is also in the top 20 per cent. and maternity provision is well above the national average.

I mention those points not to sound complacent in any way—as my hon. Friend knows, that is the last thing that I would wish to do—and I am conscious of the fact that when any Minister uses statistics in that way the ghost of Disraeli hovers at his elbow muttering about "lies, damned lies and statistics."

Nevertheless, we must measure the situation in some way, and according to some measures the position of Bexley is not unreasonable. I say that, not to dismiss the concern that has been expressed, but to show the difficulty of forming a balanced view as to the precise cause of the problems and what can best be done about them.

As I have said, the authority's problems have been ably and eloquently brought to the attention of Ministers and of the House. I therefore hope that, whatever else he may think, my hon. Friend will accept that those concerns have not been lost on Ministers or, indeed, on the South East Thames regional health authority and its chairman, to whom specific reference has been made. Indeed, I spoke to the chairman this week after undertaking to visit the authority. I should point out that the regional director of finance and his staff have been and are giving an amount of time and attention to Bexley's problems which might be described as disproportionate by comparisons with other authorities in the region, but which neither I nor they regard as such. The amount of time being devoted to these matters reflects the recognition of the anxieties that have been expressed.

Another oddity in all this was reflected in my hon. Friend's remarks. Compared with many authorities in the South East Thames region and throughout the country, on the face of it Bexley lends itself to being a fairly smoothly run and effective district. It is compact, it does not have a legacy of old, badly sited hospitals, and it has a modern district general hospital at Queen Mary's. I acknowledge the problem of the mental illness hospital, which is over the border in Dartford and Gravesham but managed by Bexley, and that may have played some part in the situation that my hon. Friend described.

Against that background, I understand that Bexley has a recurring budget shortfall of £942,000 for the next three years. With the non-recurring potential overspend for 1986-87, the overrun for this financial year was estimated at around £1·7 million out of a total budget of £36,731,000, although I shall qualify that point in a moment.

Discussions at senior levels in both the district and regional health authorities have taken place over a long period to try to resolve the problem. One result has been that an inquiry team headed by the region's director of finance is going to Bexley—it may already be there—to examine the district's finances in detail and to suggest positive courses of action to put it on a firmer financial footing. I emphasise that the aim of all this is entirely positive. The intention is to offer a high level of practical and professional help to the district, although clearly I cannot prejudge the results of that inquiry.

In the light of what my hon. Friend has said, I should give a couple of examples of what the regional authority has already sought to do to try to help Bexley. As was confirmed at the district review meeting on 26 June, the

[Mr. Tony Newton]

region has offered Bexley £480,000 bridging finance, chiefly to facilitate the launching of its competitive tendering programme, which in turn will generate benefits for the district in years to come. That finance depended on Bexley's presenting to the region a realistic and affordable short-term programme. I understand that a preview of that programme has been received and is being assessed by the region.

The region has tried to help also by providing £450,000 in grant for the development of mental handicap support services. I understand that the district authority has developed an ambitious "ordinary life" programme of resettling mentally handicapped people in three and four-bedroom surburban houses near shops and facilities. Such a policy is expensive. Indeed, Bexley has the highest unit cost for resettling mentally handicapped people in the region. To be eligible for the help offered by the region, Bexley must provide it with essential details of the programme's dependency and assessment costs.

I am not suggesting that those contributions are overwhelming, but they are clear examples of how the region has tried to help.

Since the offers were made, there has been a major development. I am told that, rather than have a projected overspend of £1·7 million, Bexley will break even. That change in its fortunes, if that is the right word, is attributed chiefly to some planned savings and difficulty with nurse recruitment, which is proving to be a problem for several health authorities. The region's director of finance will want to consider those factors also.

As a result of the change from a projected large overspend to a projected rough break even, Bexley has asked the region for only £192,000 of the £480,000 bridging finance which was offered, and I understand that the money has been transferred to the district's account.

As for the £450,000 grant to help develop mentally handicapped support services, I gather that details of the dependency and assistant costs are still awaited by the region.

My hon. Friend said with some vigour that the district had brought forward a package of measures which, in the words of the district general manager—I am afraid that DGMs have as much awful jargon as Ministers—will "reprofile" services in a way that will produce the greatest benefit to patients from available resources.

The measures are designed primarily not to reduce expenditure but to focus it on what are thought to be priority services in the acute sector and to improve services for the elderly, the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped, who have previously been neglected.

I understand that the local community health council has expressed opposition to most of the proposed measures. Consultation on the measures was completed on 8 September and the Bexley community health council reported back to the authority on 13 November, having considered all the comments that had been received. I believe that a special meeting of the health authority is to be held early in December to agree a course of action.

My hon. Friend will know what I am about to say next. In view of the community health council's opposition to the proposals, there must be a good chance that they will land on Ministers' desks for decision, so I am pre-empted from offering views on them as I shall have to consider them with care later. I can only assure my hon. Friend, as I have assured others before him, that Ministers do not regard their role as rubber stamping whatever is presented by health authorities—I certainly do not. If proposals come to us, they will be examined with great care, and the views of local interests, my hon. Friend and others will be weighed.

I hope that I have been able to assure my hon. Friend, and through him, his constituents, that we are not ignoring the health authority's problems. They are being addressed at senior level by the regional health authority with active indications of ministerial interest. I thank my hon. Friend for reinforcing that interest and making me even better informed today.

My hon. Friend asked me earlier this week to visit some hospitals in the Bexley area. I hope that I have demonstrated my interest in the matter by saying that I hope to do that early in the new year. I have no doubt that I shall have further contact with my hon. Friend then, if not before, and I look forward to that. Meanwhile, I hope that the work now continuing will help to overcome the problems to which my hon. Friend referred, and I assure him that I and other Ministers will not lose sight of what he said.

The Channel and Irish Sea Fisheries

2.5 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I welcome this opportunity to debate the closure of the Channel and Irish sea fisheries, and I express my gratitude to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for rearranging a busy programme so that he could answer this debate. It is a reflection of the gravity which he, too, attaches to the plight of many fishermen that he has found the time to be present this afternoon.

On 22 November, a prohibition on the fishing of cod was introduced for the area between New Romney and Fishguard. At a stroke, this has banned the livelihood of hundreds of fishermen, especially those who operate inshore in the eastern Channel, not least my constitutents who fish in the Selsey and Emsworth areas, who were quick to approach me on this issue and who visited me in the House this week. As the Minister will know, several of my constituents formed part of a large delegation which lobbied Parliament yesterday. When I received those delegates, there was no disguising the irate atmosphere and their belief that they had been treated regrettably, in that the period of notice before the prohibition was introduced was extremely short, and that they had been deprived of their livelihoods. There was no doubting the importance that they all attached to the separate delegation to the Minister, led by my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden), of fishermen from the Sussex area.

The European Community's fisheries conservation policy centres on a system of total allowable catches which are fixed annually and from which the United Kindom is allocated national quotas for the various stocks. With the agreement and the participation of representatives of the fishing industry, fisheries departments attempt to manage the quotas so that fishermen can enjoy fishing opportunities for as much of the year as possible without exceeding the annual allocation. For the majority of stocks in the Channel and the Irish sea, especially sole and plaice, they have so far succeeded in those objectives, although it has necessitated the suspension of fishing from time to time in line with by-monthly seasonal quota targets.

In the case of Channel and Irish sea cod, for which the annual quota is about 1,330 tonnes, there was no restriction on fishing in previous years, and until the end of September 1986 there had been no overshoot in the seasonal targets. I am told by the Ministry that because of good weather in October and early November, together with an unexpected abundance of cod, mainly codling, there was an abnormally high catch and, as a result, the United Kingdom quota was exhausted. The overshoot when the prohibition came into force was about 100 tonnes. Fishermen and the Ministry dispute the weather conditions that prevailed then. Most of the fishermen off the Sussex coast contend that the conditions were appalling and allowed only a short period of fishing, but earlier in the summer the weather was reasonably good. The Minister has already recognised that the quota has curtailed opportunities for many fishermen, especially those who operate inshore in the eastern Channel.

I appreciate the importance that the Minister attaches to observance of national quotas in the interests of long-term conservation of fish stocks. The European Commission has now apparently confirmed the closure by regulation which applies to all United Kingdom vessels, whether or not they are operated by commercial fishermen. That also means that anglers are bound by the prohibition. With the exception of the Republic of Ireland the other member states which have a cod quota in this area were obliged to close their fisheries at an earlier stage this year. I understand that the Republic of Ireland was not able to accede to requests that have so far been made to it for a quota swap which would have enabled my right hon. Friend to extend the United Kingdom fishery.

The problem and plight of the Sussex and Channel fishermen can be summed up no better than by a letter which I have received from a constituent earlier this week. He says:

"I do not normally involve myself in protests of any kind but feel I have to write to you now regarding a matter of decision, taken by others which affects me personally, putting not only myself but hundreds of other people as well in serious financial trouble without our fishing business . . .

I only learnt of this decision '—to ban the fishing of cod in the eastern English Channel' — by chance through a report by the media network, and this ban takes effect from midnight tonight.

I am a full time (not a part time) fisherman, registered since 1974 and always fished from my home village of Selsey. I have no other source of income to fall back on as I am fully committed with my time and money to fishing.

'Somebody' has made a decision which is going to help ruin a lot of people who rely on fishing for their living, without any prior warning or consultation with those who it will affect. Coupled with an already disastrous season so far due to weather, a lot of people will not have built up any cash reserves to 'ride' this latest ban until the new year.

Being an individual and self employed I do not have any 'big voice' or 'organisation' to look after my interest when things go wrong, and normally do not want or need them.

What I do not want, need or expect is for 'some . . . gentlemen' . . . with the stroke of their pens, taking my living away from me, least of all without showing the basic courtesy of discussing it or at least warning me in advance so that I might, if possible, prepare alternative arrangements for myself.

If there is a need for conservation of a species in this area then I am quite sure that the people who made this decision were aware some time ago of what decisions they would need to make. These decisions could not have resulted from recent fishing activities as this has been severely limited by continuous bad weather for the past few weeks. I myself have only managed six days fishing since 17th October, my vessel pinned down in Chichester Harbour sheltering for most of the time.

Fishing in this local area is governed by seasonal patterns. Cod being a species that mainly arrives in any quantity inshore by late autumn and departs again by January. To date we have lost most of our cod fishing this year to bad weather. A species which is relied upon by a lot of people to help see us through a long winter.

This year has been an exceptional year with a large showing of immature codling being evident for most of the year. I have avoided catching these small fish with selective use of my 'trammel' nets with larger meshes. The market value of these small fish is very low. Unfortunately . . . a number of larger craft have been engaged in a continuous effort to catch large quantities of these small fish, making their money by sheer weight of catch, almost all being small but still legal codling. A lot of fish being consigned to fish meal plants. The authorities should have acted much sooner to bring to a halt this wasteful slaughter of these young fish, which if left to grow would provide a valuable crop in the future.

Those fishermen involved cannot really be blamed. The catch is legal and they have 'cashed in' on a bonus bounty. What does seem criminal to me is the pathetic minimum measure of a legally caught codling, twelve inches total length, a fish of less than one pound in weight and worth about 12-15p on the market. These are rapid growing fish which would reach considerable size and weight in a few short years.

[Mr. Anthony Nelson]

A large cod would exceed 30 lbs and be worth 50-60p per lb on the same market, as indeed would similar fish of over 4 lbs in weight. I consider it a short term gain and madness for this situation to remain unchecked in the future. With the present arrangement, the fishery will be reopened and there will be another mad rush to fill the boxes again, until another stop is enforced on us. Nobody knows where they stand, or is able to plan ahead. No business can plan or survive in that atmosphere. The 'trammel' nets used by most of us along this part of the coast are not selective in the species they catch, although small fish can be avoided by using suitable sized mesh netting. Most cod brought to the surface are dead or die before removal from the net. A cod ban is a fishing ban, unless we wish to keep other species and throw back dead cod, to be wasted. They would form some 85 per cent. of total catch for fish this time of year. Where is the conservation in that legal option? These people who make such decisions are completely out of touch with the realities of needs of small communities to survive, and this 'heavy hand' of 'big brother' does nothing to enhance relations between ordinary people and this organisation. Applying this 'blanket ban' is like 'killing the dog to get rid of the fleas.' They can distance themselves from the effects of their actions to satisfy various statistics."

The letter continues in that vein. I make no apology for reading it at length, because my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will be the first to understand that when the livelihood of individual constituents is affected and they write in such a vein they have a right to be represented clearly in this House, in the way in which they have written to their Member of Parliament.

The problems that have been described in my constituent's letter go beyond that. The problem of lack of notice is difficult to resolve, and this grievance is felt widely by other fishermen. Many of them also encounter serious problems over paying for their investment in gear and over decisions that they should now take about invesment in gear for the spring fishing season. Are they to extend themselves further by borrowing money for fishing gear, only to find that a ban is suddenly introduced when shoals of fish come into the Channel in which they are active? Moreover, 70 per cent. of the boats in this area are small. They are not nomadic trawler vessels that are able to follow shoals of fish, thereby ensuring that the fish are not caught in the same area. Trawler vessels are not susceptible to a ban, as my constituents have been.

The weather was bad during the first few days when the Sussex fishermen were able to go out. However, further along the coast, as the cod migrated down from the North sea in July and August, the fishing conditions were very good. It is very difficult to manage any total allowable catch or any quota system on a fair basis to all concerned, but this ban has had a disproportionate effect on the livelihood and interests of my constituents and other Sussex fishermen. However, those fishing further along the coast earlier in the year had some fairly rich pickings.

It is not sufficient just to quote and emphasise the problems as my constituents have asked me to do. I seek my right hon. Friend's comments on certain solutions that have been put to me. First, there should be a transfer of quota from the North sea area, where the quota for cod fishing is overestimated and is likely to be under fished. That is area 4C. Why cannot that deficit or shortfall be transferred to the Sussex coast, area 7D?

Secondly, my constituents and others have put it to me that there may be a case for raising the minimum size of cod that can be caught from 12in. I appreciate that this has implications for mesh nets and for other parts of the equipment of inshore fishermen and trawler fleets. However, with an eye to conservation and to the need to try to prevent a repetition, this suggestion is worth considering.

Thirdly, fishermen have also put to me the case for registering boats under 10m, thereby enabling catches to be logged. I understand that vessels over 10m have to be registered. Their catches are logged and form part of the statistics that are used by the Ministry when ascertaining whether the quotas have been exceeded. Their assumptions are based on the extent to which cod and other species have been landed by inshore fishermen and anglers. My fishermen dispute whether these assumptions and estimates are correct and would like to know the estimate of the catch by small fishermen used to assess whether the quota target has been exceeded.

Fourthly, a number of fishermen have put to me the case for better management of the total allowable catch in order to allow for the migration of fish. They say that this was a freak season and that there has not been one like it for about seven years. They face the absurd situation that they have been denied their livelihoods because they cannot go out to fish, while just offshore the fish are teeming. There are plenty of cod in the Channel at present. Many of them are well above the minimum size and many are slightly above it. There is a market for the cod and because there are such large stocks—in the view of the fishermen because of migration from the North sea—the fishermen feel that the ban imposed on them is unreasonable.

I understand that there is some scientific dispute about whether it can be proved that the stocks of fish have come down from the North sea. My right hon. Friend may say that the fish will go back there. However, if there has been such movement of fish and if the area is under-fished in one part, surely it is reasonable and pragmatic for us to transfer some of the under-utilised quota elsewhere.

Fifthly, it is not surprising to hear the fishermen say that in future years they want a bigger quota, especially of cod, to protect the inshore fishermen. Following discussions with my right hon. Friend, and in view of the consideration and the sympathetic replies that he has given to me, I appreciate the difficulties of implementing any of these changes. However, at the very least we should approach the Republic of Ireland to see whether there is a case for some swap arrangement for the quota. The Republic of Ireland has not yet banned the fishing of cod and may have some under-fished quota at its disposal. Surely, in a co-operative way we could try to resolve the problem to the benefit of local fishermen, and that could be done if the Republic of Ireland was prepared to allow some sort of swap arrangement.

I hope that my right hon. Friend is in no doubt about the immediate deprivation and the plight of the fishermen along the Sussex coast. They are in serious difficulties and the fall in their livelihoods comes at the worst possible time, about a month before Christmas. The burden of the ban is disproportionately borne by them.

Fish is the staple diet of many families on Fridays. My hon. Friends may have noticed that fried cod fillets are on the menu of the Refreshment Department of the House. If my right hon. Friend can give me a favourable reply to the debate, I shall be more than happy to stand him a fried cod fillet steak later today. I hope that he will not regard that as an improper offer. I shall close with that conciliatory gesture. I look forward to hearing what my

right hon. Friend has to say and the extent to which he feels able to alleviate this serious and immediate problem. I know that the problem is shared by the constituents of many other hon. Members in the area, not least my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) who is in his place today and who, like me, yesterday met a large number of constituents to discuss this matter.

2.23 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I am sure that the House will be keen to acknowldege how important it is that my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) has taken the opportunity afforded to him to raise this important matter, because nothing is more important than the occasions on which Government actions directly affect the lives of constituents.

By the case that he presented, my hon. Friend has shown how closely he is in touch with his fishing constituents. I am sure that he will agree that the same must be said of my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden), who brought to me a delegation of leaders in the fishing industry on the south coast. We must also pay tribute to those other hon. Members, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who met their constituents at a large meeting of fishermen who came to the House of Commons yesterday.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester realises that I take my responsibilities very seriously in deciding when fishing may continue and when it should stop. The common fisheries policy, which is an outstanding success, has shared out the stocks available among the countries that fish in these crowded waters, so that fishing can be protected for the future. It is only because we wish to save the livelihoods of those fishermen and their sons that we are trying to protect the stock from overfishing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester has raised a serious matter. He will recall that we could not take the measures that should have been adopted for herring and that, as a result, herring was almost extinct in certain parts of the waters around this island. That cannot be allowed to happen again, and that is why we must take severe measures. The arrangements are just as my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester described them. The total allowable catch is shared proportionately among those nations that have historic rights to fish.

It is fair to say that following the negotiations on the common fisheries policy, the United Kingdom had to accept that we were very properly treated in the share that we obtained. Although it is not too large, we have a perfectly reasonable share. The problem is that the arrangements mean that the pressure on stocks has grown considerably. Cod is a particularly difficult stock. We arranged a total allowable catch that was much lower than the industry wanted, but it was still too high for the real demands of conservation. The problem is that in strictly scientific terms, we already allow too much fishing. Indeed, the United Kingdom was prepared to go further than other countries with restrictions, not least because we believed that to adopt a harder line now would save opportunities for the future.

Nevertheless, the Community as a whole set a TAC that was higher than we thought advisable but to which we now work. Consequently, when there is overfishing, we are in a serious position. It cannot just be passed over. It is not a question of getting near the target, because we have taken more cod than is within our quota.

There is a problem, because Britain has been the leader in the conservation battle in the European Community. It was we who insisted upon an inspectorate, because we began to believe that some countries were not as good at maintaining the rules as we were. We now have a Community inspectorate that has done sterling work. Because of the Government's demands and the pressures that we applied in the European Community, there are, this year, additional powers so that we can stop some of the scandalous abuse of the rules by other countries, although I am happy to say, not by Britain.

We have done much to improve conservation, and consequently I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester will understand when I say that I cannot take measures that would leave Britain open to the accusation of being in favour of conservation for others but not for ourselves. The decision to close the fishery had to be taken.

My hon. Friend's constituent wrote an appealing and understandable letter which showed just how hard these decisions are on individuals. But I hope that his constituent will accept that I had no other choice. We had overfished. It was not merely that we might do so. My hon. Friend will probably say, "Why the blazes didn't you know beforehand? Why were you not able to make a decision earlier, or to warn people earlier?" I must remind him of his constituent's letter, which refers to the way in which stocks change rapidly, the migration of fish producing huge changes. When these changes take place, we have to move quickly.

This is the first time that we have been in the present position. I must say to my hon. Friend that we cannot criticise entirely those——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the Motion for the Adjournment lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Mr. Gummer: We must accept that a remarkable change took place in October, and the experience of my hon. Friend's constituent was different from the general. The figures are clear. In October 1985, less than 30 tonnes of cod were fished. This October, 90 tonnes of cod were fished. We are talking about a huge change in a short period.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): My right hon. Friend is talking about the overall position, and no one is disputing the need for conservation. The crucial issue is whether the arrangements are fair between those who are fishing some distance offshore and the important group of fishermen, from our point of view, who are using boats that are less than 10 m in length. Nothing that my right hon. Friend has said so far has been addressed to that. I hope that he will consider carefully the position of those who until now have not taken the fish to which he has been referring. As I understand it, the fish have been taken almost entirely by those fishing further away.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend is right to say that, and I apologise for not yet having reached that issue. I want to approach it carefully.

In the curious and archaic practice of having to sit down and then stand up again on the Adjournment, I read

[Mr. Gummer]

out the wrong figures. I shall correct myself immediately. The total catch in October of this year was 150 tonnes compared with 60 tonnes last year.

I shall addres myself now to those who did the catching, and I understand the concern of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing. Faced with such a change, I think that he will understand what would normally happen. If 60 tonnes are taken from 150, there is sufficient tonnage for the fishery to remain open. Most of the fishing takes place at this time, as it has not heretofore, by the smaller inshore boats which cannot go out very far. The men who work from these boats wait for the fish to migrate, which is aided by the bad weather. It is curious that these boats are not able to leave shore for part of the time because of bad weather and that the bad weather helps to drive the fish into an area where they can be caught from the small boats. That is the mix.

Until very shortly before imposing the ban we expected the normal pattern to continue, which would mean enough fish for eveeryone. We have always taken the view—I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will agree with me that it is the right one—that the worst decision to take would be to close a fishery in advance of the quota being exhausted, when the fish are still there, in the hope that at some later stage it will be possible to reopen the fishery, when perhaps the fish are not there. That is a position in which fishermen have found themselves caught in the past and I was not prepared to let that happen again. That is why the decision was made at such a late stage. We could not have known beforehand how close to the quota we were runing.

The ban falls unevenly because of the pattern of fishing. The larger boats have profited from the presence of cod up to now because they have been able to take the larger catches. It is only at this stage of the year — this is especially so for those fishing off Worthing and other ports along that stretch of the couth coast—that the smaller boats can participate. This fishing involves few men, few boats and few ports, but each man is dependent commercially upon his catch. I am particularly concerned because they have not had a fair deal up to now. It is not a question of me being able to say, "You have fished well for the rest of the year and, if you have not put aside a certain amount in case things went wrong, you should have." I cannot say that because they have not fished better during the earlier part of the year. Therefore, I take very seriously what was said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing and my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester.

To try to meet this concern I could not hold off the closure of the fishery, because that would have broken the rules. It would have invited the Commission to take action, which would have been wrong, and it would have made it extremely difficult for me to stand up in the fisheries Council next Wednesday and continue our policy on conservation, which is so important to the United Kingdom.

We tried to turn to the one country which had not up to then closed its fisheries. The French had, the Belgians had and the Dutch had because they had all run out of quota, much earlier than us. The only country that had not, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester said, was the Republic of Ireland. We approached that country to see whether it had any fish that we could swap; whether we could give it some of our fish from another area and, in exchange, it could help us with the cod in the area concerned. It said that it was impossible because it was running very close to quota.

We could not do anything ourselves, because to move cod from one area to another is contrary to the rules. It is not contrary to the rules for some bureaucratic reason, but for a good reason because the quotas are divided specifically on scientific grounds. It is important where one picks the fish. Once one allowed that, some unscrupulous Government might easily move from one to another and juggle the books in such a way that we would find it more and more difficult to see whether they were keeping the rules at all. It is terribly important that this is transparent, that nobody fiddles and that the conservation rules that we need so much are kept. That prohibits us from making the changes mentioned by my hon. Friend and which others have pressed upon me.

Once the fishery was closed I felt it right to go back to the Republic of Ireland and ask, in the light of its latest figures, whether there was any possibility of it accommodating us. I am pleased to say that even as I speak a note has been passed to me saying that the Republic of Ireland has agreed to a quota swap whereby we will have 200 tonnes of cod from the Channel. That will mean, given that some of it will immediately be used up because we have already overfished, that we will be able to reopen the fishery and lift the ban with effect from Tuesday 2 December. That should enable my right hon. and hon. Friend's constituents to continue to fish in that urgent and important period between now and Christmas.

Mr. Nelson: That major announcement will be received with great joy by my Selsey and Emsworth fishermen and by the constituents of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) and other colleagues along the south coast. I am absolutely delighted. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the speed and persuasion that he has deployed in wresting this swap for us. It will bring much needed alleviation of a plight that would otherwise have been severe for so many. It is good news indeed.

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend. I should like to pay tribute to my officials who have spent a great deal of time on this matter. It involves not only persuasion but finding some other area that can be swapped. We do not wish to see a series of these Adjournment debates in which other people ask where the fish that they once had have gone and why the Irish are taking them and not us. I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand that the chain is more complicated than it appears on the surface.

I should like to refer to a serious factor in the discussion. We have acted throughout with the utmost probity and we have tried to maintain the important responsibilities that arise from being part of the Community's common fisheries policy. That policy works extremely well, and increasingly so, yet this has come to my notice. There was an attempt to make political capital on this matter, which I deeply deplore. This should be said in the Chamber, which at the moment does not contain any representatives of the Social Democratic party or a single representative of the Liberal party. The press was informed by the prospective Liberal candidate for Arundel —I hardly dare to say this, but it is so serious a matter —that he had every sympathy with the fishermen who will defy the ban and risk £50,000 fines, and with fisheries inspectors who may not impose the ban.

Mr. Nelson: Disgraceful.

Mr. Gummer: It is conservation that we are talking about, the saving of fish for future generations, yet someone, for party political advantage—one can hardly say other—has encouraged people to break the laws of conservation and, indeed, has encouraged servants of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to turn a blind eye to the conservation rules. That has been done in a grubby attempt to gain votes.

That is wholly unacceptable, particularly as it is in a document that contains suggestions that the decisions were made arbitrarily. There is nothing arbitrary about them. This matter is about the protection of people's livelihood in future, not just now, next year or the year afterwards. I could have made party political decisions that would have been comfortable for now but that would have been dishonest with regard to the future.

I hope very much that anybody who has received or publicised the document will ask, as I shall ask the official Liberal spokesman on fisheries — who is not present now, but I shall ask him when he returns from his weekend —whether he will dissociate himself publicly from that attempt to undermine conservation rules that are for the benefit of the whole nation, all fishermen and the European Community, an organisation which, in this area at least, has shown itself extremely effective in providing a system that protects the fish not only for people now but for their sons and grandsons.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 1 December 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

London Regional Transport

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next proposes to meet the chairman of London Regional Transport to discuss the performance of his industry.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John Moore): I meet the chairman of London Regional Transport at regular intervals to discuss various aspects of the performance of his industry. He is to be congratulated on cutting costs, reducing revenue support and attracting record numbers of passengers to use LRT services.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: The many improvements are attracting passengers, but is my right hon. Friend satisfied that everything is being done to reduce the consequent overcrowding? Will he have a word with the chairman about the modernisation of the Central line, and particularly the signals, especially as only this morning many of my constituents were appallingly delayed and suffered great inconvenience?

Mr. Moore: I shall certainly draw that point to the attention of the chairman, Keith Bright. My hon. Friend is right, in that as a result of LRT's success overcrowding means that the frequency of trains on four lines has had to be improved in 1986. I was pleased to be able to approve last month a major new investment programme, involving £45 million of investment in new trains for delivery in 1987-88.

Mr. Foot: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the shambles that his transport policy is causing on the No. 24 bus, which is supposed to bring me to the House of Commons from Hampstead? Is the principle that he applies that it does not matter what happens to the passengers as long as a few more people are thrown out of jobs?

Mr. Moore: The right hon. Gentleman has, of course, written to me on that subject. I do not accept his criticism, and should like to remind him of two facts. He keeps drawing my attention to the operation of buses by one person. That is a matter for LRT, but it should be remembered that staff on crewed buses are three times more likely to be assaulted than those on one-person buses. The right hon. Gentleman is a fair man, and he should remember that.

Mr. Adley: Are there not lessons to be drawn by both sides of the House following the success of LRT? The lesson for the Labour Party is that politically motivated people who try to run transport services do not do a very good job. The lesson for us is that the nationalisation of London Transport, by this Government, did not necessarily have undesirable results.

Mr. Moore: The lesson to be drawn is that excellent management which has clear objectives and a clear set of disciplines can attract increased custom, and can lead to greater efficiency, a reduction in unit costs and an overall improvement for the passenger.

Mr. Cartwright: Is the Secretary of State aware that many of my constituents are once again complaining of being kept waiting for a long time at bus stops for buses that never come? On investigation, the reason is usually that LRT simply did not have a driver available to operate the service. When he next meets the chairman, will the Secretary of State point out to him that we all want a lean and hungry service, but not one that is so emaciated that it cannot deliver a service to the customers?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman has written to me, and we may later reach his question on the Order Paper concerning the quality of services. I shall talk to the chairman about the hon. Gentleman's point, but I am sure he will remember that many of the difficulties concern crewed buses rather than those manned by one operator. The problem of staff failing to arrive for those buses creates considerable difficulties and cancellations.

Mr. Waller: Is it not significant that all the Greater London council's forecasts at the time when my right hon. Friend's Department took over transport responsibilities have been proved to be completely untrue? Is it not the fact that by running the business on proper businesslike lines it has been possible to attract more passengers, to provide a much better service for them and to put more investment into London Regional Transport?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is entirely right. There has been a major increase in patronage—by 4 per cent. in 1985-86 compared with 1984-85. He is right to remind the House of the scaremongering of the erstwhile GLC. That body said that 33 tube stations and branch lines would be closed, but none has.

Mr. Robert Hughes: There appears to be a great difference of opinion between the Secretary of State and those who use the service. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman should conduct a proper investigation into the matter. It he aware of the engineering dispute that is taking place within London Buses Ltd., which is having a greater impact each day on the travelling public? Is he taking active steps to try to get the dispute resolved?

Mr. Moore: I shall remind the hon. Gentleman of what the London Region Passengers Committee, the consumer watchdog, said. The following passage appeared in the 1985-86 annual report:

> "The year . . . may go down in history as having seen the reversal of the long spiral of decline in London's public transport."

Surely that is a clear sign.

I recognise that the level of service of London Buses Ltd. has been hit badly over the past week or so, but I understand that the craftsmen, the engineers, who have been working to rule have today returned to normal

working. I hope that services will rapidly improve. On behalf of London Regional Transport, I apologise to passengers for the disruption that the work-to-rule action has caused.

2. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of London Regional Transport; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Moore: I met the chairman of London Regional Transport last Tuesday at a meeting of the London passenger transport group, where a number of LRT and BR issues were discussed.

Mr. Banks: Did the Secretary of State discuss with the chairman of London Regional Transport the crisis in LRT Builders? He will no doubt be aware that there has been a 50 per cent. reduction in personnel there through voluntary redundancies and a great increase in productivity, yet the organisation is still heading for a loss. The feeling of the work force is that it has been let down badly by management. For example, five contracts worth £2·7 million were won by LRT Builders in open competition, which the LRT board gave back. The staff would like the Government to call for an inquiry into the management of LRT Builders. Will the right hon. Gentleman consider taking that course?

Mr. Moore: That is not one of the subjects that was discussed. This is a matter for LRT management, but to put the matter into perspective I draw attention to the fact that this is a fringe business with a turnover of £15 million with losses that are running at between £5 million and £6 million. Following an internal audit, it was recognised that a number of recent tenders would have recovered only 60 per cent. of costs. As for the hon. Gentleman's specific request, I see little justification for diverting public subsidy from its proper purpose of supporting the transport operation to funding losses in fringe activities.

Mr. Higgins: Did my right hon. Friend discuss the appalling delays that are caused to buses by the completely unnecessary construction of barriers to traffic, of which the worst examples are to be found at Aldwych and at the south end of Westminster bridge? In addition, there is the proliferation of traffic lights, which seems to be taking place at a tremendous rate. Will my right hon. Friend discuss these matters and take corrective steps?

Mr. Moore: I shall, of course, because my right hon. Friend has in the past drawn my attention to the last product of the GLC.

Mr. Spearing: Irrespective of what the Secretary of State has just said, does he agree that the majority of passengers in London want crew-operated buses in central London? As for the engineering dispute, is it not a fact that management was trying to be too clever by half and was requiring conditions that would be prejudicial to the success of the bus service, and that the men on the job knew it?

Mr. Moore: In considering the operations of London Buses Ltd., we must take into account the advice that was given by those who seek to manage the bus services on our behalf. I shall not add to what I said earlier. A few engineers have been involved in a dispute in conflict with the settlement that was arrived at by the majority of LRT employees. The dispute has inconvenienced passengers, and I apologise for that on behalf of LRT.

Mr. Squire: I reassure my right hon. Friend. His earlier statements have already made it clear that the threats and fears expressed by Opposition Members have not been proved true in the performance of London Regional Transport. I ask my right hon. Friend when he meets the chairman of LRT, to bear in mind a matter which is causing concern — the recruitment of workers within LRT bus operations. A number of services seem to be suffering from a failure to run to timetables. This causes considerable aggravation and annoyance to my constituents.

Mr. Moore: I shall draw my hon. Friend's last point to the attention of London Regional Transport. I have to reiterate that, as my hon. Friend said, we are talking about a transport undertaking that has seen a significant growth in the number of passengers. It is a great success, despite the scaremongering from the erstwhile GLC.

Mr. Stephen Ross: Is the Secretary of State aware that there seems to be a gross shortage of staff on the London Underground? Announcements on the Northern line say, "Sorry, there are far fewer trains today due to shortage of staff." At a time of high unemployment, why is this so? Can the right hon. Gentleman also get the computer indicators to work properly, without management always apologising from central control at Euston?

Mr. Moore: I shall be delighted to make sure that those points are brought to the attention of London Regional Transport. It is interesting, in regard to some of the comments that we hear—I am sure the hon. Member, with his interest in transport will know this — that approximately 75 per cent. of total London Regional Transport costs are staff costs. They are a critical factor in the success of London Transport.

Mr. Robert Hughes: How can the Minister stand at the Dispatch Box and extol the virtues of London Regional Transport management and then, in his next answer, admit that it apparently won contracts on the open market, which, on checking, show that it recovered only 60 per cent. of its costs? How can the right hon. Gentleman say that that is good management? How can we possibly have confidence in the other figures?

Mr. Moore: I obviously did not make myself clear. The contracts in question, which LRT did not seek to secure, were those which followed an internal audit and showed that LRT was recovering only 60 per cent. of its costs. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) asked why it did not proceed with those contracts. I was stating the advice that I had been given by London Transport as to the way in which the contracts in question had not covered its costs. In so far as they had not, they were not pursued.

Drinking and Driving

3. **Mr. William Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to increase public awareness of the dangers of drinking and driving.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): The latest step in our continuing campaign against drinking and driving is our Christmas advertising. From today, 2,000 poster sites will tell the public that at least 1,100 people a year are killed

by drivers who have been drinking. The posters brand drinking drivers as a menace to society. The clear message is, "Do not drink and drive."

Mr. Powell: I thank my hon. Friend for his answer and for the new campaign to try to deter people from drinking and driving this Christmas. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is necessary to have a sustained campaign throughout the year? The problem of drinking and driving does not appear only at Christmas, but exists throughout the year and, most of all, when people have forgotten the warnings given at Christmas.

Mr. Bottomley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Drinking and driving is a menace to everybody in society. We need a campaign, not just to get at the person who knows that he is a drinking driver—there are not that many of those—but to get all those around us to remind us every month and week of the year that drinking and driving do not mix.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: As it is probably agreed that drinking drivers are potential murderers, will the hon. Gentleman accept that there will be widespread public support for a more robust attitude to this problem? Will he ensure that his writ extends to Scotland, because one of my constituents was killed by one of these drivers? All that the offender got was an admonition and five years' suspension of licence.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Member will be pleased to know that, at the launch of the anti-drink driving campaign, we had an assistant chief constable from Scotland with us. I am glad that we are working in partnership with the police in getting the message across. The key point, although sentences and court procedures are important, is to stop people from offending. That is what cuts out the accidents, injuries and fatalities.

Mr. Cormack: Would it not be appropriate for those who kill when they are drunk and driving to be automatically charged with manslaughter?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend will know that that is not a point for this Department. Florence Nightingale talked about the effects of alcohol as an anaeshetic. On her deathbed in 1910, she said that it was a killer. People need to appreciate that point and not just look on the courts or the law as an excuse for doing what too many peeople do, and that is knowlingly to drink and then to drive.

Mr. Boyes: I welcome the clarity of the Minister's message for this Christmas and his promise to keep up a sustained campaign. Does he agree that the problem will be made worse by the growth in the number of hand-held telephones in cars? Some drunken loonies will be driving at the same time as making a phone call. I recognise that the hon. Gentleman has inserted a strong paragraph in next year's edition of the "Highway Code", but does he agree that it is time to outlaw hand-held telephones now that a suitable and adequate alternative is available?

Mr. Bottomley: I think that if I went into too much detail I should be slightly out of order, but I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing attention to the clear advice which will be in the "Highway Code"—not only do not drink and drive, but do not use a hand-held telephone when driving.

Mr. Wheeler: Does my hon. Friend agree that the best way to remove the offence of drinking and driving from the criminal justice system and to stop it causing conflict between the police and the public would be to adopt the new technology, on which some motor manufacturers are working, whereby it is impossible to start a car engine when the breath has been analysed and revealed evidence of drink or drugs? Will that not solve the problem? Will my hon. Friend encourage that technology?

Mr. Bottomley: I shall certainly consider that technology carefully. Even if such a device were introduced within, say four years, for the next 24 years most cars would be unconverted. We need to convert the more than 20 million licence holders who at present are killing 120 people a month to the idea that they should not be doing it. They are the ones who can stop it.

Mr. Stott: I am sure the Minister is aware that Labour Members share his concern and are fully behind any Government measure that will deter people from drinking and driving. Will he ask his hon. Friend the Minister responsible for public transport—the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Mr. Mitchell)—how he can believe in the deregulation of our bus system in view of the fact that the evidence so far leads us to believe that there will be no public transport on Christmas day or Boxing day and, as my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) tells me, no trains in England and Wales? This cannot be good for the hon. Gentleman's campaign, which we support. Will the Minister have a word with his hon. Friend to get the buses on the road on Christmas day. In addition——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Briefly.

Mr. Stott: I shall do my best, Sir. In a written answer to me, the Minister revealed that throughout this year his Department spent £1·5 million on a drink and drive campaign, but last year the Department spent £1·4 million at Christmas alone. That represents a serious drop in the amount that his Department is spending on this campaign. Does the hon. Gentleman think that it is a good idea to reduce expenditure at such a time?

Mr. Bottomley: Deregulation of buses means more minibuses, so more people are likely to be able to get a ride to where they live. The Brewers Society—*[Interruption.]* If the Opposition would care to listen to the answer, they might find that they can help to reduce drinking and driving in their constituencies. They might want to draw more attention to the Brewers Society campaign, "Don't get a ban. Get a bus, taxi, mini-cab, train, tube or a lift." There has been greatly increased spending on reducing road casualties. I am sure that, like me, the hon. Gentleman would welcome the £2 million that the General Accident Fire and Life Assurance Corporation has spent and will hope that this is a growing trend.

I think that about 30 million people saw television coverage of the launch of the anti-drinking and driving campaign on Wednesday. I regret that some people used that massive exposure to the danger of drinking and driving to argue either about the amount of money being spent or about the law. This month is the time to get the drink-driving message home to people—they can stop it themselvess.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are making very slow progress. We must speed up a little.

Buses (Deregulation)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received following deregulation of the buses.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): As might be expected with such a major change, I have received a diversity of representations.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that, far from deregulation causing just a few initial problems, many people have suffered from a deterioration in the services available to them? When will he take action to do something about that? Does he accept that there has been a deterioration in employees' working conditions, in addition to the many redundancies?

Mr. Mitchell: Deregulation has been in operation for just over one month. Unfortunately, in some bus companies it has shown up a lower standard of preparation than in others. However, over much of the country it is proceeding very well. There are gainers and losers in deregulation. The losers will complain, but very rarely will the gainers come out and say that they are gainers.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Is my hon. Friend aware that many of the problems that arose in Lancashire were caused by the incompetence of the Labour-controlled education authority? It would be much appreciated if the pupils from Kirkland Church of England school could be assisted by the provision of a socially necessary bus to take them to school, because they have to cross the A6. Will the Lancashire county council kindly co-operate?

Mr. Mitchell: Those matters are entirely within the competence of Lancashire county council. It has saved over £5 million by deregulation. It has enough money to bathe in when it comes to providing additional services.

British Rail

5. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on delays on British Rail in the past year.

Mr. Mitchell: Separate records are not kept for representations on delays. On quality of service generally, I estimate that some 400 representations have been received by my Department in the past year. That is about one complaint for every 2 million journeys.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Minister aware of the steadily escalating incidence of complaints from all parts of the United Kingdom about the inter-city service? Why does he not keep lists and refer to them? Why does he not keep lists and take them to the chairman of British Rail and present them as complaints, because everyone wants something to be done? Is it not the role of the Minister who has responsibility for those matters to ensure that the public interest is preserved? Why does he not do his job properly?

Mr. Mitchell: As I said, one complaint for every 2 million passengers does not seem to be as excessive as the hon. Gentleman tries to suggest. The operation of local services is a matter for British Rail management. The Government's job is to set the objectives. We set the objectives and have included in them particular reference to quality standards.

Mr. Gregory: Does my hon. Friend not deplore the comments of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) who constantly seeks to deplore the activities of British Rail, which is most certainly on the right path? When my right hon. Friend next meets the chairman of British Rail, will he discuss the dichotomy between the operator's timetable and the published timetable, so that the gap is widened to a realistic one? Secondly, will he see whether telephones can be provided much more frequently on 125 trains and that they operate within tunnels in the unlikely event of a delay on a train?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is correct to suggest that sometimes the rail services attempt to provide the fastest possible service. If British Rail went a little slower on the timetable it would more frequently achieve punctuality in the provision of service. I shall draw my hon. Friend's remark about telephones on trains to the attention of the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. Malins: Many of my constituents in Croydon are commuters to London. Apparently, they are going to put up with a small increase in prices, but the main concentration needs to be on the quality, reliability and frequency of service. Can my hon. Friend give some reassurance to south London commuters that those matters will be concentrated upon?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend can have the assurance that he seeks. I need hardly add that as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State also represents a Croydon constituency, it is a matter that does not escape his gimlet eye. [*Interruption.*] British Rail staff on Network South East should be substantially praised for what they have achieved. Punctuality has improved from 87 per cent. within five minutes in the spring, to 91 per cent. at present. The staff should be given credit for that.

Mr. Snape: Does the Minister agree that fares have risen dramatically on British Rail since 1979, at a much greater rate than the rate of inflation, while punctuality standards over the seven years have fallen away equally dramatically? Is he aware that BR's response to the falling away in punctuality is to deny the available statistics to the central transport users consultative committee, supposedly on the ground that the statistics are being misused? Would it not be a good idea to have for once some action from Ministers, rather than flannel in the Chamber?

Mr. Mitchell: The average fare increase on British Rail is 4·9 per cent. That is only 1 per cent. or 1·5 per cent. above the rate of inflation. If the hon. Gentleman looks back over the past five years, he will find that the rate of fare increase has been little different from the increase in the level of inflation.

Buses (Deregulation)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on the current situation following the deregulation of bus services under the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. Moore: Deregulation has gone well in most areas, and local teething problems are being solved. There are service improvements in many places, for example, the introduction of minibuses, and worthwhile savings in subsidy have been made by many local authorities.

Mr. Ross: Is the Minister aware that there are differences of view about deregulation? Does he accept

that it should be common ground that there are problems of timetabling and the booking of through services? Does he accept that local authorities have a part to play, if he will instruct them to do that and provide finance to allow them to carry that out?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman is correct. There is a clear role for local authorities to play. However, the question is whether that should be voluntary or statutory bound. In a recent debate the hon. Gentleman drew our attention to the west midlands, where one operator is running 90 per cent. of the services, and where there is no apparent difficulty. I will examine the hon. Gentleman's point. I do not think that there is a need for cash, but there is a need and an opportunity for authorities to co-ordinate.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the management of Midland Fox on the introduction of its new fox cub service, which has brought a successful minibus service to the county of Leicestershire, reduced the fares on its buses and brought in a better frequency of service and reliability which the Leicester city council bus service could not offer.

Mr. Moore: As is so often the case, my hon. Friend is right in every detail.

Mr. Mason: Does the Minister accept that the truth about bus deregulation in south Yorkshire is that it has resulted in major fare increases, a loss of passengers, a worse service in the towns and disastrous services in rural areas? Who, therefore, has benefited?

Mr. Moore: The ratepayers might question the right hon. Gentleman's point. For some considerable time south Yorkshire has been paying £60 per head for each man, woman and child for its subsidised services.

Channel Tunnel

7. **Mr. Raynsford** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what comparative studies have been carried out to the knowledge of his Department on the respective advantage of passenger-vehicle segregation as against passengers remaining with their vehicles on the Channel tunnel shuttle service, particularly from the point of view of safety in the tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: No comparative studies of this kind have been carried out. The Anglo-French bodies concerned with safety in the Channel tunnel will consider whether the arrangements that Eurotunnel has proposed are acceptable, rather than analysing variations which have not been proposed.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister accept that there is considerable public concern on this issue and that it would be appropriate for comparative studies to be carried out to make sure that, whatever mode is proposed for transport through the Channel tunnel on the ferry vehicles, the safest possible mode of transport is employed? Does he also accept that Lord Pennock the chairman of Eurotunnel, has said that he would be perfectly happy for such evaluations to take place? Would it not therefore be sensible for the Government to agree an amendment to the Bill to allow that to happen?

Mr. Mitchell: I do not know how widespread is the public concern, although I am very much aware of the hon. Gentleman's concern. Naturally, safety is a vitally important part, to which considerable attention has been given. The safety authorities are gathering information worldwide on, for example, fires in tunnels, on board ships and in multi-storey car parks. They are gathering information with which to make a proper assessment when an application is made to them.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister give authority for British Rail to release for publication the report comparing London termini for the Channel tunnel so that we may see the detail of what led British Rail to state that Waterloo was its preferred choice?

Mr. Mitchell: The release of internal British Rail documents is for British Rail to decide, but I will draw the chairman's attention to the hon. Gentleman's request.

London Buses

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the efficiency of London buses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend receives representations from time to time from hon. Members, interested organisations and members of the public about the efficiency of bus services in London.

Mr. Greenway: Notwithstanding the problems of traffic congestion, what is London Buses Ltd. doing to make its services more efficient and regular and to avoid bunching? Will he tell my constituents why a one-man 207 bus should be more efficient than the previous two-man service, which did not cause a bunching of traffic behind it or delays to long queues of people waiting to get on?

Mr. Mitchell: Whether particular routes should be one person operated is a matter for London Buses Ltd. It has invested in 260 buses with easier access for elderly people, which I think my hon. Friend will welcome. He should also be aware that there are three times as many boarding and alighting accidents on open platform buses and four times as many assaults on crews of two-man buses as on OPO buses.

Mr. Pavitt: Is the Minister aware of the amount of violence on the 52 and 16 bus routes in the area known as the Kilburn triangle? I welcome today's statement about steps to be taken to deal with violence on public transport. Will the hon. Gentleman give special attention to protecting conductors on those routes?

Mr. Mitchell: I very much concur with the hon. Gentleman's views about the protection of bus crews and indeed, passengers, but details of the 52 bus service are matters for management, not for me.

A46 (Lincoln)

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will specify in detail his plans for improving the A46 between Lincoln and the A1.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Investigations into the possibility of improving the standard of the existing road to provide greater opportunity for overtaking are continuing. There are no specific schemes at present.

Mr. Carlisle: As the road is an essential link between Lincoln and the A1 and the midlands, and its bad state has

destroyed many jobs in Lincolnshire, does my hon. Friend agree that it is high time the studies were completed and the improvements made? Will he undertake to work out the exact detail of where and when the much-needed improvements will take place?

Mr. Bottomley: Perhaps it would be best for me to have a talk with my hon. Friend when the studies are completed. I fully understand his concern.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning his policy for funding extensions of the Docklands light railway.

Mr. David Mitchell: Expenditure contemplated by London Regional Transport on extensions of the Docklands light railway would have to meet the Government's criteria for public sector investment.

Mr. Spearing: That does not answer the question. Who will fund the extension? Will the funds come from public or private, sources, or a mixture of both, or has the Minister not decided yet? Has he noticed the mutually incompatible statements by the director of the London Docklands Development Corporation and from his office as published in the press?

Mr. Mitchell: I hope that I can reassure the hon. Gentleman. He will be aware that the Bill has been deposited. The Government have been assured by the London Docklands Development Corporation that, in its view, the project could go ahead without any expectation of Government contribution to capital or running costs. Before the Bill proceeds to Second Reading the Government will wish to examine the specific arrangements to be made by the LDDC to ensure that there is no significant risk that any of the cost would fall as a burden on LRT. We shall also want to see a full financial and economic appraisal of the railway project from LRT.

Buses (Deregulation)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on the implementation of the Transport Act 1986.

Mr. Moore: As I have already said, I am encouraged by the way deregulation of local bus services has been implemented. I have also been greatly impressed by the way in which local authorities have implemented the system of competitive tendering for subsidised services which is provided for in the Act.

Mrs. Bottomley: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the new system is already beginning to show savings to local authorities over subsidised services? Has he had time to consult my hon. and close Friend the Minister responsible for roads and traffic about his inaugural ride on the Haslemere town bus, which is one of two new bus services in my constituency, which have been introduced since deregulation, with a considerable saving to the ratepayers?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right. There have been substantial savings of approximately £40 million a year. The savings in the Surrey area appear to be about £1 million a year. I do not have such a close relationship with the Minister responsible for public safety, roads and traffic as does my hon. Friend, but despite that we have communicated on that subject.

Mr. Robert Hughes: As the Minister of State has admitted that there has probably been an over-registration of commercial services, will the right hon. Gentleman discuss with the authorities concerned the possibility of providing more money to make up the existing shortfall as well as the expected shortfall in socially desirable services?

Mr. Moore: In the debate last week my hon. Friend the Minister of State made it quite clear that there might be some marginal impact on costs, but nothing like the £40 million in savings that has already come from the more effective tendering for subsidised services.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Family Courts

51. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Attorney-General when he expects to make an announcement on the outcome of the Lord Chancellor's consultation document on family courts.

54. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Attorney-General how many responses he has received to the "Interdepartmental Review of Family and Domestic Jurisdiction" paper.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): The responses to the consultation paper, which was published by the Lord Chancellor's Department on 13 May, were due by 31 October. One hundred and seventy four have been received and, as one would expect in an exercise of this nature, different views have been expressed on the whole range of issues canvassed in the consultation paper. The Government will make an announcement as soon as possible when the responses have been analysed and the resource implications of the main options for a family court have been assessed.

Mrs. Bottomley: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that it is high time that we had action rather than words on family courts? We need an integrated, coherent and accessible system of family courts. More than 160,000 children a year are involved in divorce cases, and there are 20 different ways of going into local authority care. It is, therefore, time for action. Without jeopardising my overwhelming case, may I ask whether my right hon. and learned Friend has had time to consider the situation in Australia, where progress has already been made towards a federal family court system?

The Solicitor-General: As to the latter part of my hon. Friend's question, we think of little else. With regard to the former part, in fairness to the Lord Chancellor I should remind my hon. Friend that the consultation paper was issued only in May this year and that the consultation period finished only on 31 October. There is much criticism of the present system, but there needs to be a proper analysis.

Mr. Maclennan: Has the Solicitor-General looked at the representations from the Social Democratic Lawyers Association? Has he noticed that, with reasonable economy, it has advocated a system of family courts which enables child care cases to be more sensitively handled

than they can be at present and also allows couples to seek to settle their differences without full adversarial proceedings in court?

The Solicitor-General: The Social Democratic Lawyers Association has achieved immortality by being referred to in this report. Its recommendations will, of course, receive the same serious consideration as all the others.

Mr. Sims: My right hon. and learned Friend has suggested that there are different views on the form that family courts should take. Will he assure us that those views will not be taken as an excuse for inaction? I commend to him the initiative of the family courts campaign, which has sought some consensus.

As there has been general consultation, is it not appropriate for the House to have an opportunity to debate the proposals, and will he put that suggestion to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House?

The Solicitor-General: My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will be aware of that suggestion. A variety of options are available and they were set out in chapter 8 of this report. Most people would agree that there are defects in the present *[Interruption.]* I do not wish to take up unnecessary time. Most people agree that there are many criticisms to be made of the present system, but there is less agreement on what is a desirable alternative.

State Security

52. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Attorney-General on how many possible prosecutions he has sought the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions over the last two months.

The Attorney-General (Sir Michael Havers): I regularly meet the Director of Public Prosecutions. The last meeting took place on 25 November 1986.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Attorney-General accept that there is no Government indivisibility on questions of criminal prosecution and that those decisions are uniquely and exclusively decisions of the Attorney-General?

Does the Attorney-General further accept that if the Government had wanted to stop Pincher and West's books they could have done so by taking action under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 against those who leaked to West and Pincher, including Mr. Martin? Action could also have been taken action against West and Pincher themselves, and also against the publishers of those two books. In so far as the Attorney-General did not take action, has he not been negligent, and should he not now consider resigning?

The Attorney-General: Of course the hon. Gentleman is right. When I am wearing my hat as Attorney-General and prosecutor, nobody can influence me and I would not accept any attempt to influence me from anybody. When the Government are acting as Government in civil proceedings I happen, by tradition, to be the nominal plaintiff and that is what has happened here.

I answered a question from the hon. Gentleman last week, and there is nothing that I wish to add to that about the prosecution of any of those particular individuals. So far as resigning is concerned, let me say this: I have no intention of resigning. I have had that most wonderful and loyal support from the Prime Minister, for which I am extremely grateful.

Mr. Stanbrook: Did one of those occasions to which my right hon. and learned Friend referred concern the successful action against the book "One Girl's War"? Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell us about the principles on which he acts in such cases?

The Attorney-General: The principle concerning the book of the late Mrs. Miller is exactly the same principle as that on which we have started the proceedings in the Australian courts.

Mr. Abse: Does the Attorney-General agree that when all the spy froth has disappeared, the important fact is whether his office remains inviolate and is not dominated by the Prime Minister or any so-called collective decision?

On what basis, and on what precedent, does the right hon. and learned Gentleman base the view that he is able to have instructions on civil matters, such as are taking place in Australia, and as has been canvassed in *The Times*, clearly on information coming from No. 10? On what basis does he rest the view that he can take instructions from the Cabinet to commence proceedings? Does he not realise that there is widespread concern at the Bar, within the legal profession and among all within the legal profession and among all libertarians that his office is being assailed and that he is being manipulated by a Prime Minister who is dominating the whole of these proceedings?

The Attorney-General: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman, whom I have known for many years. I am quite able to look after my independence, and I always have. The hon. Gentleman must realise — and as a lawyer I am surprised that he does not—that this was a Government decision and, of course, like my fellow Ministers, I accept collective responsibility.

Mr. Hayes: May I say to my right hon. and learned Friend that most, if not all, of us in the Conservative party feel that he has behaved with honour and dignity throughout these proceedings? Does he agree that none of this sorry saga would have occurred if one former intelligence officer had not put greed before principle, and one leader of the Opposition had not put ambition before his country?

The Attorney-General: On the last point, I am not responsible for the conduct of the Leader of the Opposition. On the first point, the idea that we can allow officers or ex-officers of the security services to write books would probably end with us not having any important secrets which should be preserved.

Mr. John Morris: Will the Attorney-General confirm that the decision to prosecute a receiver as well as a supplier allegedly in breach of the Official Secrets Act is a matter solely for the Attorney-General? Will he also confirm that it is the Attorney-General's duty to determine the public interest before commencing the injunctive process to ban a book, and not the duty of Ministers collectively, according to the precedents of the Gouriet case and the Crossman diaries? Why was he not consulted on the Pincher book? Is it another example of the Prime Minister flouting the conventions, as in the leaking of the Law Officer's letters in the Westland case?

The Attorney-General: If I answered all those questions, the next Minister would never get to the Dispatch Box. It is the same old story of the right hon. and learned Gentleman becoming too party political on occasions. Just

as he accuses me of kow-towing to the Prime Minister, which is wholly untrue, I suspect that he may be responding to the Leader of the Opposition.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

United Nations (Funds)

57. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution he intends to pledge to the United Nations international children's emergency Fund and the United Nations development programme for the forthcoming year.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): At the annual United Nations pledging conference last month we announced contributions for 1987, subject to parliamentary approval, of £21·5 million for the United Nations development programme and of £6·5 million for the United Nations children's fund. In addition, I have agreed a further £1 million for UNICEF's special appeal for Africa.

Mr. Beith: I welcome the £1 million for the UNICEF special appeal, but does the Minister recognise that those levels of contributions mean that Britain is giving only half as much to UNICEF as is Norway, which has a population that is only one tenth of ours? Is he aware that we receive three times as much money to be spent by the United Nations development fund in Britain as the British Government give to that fund. Surely the Government can do better than that?

Mr. Patten: I think I am right in saying that we make the second largest contribution to UNICEF, in the European Community., I value the work done by UNICEF, which is why we make a contribution not only to the regular programme but to special appeals. We have made a reasonable contribution in the past two years and I am sure that we shall continue to consider the fund's special appeals. I am meeting the director of the UNDP later this week.

Mr. Chapman: Is my hon. Friend aware that the special programme of innoculation of children will be extremely expensive? I think that it would work out at about £5 per child. Nevertheless, will my hon. Friend sympathetically consider making further money available for that project, because it will capture the imagination and win the support of the whole British people? They will appreciate that something practical can be done, to the eternal benefit of future generations.

Mr. Patten: I agree with much of what my hon. Friend said. This year we made an additional contribution to immunisation and I am sure that we shall make an equally generous response to future special appeals. I should like to put on record our support for UNICEF's work on spreading oral rehydration therapy.

Third World

58. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will put more aid into health and population projects in the Third world.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have recently reviewed our policy in this respect. In 1985 we spent about £38 million on health and population. We shall be giving more emphasis in future to primary health care and associated population programmes.

Mr. Bowden: I am encouraged by my hon. Friend's reply. Does he agree that there is a close connection between the limitation of population and economic and social development? As that is the case could priority be given to programmes on family planning in our aid to the Third world?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend may have noticed that at the Development Council meeting of the EC, which I chaired, on 11 November, we agreed guidelines on population policy for the first time. They are firmly based on principles of individual choice and of refusal to accept coercion. They move in the direction suggested by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Deakins: Will the Minister follow and further develop the policy of his two predecessors of ensuring that there is a population component in every major overseas aid project, wherever it may be?

Mr. Patten: That is a valuable policy development. Last week I saw what we are doing to help a population programme in Pakistan. There is an intimate relationship between population programmes, primary health care and drives for greater literacy.

Mr. Key: Has my hon. Friend yet had time to assess the impact on our overseas aid programme of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome, and is he satisfied that the forecast growth in the budget will be able to take that on board?

Mr. Patten: We have already made a contribution to the World Health Organisation's global programme on AIDS. I share my hon. Friend's considerable concern about the subject. Officials from my Department attended a conference on that issue at Brazzaville a couple of weeks ago. We were one of the few donors to be represented at that conference and we shall be considering our policy when I am able to talk to the officials who went there.

Overseas Aid

59. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to alter expenditure on overseas aid; and if he will set a limit on the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Chris Patten: As a result of this year's public expenditure survey the revised aid baseline for 1987-88 will be £1,235 million. There is a limit each year on the aid and trade provision budget.

Mr. Wareing: Does the Minister's trite answer not show the Government's rather complacent attitude? Since 1979 there has been a 15·8 per cent. real reduction in the overseas aid, budget. Is it not a function of the ATP to reduce that? Is it not about time that there was real direct Government aid in order to bring our figure nearer to the figure which was designated as realistic by the United Nations?

Mr. Patten: The ATP has the same purpose now as it had when it was introduced by the right hon. Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart), that is, to allow British exporters to compete for contracts that are part of sound projects in developing countries.

As for the overall size of our aid budget, I am pleased that next year we shall be spending £48 million more than this year, the following year £88 million more than this year, and the year after that £128 million more than this year.

Mr. Bowen Wells: Will my hon. Friend's recent negotiations on the EC's food aid programme result in a change in expenditure in the overseas development budget? If so, where will he put the savings or increased expenditure on effective food aid?

Mr. Patten: The changes that we were successful in pushing through at the Development Council meeting last month will not reduce the amount of money that is spent on food aid through the EC. We still have to deal with one or two institutional problems, but the changes should ensure that that money is sensibly spent in a developmentally sound way.

Aid and Trade Provisions

60. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total sum expended in the current financial year under the aid and trade provisions; and what are the maximum and minimum estimates of the outturn for the year 1986-87.

Mr. Chris Patten: For the current financial year aid and trade provision expenditure up to the end of October 1986 was £64·08 million. The amount available for expenditure in 1986-87 is £90 million, which is expected to be fully spent.

Mr. Spearing: Do not those figures, and the additional figure of about £100 million that the Minister has just mentioned, throw further light on the controversy relating to the aid and trade provision? The Minister used the words "developmentally sound". Would it not be better to use even £2 million or £3 million to restore the vicious and arbitrary cuts in the scientific services of the overseas development fund, which could be important in the relief of famine and the prevention of hunger?

Mr. Patten: I do not accept the thrust of the hon. Gentleman's question. I shall explain the figure for this year. This year the ATP budget was increased, exceptionally, to cope with the large Malaysian rural water supply project which slipped into this year and resulted in an underspend of ATP last year. The increase came from within the existing aid budget, but it did not affect other planned programmes, because we brought forward annual payments to some international bodies into last year.

Mr. Stanbrook: Instead of spreading the available money thinly over thousands of projects — however much moral satisfaction that gives us — will my hon. Friend consider concentrating the assistance on fewer projects, especially rural water supplies, which, fundamentally, will benefit the recipients much more than will the accumulation of minute quantities of aid?

Mr. Patten: I agree with my hon. Friend's remarks about the importance of a sensible balance in a programme. I totally agree also with what he said about the importance of rural water schemes. Last week in Pakistan I saw what we have successfully achieved in irrigation and drainage schemes.

Central America and the Caribbean

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what way he intends to increase the United Kingdom aid programme to Central America and the Caribbean.

Mr. Chris Patten: We intend to continue our substantial aid programme in this area. The needs of each country will be considered on their merits.

Mr. Holland: The Minister will be aware that the World bank and the Inter-American Development Bank recently have lent nothing to Nicaragua, leant on as these institutions have been in turn by the President of the United States. The President seems to have the same attitude towards multilateral lending to Nicaragua as he has to the decision of the International Court of Justice at The Hague or recent finance to the Contras via arms sales to Iran. Will the Minister take this opportunity to dissociate himself from that discrimination by one of the world's biggest powers against one of the world's least developed countries and initiate a bilateral programme for Central America and the Caribbean area, of which Nicaragua can be a beneficiary?

Mr. Patten: I am delighted to have the opportunity to make our position absolutely clear. We judge loans by the World Bank or the Inter-American Development Bank entirely on their economic and technical merits. It is important to consider the programmes in the entire area in terms of what we do bilaterally and what the European Community does. European Community aid to Central America was £25·8 million in the last year for which we have figures. The EDF VI allows more for the Caribbean —about £109·6 million. We contribute about a fifth of those figures. Our contribution to the Central American and Caribbean countries bilaterally is about £46 million. That is a substantial programme.

Mr. Stuart Holland: And Nicaragua?

Mr. Patten: Nicaragua does not receive as much as other countries, such as Honduras, because it is not as poor.

Mr. Speaker: Application under Standing Order No. 20.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it relevant to questions?

Mr. Gow: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: In that case, I shall take it later.

The Attorney-General

3.32 pm

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the office and conduct of the Attorney-General."

First, the matter is specific, since it arises from the evidence of Sir Robert Armstrong, whereby he withdrew his earlier testimony that the decision not to seek to prohibit the publication of the book "Their Trade is Treachery" was the decision of the Attorney-General.

Secondly, the matter is important in that it is commonly understood that a decision on what is in the public interest is a matter for the Attorney-General and does not engage the collective responsibility of the Government. That was the understanding of Sir Robert Armstrong. Among the precedents are the Crossman Diaries and the Gouriet case, where the decision to seek an injunction was taken, if hon. Members did not know it, by the Attorney-General.

Last Thursday the Prime Minister told the House that in the Wright case the decisions were taken by the Government, not by individual Ministers. She said that the Government were indivisible. If that is what has happened, it is a radical departure. The matter is urgent because, apparently, there has been a departure from the well-known and established convention. The role of the Attorney-General as the independent legal adviser of the Government is deemed superfluous. Other anonymous lawyers supplant his role. Ministers, especially the Prime Minister, as in the leaking of the Solicitor-General's letter in the Westland affair, arrogantly assume to themselves the Attorney-General's long-standing constitutional duties. The Attorney-General is answerable to this House. If his role is now understood to be different, the matter should be debated urgently by the House.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. and learned Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the office and conduct of the Attorney-General."

I listened with care to what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said. As he knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 is to decide whether it should be given preference over the Orders set down for today or tomorrow, and to take into account the criteria of the Standing Order. I regret that I cannot find that the matter which he has raised meets all those criteria and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Telephone Tapping

3.35 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"interference with the telephones of Members of Parliament."

I gave you notice of the subject, Mr. Speaker, at 8.45 this morning.

You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that on 31 October 1983, at column 255, I asked the Prime Minister a question about telephone tapping, to which she gave a substantive answer. I believe that the matter is specific because I was telephoned by a distinguished member of the Press Gallery, whose name I gave to the Clerk of the House yesterday, on the subject of the third question to the Attorney-General today which relates to the Law Officer's letter. He volunteered the information that when the telephone behaves very strangely it means that it is being interfered with.

I have further to report that last night at 8 o'clock I was telephoned by someone who purported to be Mr. John Gordon, giving information which obviously came from a very informed source. When I put it to him that that was not his real name and that he had better be very careful, he said, "I understand perfectly well. I have not given my real name because I understand that your telephone is being tampered with."

I would not have raised the matter had it related only to me, but something much more important is involved — the telephone of the Leader of the Opposition. Bluntly, with the whole history of Ponting and the Conqueror diaries, I am used to this. What is more important is the telephone of the Leader of the Opposition. I do not jump to any conclusions as to why newspapers ranging from *The Mirror* to the *Daily Telegraph* have asked how information came into the public domain relating to telephone calls between the Leader of the Opposition and Australia. However, I say that this matter deserves a statement from the Government, because the basic question is whether we can be certain that the assurances that were given solemnly by the Prime Minister in 1983 and repeated in another place to my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Jenkins of Putney are valid. Can we be certain that Members of Parliament's telephones are not interfered with? If we cannot be certain of that, let us at least have an explanation of what happened with the telephone of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"interference with the telephones of Members of Parliament."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman said about this matter, but I regret that I do not consider it appropriate for discussion under standing Order No. 20. Nevertheless, it is a serious allegation, and I am sure that the whole House will have listened carefully to what he said. I cannot submit his application to the House.

Opposition Parties (Financial Support)

3.39 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the need for an urgent review of arrangements for Government financial support of Opposition parties."

The reason for putting this case at this time is that we have a unique Opposition, with a unique Leader of the Opposition. This is a gravely important matter. I believe that there is no previous experience of a Privy Councillor involving himself with a lawyer in opposition to the Crown in a court case in a foreign country on issues relating to national security.

In considering the level of financial support to award to this Opposition, I believe that there are a number of specific issues that should be raised. The Leader of the Opposition has said, in a letter to you, Mr. Speaker, that his office has been involved in several phone calls to Mr. Turnbull in Australia. The sequence was initiated from Mr. Turnbull's office by Mr. Leigh, who I understand is a close acquaintance of the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition spoke to Mr. Turnbull. Subsequently, there were two phone calls from Mr. Charles Clarke, of the Leader of the Opposition's office, to Mr. Turnbull. This was followed by five phone calls from Mr. Turnbull to the Leader of the Opposition's office.

If one is to assume, charitably, that Mr. Clarke was an innocent seeker after the truth in ringing the Leader of the Opposition's office — a truth, moreover, that was available to the Leader of the Opposition's office by other means—what was the role of Mr. Turnbull in ringing up the Leader of the Opposition? What were the details of that conversation? Did Mr. Turnbull ask advice of the Leader of the Opposition? Did the Leader of the Opposition's office offer advice to Mr. Turnbull? What advice, if any, was given to the Leader of the Opposition by this lawyer fighting the Crown in Australia? What collusion has there been?

Allegations have also been made which the debate could clear up. Have members of the Leader of the Opposition's office been in Australia over the last few weeks, and what have they been doing? We on this side of the House are disinclined to accept allegations against those who are unable to defend themselves. A debate on the financial support of Opposition parties would give the Leader of the Opposition, who is currently undermining the United Kingdom's defence policy in the United States, a chance to explain whether he has also been undermining our security policy in Australia.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the need for an urgent review of arrangements for Government financial support of Opposition parties."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Member has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

The Leader of the Opposition

3.43pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance, please, about what arose in the House, as recorded in the *Official Report*, on Friday of last week. When you were not in the Chair the Leader of the Opposition said:

"I have with me a statement which I deliberately brought into the House".

In the following column Mr. Deputy Speaker said:

"If this is a personal statement, the right hon. Gentleman should send it to Mr. Speaker." — [*Official Report*, 28 November 1986; Vol. 106, c. 559-60.]

Subsequently, the office of the Leader of the Opposition issued a copy of a letter dated 28 November, addressed to you. The final paragraph of that letter reads:

"With your permission I would like to release the text to the Press."

I should like to ask you, Mr. Speaker, at what time you received that letter and whether you did, indeed, give your consent to the release of that statement? This is described —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gow: It is described by the Leader of the Opposition as a personal statement. Do not all personal statements to the House have to be cleared by you? Is it not the case that, by long tradition, the Speaker will give his approval to a personal statement only if what appears in it is approved by him? Is there not, moreover, a long tradition that a personal statement is non-controversial? It would be difficult to imagine a personal statement that is more controversial, more tendentious and, in many respects, less faithful to the truth than that from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker: I think that I can clear up the matter. The Deputy Speaker who was in the Chair at the time was quite correct in saying that it was not a personal statement. The hon. Gentleman, however, is right to say that personal statements have to be cleared with me. The Leader of the Opposition spoke to me at about 3 pm, although I cannot be quite certain of the time. What I said to him was that it could be issued as a press statement.

Mr. Peter Lilley (St. Albans): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. When the Leader of the Opposition commented on the point of order that I raised with Mr. Deputy Speaker on Friday, he said that he would be willing to make a personal explanation, either directly to the House or in a written form, taking them as equivalent. We would like to know whether he sought permission to make a personal statement to the House, and if not, whether he will be given the opportunity to do so.

In view of the precedent in "Erskine May" that a right hon. or hon. Member may make a statement on behalf of a Member of Parliament who is abroad, will you give one of the Leader of the Opposition's right hon. Friends an opportunity to make a statement to the House explaining the very grave matters that are dealt with unsatisfactorily in that letter? A vague allusion to five calls made to the Leader of the Opposition's office, after he was in receipt of the full transcript, cannot be satisfactory. We need to know what those conversations——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now going into the merits of the matter. I repeat that Mr. Deputy

[Mr. Speaker]

Speaker was quite correct to say that it was not a personal statement. It is hypothetical whether the Leader of the Opposition will seek to make a personal statement, but it certainly would not be in those terms.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have got off on a very bad tack. Every day there are points of order, and I have nothing really to add to what I have said. Does the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) wish to raise a point of order on the same issue?

Mr. Banks: Not really.

Mr. Speaker: In that case, I shall take the hon. Gentleman's point of order later, so that I can clear up this matter first.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, which is connected to the others. You will have realised that when questions were being put to the Attorney-General we reached only one question that had anything to do with the Director of Public Prosecutions. Given all the current controversy, Opposition Members have raised points of order before asking that the Attorney-General should make a statement. Today was the Attorney-General's chance to answer questions, yet in the 10 minutes allocated only one question was reached. That is a most unsatisfactory state of affairs. The issue is being debated and discussed in the country, yet the House has a small and limited opportunity to ask about what is happening in Australia.

The hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley) suggested that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition should make a statement. What is required is not that he should make a statement but that the Prime Minister should do so.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that the length of time given to ministerial questions is not a matter for the Chair. The Attorney-General answered three questions, of which two were linked.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The document to which reference has been made arises from the early-day motion which I tabled and which has been signed by 52 of my colleagues. Is it in order, Mr. Speaker, for a so-called personal statement to be made, issued through your office——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It was not issued through my office, and I have already said that it was not a personal statement.

Mr. Hickmet: Given the contents of the document, Mr. Speaker, will you rule whether it would be proper for the Leader of the Opposition not to hold the House in contempt and to return to explain why he is colluding with those who seek to undermine this country's security, and why he has behaved with dishonour in his relations with Mr.——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Gentleman wish to raise a point of order on the same subject?

Mr. Nicholls: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. You said a few moments ago that, essentially, the Leader of the Opposition had asked for your guidance on the circumstances in which a personal statement might be made. You advised him of that which he should know already, which is that he would have to proceed by way of a press statement. As it was in the Leader of the Opposition's mind that a personal statement should be made, is it not appropriate that there should be some way of enabling him, if not compelling him, to do so, bearing in mind that he has now made it abundantly clear that he has had personal contacts with the agent of a man in Australia——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Those are not matters for me.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the course of the past 10 minutes, you have heard several points of order which follow on from your decision on the Standing Order No. 20 application of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris). It has crossed my mind, Mr. Speaker, and no doubt the minds of many others in the Chamber, that we should be considering again the possibility of having a debate on the issue raised by my right hon. and learned Friend, especially as many Tories want to take part in such a debate. It might be that tomorrow we shall have the unusual event of a joint application being made under Standing Order No. 20, which, if granted, will mean that we shall be able to hear what Conservative Members have to say about my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, and that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends will be able to draw the connection between the Prime Minister's involvement in this affair and that parliamentary wimp who acts as Attorney-General.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I raise a point of order, Mr. Speaker, following the comments of my hon. Friends the Members for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley). As I understand it, the Leader of the Opposition said that he had a personal statement to make and that you decided, quite properly, that it was not a personal statement. Surely this means that either the right hon. Gentleman was misleading the House, or he does not know the procedure of the House.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that there is anything more to be said about that. Every right hon. and hon. Member can occasionally be mistaken in what he or she is seeking to do in terms of what is in order. The Leader of the Opposition was quite correctly pulled up by Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the matter was dealt with in that way. As for the propriety or otherwise of issuing press statements, I think it is fairly well known that nearly every Member of this place issues a press statement nearly every weekend.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): "Wimp" is a reasonably contemporary term, Mr. Speaker, but is it in order to describe any Member of Parliament, including the Attorney-General, as a "parliamentary wimp"?

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether it is unparliamentary, but it is certainly an undignified and offensive word to use, and I think that it should be withdrawn.

Mr. Skinner: He has been kicked from pillar to post by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman, who is a good and experienced Member, and very helpful to the Chair, to withdraw the word "wimp".

Mr. Skinner: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Member, please —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Skinner: No.

Mr. Speaker: Then I must ask the hon. Member to leave the Chamber.

Mr. Skinner: No. The word is not unparliamentary. The Leader of the House has said that it is not unparliamentary. I am prepared to substitute "wally" for it.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Nothing of substance has been said by Opposition Members about the statement on Friday by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition to merit my speaking, but I take account of the intervention by the Leader of the Opposition —*[Interruption]*—the Leader of the House. He will be the Leader of the Opposition. I am merely anticipating.

I heard the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) refer to my right hon. Friend' s behaviour as "behaviour with dishonour". I do not think that that is parliamentary or acceptable language. I hope that you will be as stern with him as you were with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Speaker: Order. Fair is fair and the same must apply to all. Will the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) withdraw any imputation of dishonour?

Mr. Hickmet: I withdraw that statement, Mr. Speaker. In his letter the Leader of the Opposition said——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Thank you very much.

Later—

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, the Leader of the Opposition is presently explaining to the American people why he thinks the Western Alliance should be dismantled rather than——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Even if he is, what has that to do with me?

Mr. Hamilton: It is further to the point of order raised by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). Although I accept that the Leader of the Opposition has not acted with dishonour, but is it not an affront to the dignity of the House that he should be in daily contact with Mr. Turnbull——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing at all to do with me.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) willingly withdrew a statement that he made about the Leader of the Opposition, despite the contents of the letter which the right hon. Gentleman has placed in the Library. I did not hear, nor, I believe, did most hon. Members hear, a similar withdrawal by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Speaker: I think that it was perfectly audible at this end of the Chamber. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) replaced one very offensive word by another which is less offensive, and which I frequently see in the newspapers.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): You said just now that, as far as you were concerned, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) had withdrawn one offensive word and replaced it with another offensive word. Will you ask him to withdraw that word?

Mr. Speaker: I did not say that. I did not only use the word "offensive". I said that the hon. Member introduced another word, which I frequently see in the newspapers.

TELEPHONE TAPPING

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have in the past rightly pointed out that you protect the rights and interests of Bank Benchers. Will you give us an assurance, in view of a number of statements that have been made inside and outside the House, that the rights of Members of Parliament extend to the confidentiality of their telephone calls, whether in terms of a direct tap or through GCHQ? Will you give an assurance, Mr. Speaker, that hon. Members' telephone conversations in this place are in confidence? Can you tell us whether the rules that have been followed by successive Prime Ministers about the tapping of hon. Members' telephones still apply?

Mr. Speaker: The answer to both questions is yes. As for the telephone conversations of hon. Members in the House, I propose to look into that matter.

Orders of the Day

Advance Petroleum Revenue Tax Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.59 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Advance Petroleum Revenue Tax Bill implements the proposal announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement to accelerate, on a carefully targeted basis, the arrangements for the repayment of advance petroleum revenue tax due to oil companies.

Hon. Members will be aware of the background to this proposal. In his statement my right hon. Friend referred to the effects of the fall in the oil price on North sea activity and the consequences for the offshore supplies industry. The fall in the price of oil has had a marked impact on the economics of North sea activity. This has presented both the oil companies and the offshore supply industry with difficult transitional problems. The industry has had to reassess project plans and has begun to meet the challenge by seeking ways to improve the economics of future projects, for example, by undertaking research and development into lower cost development techniques. In the meantime, there have been calls for the Government to help the industry adjust to this sharp deterioration in its financial position.

We have received a number of representations from members of the oil and oil-related industries on the effects of the fall in the price of oil. These have generally recognised that the scope for the Government to attempt to ameliorate those effects through fiscal action is limited. The adjustments to the fiscal regime which we introduced in the Finance Act 1983 have resulted in an oil tax system for new fields which is even more price sensitive than the previous one. Moreover, the generous reliefs for exploration and appraisal provide a powerful incentive to companies to continue looking for new fields. It is also widely recognised that, to the extent that the fall in the oil price has rendered some projects uneconomic in pre-tax terms, fiscal change designed to make those projects attractive in post-tax terms would not be justified.

Many of the representations have, however, focused on one aspect where the Government consider that prompt action would be appropriate—the short-term effect of the fall in the oil price on North sea cash flow. The price fall has severely reduced oil companies' cash flow from their existing production. Many companies rely on internally generated funds to finance their exploration activity and development design costs. There is a danger, therefore, that cash constraints could put at risk expenditure on worthwhile North sea projects which could potentially be developed over the next few years. The new generation of North sea fields often poses difficult technical problems. A great deal of design and engineering work is required before they can even reach the development stage, but such work may be delayed if companies are unable to finance the necessary expenditure.

Any reduction in the pace and momentum of North sea development work because of cash constraints inevitably has knock-on effects on the offshore supplies industry. We are talking, not just about profits, but about industries and jobs, particularly in Scotland but also in many parts of England.

The United Kingdom offshore supplies industry is a young industry which has only developed since the discovery of oil in the North sea. United Kingdom companies have played a major part in the development of the North sea as a major oil province, not least by their contribution to the technological advances required to exploit deep water fields. In recent years the United Kingdom supplies industry has obtained over 70 per cent. of orders for North sea related goods and services. This is an impressive achievement and, although the Government cannot, of course, hope to offset all the effects of the oil price fall, we would not wish to see these great achievements dissipated by a reduction in activity over and above what would be a logical market response to price movements. There is a danger of excessive cuts caused by cash flow difficulties.

The supplies industry comprises a variety of different sectors, and not all sectors are affected to the same degree by the oil industry's current financial difficulties. Indeed, a large amount of oil company expenditure is incurred in servicing existing fields, but it is the companies involved in the front-end activities, in the early stages of development, which will bear the brunt of any cut in oil company activity resulting from cash flow shortages.

Against that background, what we felt was needed was a measure which would operate directly on oil company cash flow, but we did not feel that it was necessary, or appropriate, to seek to bolster the cash flow of every oil company, regardless of its own resources. Our aim was to home in on those companies where the reduction in cash flow from their North sea operations could act as a real constraint on the ability to press ahead with development work. We were also very conscious of the timing element. To avoid any interruption to development activity that might be brought about by cash flow difficulties, it seemed essential that any boost to company cash flow had more or less immediate effect. With the APRT measure embodied in the Bill, we believe that we have achieved these objectives. The early repayment of APRT under its provisions will boost, on a targeted basis, oil company cash flow. It will increase by around £300 million or so the amount of cash available for investment in the North sea by oil companies benefiting from the repayments.

APRT would, of course, normally be a Finance Bill matter, but rather than wait until the next Finance Bill we have introduced this Bill at this early stage of the Session. This will enable all repayments due under the terms of the Bill to be actually in the hands of the oil companies early next year. In this way the cash will be available for their 1987 expenditure programmes.

It may be for the convenience of the House if I now explain the nature of these accelerated APRT repayments. APRT was introduced in 1982 as a means of advancing Exchequer tax take from the North sea fields which would otherwise have paid no PRT for several years because of the front-end loading of relief for development expenditure. It is paid by companies in the early part of a field's life and is then offset against PRT liabilities arising in later periods. In other words, it is in essence an advance payment of PRT. Under the provisions of the Finance Act 1983, APRT is, in any event, being phased out. The period

ending 31 December this year is the last for which APRT is payable and that at a much reduced rate of 5 per cent. compared to 20 per cent. originally.

The oil price fall means that there are a number of fields which, although they have already paid APRT, will not now pay PRT until much later than expected, if they pay PRT at all. APRT which cannot be absorbed by PRT liabilities will, under the present law, become repayable. Such repayments could not be made under the existing rules until 1988 at the earliest. In effect, this means that the Government have received a forced loan from companies at the stage when many face cash flow difficulties. That is the raison d'etre of this measure.

The Bill provides for the repayment early next year of APRT credits, up to a ceiling, due to oil companies participating in oilfields which have not yet reached their net profit or payback period. Broadly speaking, that is the period in which cumulative income from the field first exceeds cumulative expenditure. The Bill therefore directs repayments of APRT credits to companies with fields which have yet to generate any net cash flow which could be used to finance any further development.

The Bill is short and its intention straightforward, but it might be helpful if I explain its provisions in a little more detail. The provisions of clause 1 establish the criteria for early repayment to a company. These are twofold. To meet the first criterion, a company must have been a participator in the field in question at the time of the announcement of this measure. The second criterion refers to the payback position of the company in that field. Qualifying companies are those which have not reached payback in the field before 30 June this year.

By concentrating on the concept of the payback or net profit period, the Bill to a large extent builds on the existing PRT legislation. But the payback test was devised as a means of deciding whether or not certain PRT reliefs were due, and, for that purpose, the test is not operated until later in field life, by which time claims and assessments will usually have been finalised. For the purpose of this Bill, waiting until that stage would not be consistent with the basic aim of getting these repayments to the companies as early as possible, so it has been necessary to modify the operation of the payback test to meet the circumstances of fields in the early stages of production.

For that reason, the schedule adapts the existing payback test in two situations. Paragraph 3 covers the situation in which no tax assessments have been made. Fields in that position would fall outside the scope of the existing test, which is based on tax assessments. The Bill caters for that by enabling the test to be applied broadly by reference to assessable profits or allowable losses as shown in the companies' statements of tax payable. As hon. Members may know, companies have to make regular statements of the tax that is payable.

Paragraph 4 makes special provision for other fields which, although they would be adjudged to have reached payback if the existing test were to be applied on the basis of assessments made to date, have outstanding claims for expenditure which was incurred before 30 June 1986. Under the current rules the payback test would in effect be reapplied when that outstanding expenditure had been allowed. For the reasons that I have explained, this approach would not be appropriate for the purpose of this Bill since it would result in some of the repayments being made only after a considerable amount of time had elapsed. Under the provisions of paragraph 4 of the schedule, in determining a company's eligibility for repayment, any such outstanding expenditure is taken into account at the outset.

In order to benefit from the provisions of the Bill, a company is required to make a claim for the repayment of its excess APRT for the chargeable period ending on 31 December this year. To ensure that repayment can be made as early as possible, companies are required to submit their claims on or before 28 February, that is the date by which their other returns and statements for this chargeable period are required. Special provision will be made for the Oil Taxation Office to expedite its consideration of claims. On the acceptance of its claim, a company will be repaid the amount by which its APRT credit for that period exceeds its PRT liability. Repayment is subject to a limit of £15 million per company per field.

This measure will be of proportionately more help to the small and medium-size companies. These companies tend to have fewer sources of finance than the major integrated companies which, although they have suffered a deterioration in the financial position of their upstream production activities, have benefited to some extent from an offsetting increase in their downstream, refining activities. Much of the cash will therefore go where it is likely to be of most help, which is to smaller non-integrated companies, many of which have interests in possible future developments but which have only limited access to finance. This measure will reduce the risk of those developments being delayed by cash constraints.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The right hon. Gentleman said that the chief beneficiaries of the Bill will be the small companies. There are a couple of remarkable exceptions, essentially of British companies, which will not be beneficiaries under the Bill. Can he tell us about the capricious incidence of the proposals that he is bringing to the House?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman knows that it would be quite improper if I went into the tax affairs of individual companies. He will know that Ministers do not deal with the tax affairs of individual companies. However, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the effects of the Bill will be to give most of the help—I did not say all of the help—to medium-sized, independent companies. It is true that some of the— *[Interruption.]* It would be helpful if the hon. Gentleman would let me answer one question at a time. I am grateful to him for enlivening the debate, but I would prefer to deal with one issue at a time. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will have other questions. I did not say that none of the help would go to the major companies. It would be impossible to devise a measure of that kind. I said that most of it would go to the independent medium-sized companies, but not, of course, to all companies in that category. It has been carefully targeted to have an effect that will encourage development.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): When my right hon. Friend said that it would be impossible to devise a scheme to help only the small oil companies and not the big ones, I am sure that he did not mean to imply that he would wish to devise such a scheme. He surely recognises that the small oil companies invest as much as they are able to in order to develop fields, and that the large oil companies invest far more. They have bigger developments, bigger fields and bigger payrolls. Therefore, they need help just

[Dr. Michael Clark]

as much as the small companies, despite the fact that they have downstream assistance from other things that they may do.

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend makes a fair point to redress the intervention from the Opposition. The purpose of our targeting has been to give a measure of relief in a way that we think will encourage development in the near future. That is the purpose of the relief. Incidentally, we think that the main benefit has gone to medium-sized independent companies.

It is not only direct benefit to qualifying oil companies which needs to be considered. To the extent that companies use this extra cash to maintain or enhance their development programmes, benefits will flow through to the supplies industry too. In particular, expenditure on front-end activities on potential future developments will increase the chances of these projects going ahead sooner rather than later. In that way there should be a specific benefit — both in terms of extra orders and timing of such orders—to that sector of the supplies industry that is likely to be most affected by shortages of cash.

The revenue effect of advancing the repayment of APRT as provided in the Bill will be a net reduction of oil tax revenues of up to £310 million in 1986-87. The amounts repaid under the Bill would otherwise have been available to reduce any PRT liabilities arising subsequently on the same field, or become repayable to the company five years after the first payment of APRT in respect of that field was made. So the reduction in oil tax revenues this year will be fully offset by corresponding increases in oil tax revenues over the next three financial years.

The industry has welcomed the Chancellor's announcement of the measure implemented in the Bill. The repayments will, as I have described, alleviate some of the cash difficulties of the oil industry, and will provide additional funds for investment in the North sea over the coming year. With those comments, and that introduction, I commend the Bill to the House.

4.18 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): This short Bill is a specific response to one aspect of a large problem. The problem, as everybody knows, is that the price of North sea oil, indeed the price of oil worldwide, has been slashed by virtually two thirds. I say that it is a large problem, although the Minister and particularly his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer sometimes seem to be in some doubt as to whether it is a problem. I sometimes think that for the Chancellor all economic news, provided that it arises under his jurisdiction, must be good news. We were told that the rise in the oil price was good news and would be good for the economy of this country. When the oil price fell the Chancellor, rather surprisingly, said that that, too, would be good news and that the economy would benefit.

I sometimes think that the Chancellor is in a similar position to that of a weather forecaster who always says that the weather tomorrow will be good on the simple assumption that one of these days his prediction might turn out to be true. However, the very improbability of both of the Chancellor's statements about North sea oil prices being true ought to warn us and put us on our guard about believing anything else that he says.

In truth, it is very hard to understand how a fall of two thirds in the world price of a major national asset can conceivably be anything but bad news for the economy of this country. It may be good news in the short term, in that it will stimulate trade on a world basis, and we can hope to benefit from that stimulus. However, as we are producers as well as consumers, there is an obvious down side to any small benefit, and as our major rivals will obtain virtually all of the benefit with no disadvantage, it is difficult to understand how our competitive and comparative position can conceivably have improved.

Any supposed advantage to our domestic economy through a fall in oil prices—for example, advantages to the cost of living and in economic activity — did not need to wait on the accident over North sea oil prices. They could easily have been achieved if they were desirable — and in many ways they were — by simple tax cuts. They could have been achieved by the kind of tax cuts to which the Chancellor has constantly referred for so many years, yet has never delivered.

The fall in oil prices is bad news for a range of different people. The fact that the Government have introduced this short Bill is evidence that they also recognise that simple truth. It is bad news for the large oil companies, as the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) suggested in his intervention, and no one would dispute that. However, much of the doom and despondency that has been peddled as a consequence of the fall in oil prices in terms of future operations by the major oil companies in the North sea seems to have been slightly misplaced, at least in relation to future production from existing and known capacity.

It is now generally recognised that the break-even point for major companies is as low as $5 per barrel. As long as the price holds at that rate, it makes sense to produce. The tax regime that might or might not apply to those companies is hardly relevant to their considerations and calculations.

Dr. Michael Clark: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there is probably a break-even level of about $5 a barrel and, therefore, the major oil companies will continue to produce even if oil prices fall to that level. However, does the hon. Gentleman agree that, at that level, or just above it, the major oil companies will not be exploring for the next decade's oil or for the heat, power and motive force that will provide for the next generation? I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would agree, and I would like his comments on that.

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman has anticipated a point that I was about to make. However, I agree with and endorse the point that he made. The fall in oil prices is bad news, not just for oil companies, but for the Government.

The Government have worked themselves into the position whereby over the past two financial years they have benefited to the tune of £11 billion and £12 billion from the revenues from the North sea. This year, they will have half, if not less, if prices fall below that estimate. The Government have tended at times to make great play of the fact that they have nevertheless managed to keep the national accounts in order, notwithstanding this sudden reduction in this specific item of revenue.

We might be inclined to say that that is a less worthy and less remarkable achievement when we consider what the Government have done with North sea oil. They have treated it as a capital asset to be realised as quickly as

possible and its profits to be spent as quickly as possible. Given that that is the approach, and as the Government have discovered yet another range of capital assets that they are equally prepared to treat in that cavalier manner — the assets of the taxpayer which have been built up over many years — it is not such a miracle that the Government have hastily pushed into the breach another range of capital assets to be sold off of which British Gas is just the largest and most recent example.

The fall in oil prices bodes very badly indeed. We do not need to wait for the first evidence of that; it is felt in the balance of trade — the balance of trade to which the North sea brought a benefit of some £17 billion or £18 billion a year. That is an enormous benefit that no previous Government had ever been able to enjoy. That benefit, however, will be substantially diminished. I do not suggest that the Government have treated that with equanimity. Their calculations are that the rapid deterioration in our trade balance can be kept out of the spotlight for long enough to slip in a general election before it becomes too obvious. That is the Government's tactic for dealing with that problem.

In relation to the other point made by the hon. Member for Rochford there is no doubt that, with an oil price as low as it is—and we cannot be sure of the direction that it will take; it may remain at this level or go a little lower or higher — future exploration and development would be jeopardised for rational and commercial reasons. We are not surprised, and the Government should not be, that the North sea construction industry is badly damaged by these rather grim prospects for exploration. Howard Doris and Scott Lithgow are examples of that. Those are the problems and obvious difficulties, the short-term problems for economic activity especially in Scotland, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) will address his remarks at the end of the debate.

The measure that the Minister proposes is addressed, as he rightly and frankly said, to the interests of the small companies. He attempted to suggest that, by giving them this little helping hand, that would ease the problems of the immediate prospects for exploration and development. I rather doubt that. The case for doing that has very little to do with stimulating future exploration and development on any scale that will matter and the Minister will probably concede that that is so. The real case for doing that lies on the simple ground of equity. The Minister is simply helping out the small companies that — as he rightly says — were compelled by earlier legislation to make a forced and interest-free loan to the Government who now find themselves, by virtue of changed conditions, in difficulties with their cash flow. They quite rightly believe that they can make a case based on equity that the Government should do something about returning their money rather more quickly than had been originally planned. That is the real case for the Bill.

In principle, the Opposition do not cavil with that case. However, we will want to pay a little more attention to the way in which that is included in a rather complex mechanism embodied in the Bill. We do not disagree with the idea that the help should be targeted. There is a group of small companies that ought to be beneficiaries of this form of help.

However, my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) raised an important point in his intervention in the Minister's speech. The Minister was inclined to say that some of the money might go beyond that group of small British companies that have suffered particularly. However, my hon. Friend asked whether the group that will be affected by the Bill and which is to benefit through the Bill will include all those companies which truly and in fairness should qualify for that help. The Minister did not answer that question.

Some of the problems possibly arise from the operation of the pay-back requirements. I give the Minister notice now — this might be helpful as there is relatively little time before we move from Second Reading to the remaining stages — that the Opposition wish to examine that point. We believe that, by virtue of the pay-back criterion and other measures, the operation of the set of criteria is likely to be arbitrary and capricious. We are not convinced that the companies identified by the mechanism will be those that, on grounds of economic profitability, or lack of profitability, ought to be beneficiaries of the measure.

We shall raise those matters in later stages of the Bill. I revert now to the fundamental contextual point which underlies the Bill — the recognition that the fall in oil prices is bad economic news. It is not surprising that the Chancellor has at times been tempted to argue that, far from creating problems, the lower oil price is a bonus, given the mess that he made with high oil prices. High oil prices were supposed to be the economic salvation of this country. As production reached its peak and the price rose, it was expected to provide substantial revenues to the Government — not to be squandered on unemployment, as they have been, but to make room for tax cuts to stimulate the economy through lower personal taxation. Those revenues have been and have now substantially gone but the tax burden for the ordinary person has risen rather than diminished—so much for North sea oil as a means of implementing tax cuts.

We were then told that North sea oil would be a means to regenerate British industry and the economy not just through the direct economic activity arising from its production but because, as one of the very few energy rich advanced industrial countries, we should not be constrained by the high price of energy and the comparative shortage of energy reserves. North sea oil would also relieve us of the traditional balance of payments constraint which in the past, we believed, had stopped us reaching the levels of growth achieved by our competitors. North sea oil would allow us to make full use of all our domestic resources and balance our trade at the same time. That is what we were told, but we never got anywhere near that.

The Minister may be tempted to point out the marvellous surpluses that we have had in recent years as evidence that North sea oil did the trick, but a moment's reflection will tell him that that is misleading because they were nowhere near full employment economy surpluses. With full employment, the surpluses would never have arisen because North sea oil and all the benefits of the balance of trade would have been fully engaged in paying for the imports that full employment would have sucked in. We still have a balance of payments crisis looming, record borrowings and spendings from reserves, real interest rates at record levels and 4 million unemployed. North sea oil has done nothing to alter those problems.

Why did it all go wrong? The answer is as simple as the question, and it is entirely in line with the Government's other mistakes in economic policy. I believe that the

[Mr. Gould]

Government would now concede that their monetarist policies were all a terrible mistake. Indeed, I believe that the Chancellor may even now be contemplating paying no attention whatever to sterling M3, although it was to have been the great monthly guide to how economic policy should unfold. Just as he made simple, obvious and predictable mistakes in monetary policy, he made a naive and simple mistake as to how North sea oil and its benefits should be used for the economy. Put at its simplest, Ministers yielded to what might be described as a "lump of output" fallacy. They believed that there was a particular national output and that if a new source of wealth such as North sea oil was introduced it would inevitably displace some other element in national production. That was clearly nonsense.

The whole theory and practice with resources such as North sea oil in other countries has been that in most respects they are net additions to the national wealth, not only adding something themselves but enabling the rest of the economy to grow faster by releasing it from constraints. That has been true in Holland and especially in Norway, where manufacturing output has risen sharply and unemployment is below 2 per cent. Those examples immediately give the lie to the proposition apparently accepted by the Government for the past seven years—that high unemployment and dwindling manufacturing capacity were somehow inevitable simply because we had North sea oil.

It is worth considering the mechanism of that error. The Government assumed that a rise in the exchange rate was inevitable as a result of North sea oil and that a rising exchange rate, buoyed up by tight monetary conditions, would be of benefit to us. The consequence of that simple error, which very few people would defend today but which was very much in line with the international monetarist school that dominated the Treasury and much of Whitehall at the time, was that we were encouraged to take the benefit of North sea oil in greater purchasing power for our currency and to use that greater purchasing power to buy more goods — other people's goods, because our own could no longer be sold competitively. In other words, we took the benefit of North sea oil by sucking in vast quantities of imported manufactured consumer goods. We then had to close down our own capacity because we could not compete in the market. As a result of that, and stemming from the original simple mistake, unemployment rose and the cost of unemployment provided a natural but most undesirable home for North sea oil revenues.

That is how the unfortunate circle was squared. That is how North sea oil came to be used to pay for unemployment. Contrary to all that had been predicted, hoped for and expected—the belief that North sea oil would regenerate the economy and provide faster growth with more opportunities and more jobs — the Government, through sheer incompetence and the simplest of all economic mistakes, found that North sea oil generated unemployment and the revenues and benefits gained from it had to be used to pay for that.

Dr. Michael Clark: Having spent many years in manufacturing industry before coming to the House, I agree with much of what the hon. Gentleman says and I am saddened at the decline in our manufacturing base. Does he agree, however, that the oil industry, and especially the technology developed for the North sea, has created a manufacturing sector in its own right which will stand us in very good stead in decades to come?

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman is right in that limited respect. Although the record of British industry is not so good as we might wish in every respect, and in the early days was not nearly so good, it has nevertheless been reasonable and in that very limited sense, for a very limited time which is unfortunately drawing rapidly to a close, the economic activity generated directly by North sea activity was extremely beneficial in a limited and localised way. But that limited benefit was far outweighed by the damage to the rest of the economy. How can it be that, in a world starved of energy resources, the possession of North sea oil in the hands of this benighted Government has turned into a dagger directed against ourselves? It is a remarkable story of incompetence which has yet to be fully told, let alone fully appreciated by the British people. It stands economic logic on its head.

A Labour Government would have used those revenues and resources to re-equip British industry. If that had meant importing, we should have imported not consumer goods to be frittered away but capital equipment to re-equip British industry and components to overcome bottlenecks. We would have ensured that that money strengthened British industry rather than weakening it to the point where we now face the same old problems but with even fewer resources and less strength.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I agreed with the hon. Gentleman's analysis until the last 60 seconds or so, and I support his party's position on this, but does he agree that some of the endemic problems now coming through in the oil industry and oil-related industry were due to the mistakes of the Labour Government in the 1960s? In the early days, when crucial decisions had to be taken, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and others made wrong decisions in terms of the way in which contracts were awarded and in the handling of long-term issues affecting the strategic interests of the oil industry and British industry generally. The hon. Gentleman should not make out that all the problems stem from 1979 onwards because many of them go across party political boundaries.

Mr. Gould: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks when he indicated some support for my analysis. But if he accepts my analysis, it surely follows that there is everything to be said for the measures adopted by the Labour Government to bring on North sea production quickly, to make sure there was proper accountability for the public interest and to ensure that the public interest was properly rewarded for its investment. All that is unexceptionable. The mistakes were made not through producing the resources but through what was done with them. As those resources arrived only in 1979 and then proceeded to grow rapidly—it was one of those strokes of good fortune that benefited the Government by virtue of the decisions made earlier by a Labour Government—their disposition had to be the responsibility of the Conservative party as the Government of the day. That was where the mistakes were made.

Although the Bill is worthy of support in itself, it is a sad little measure because unlike no other measure so far

it marks a recognition, even on the part of the Government, that while North sea oil will remain an important economic factor for a long time to come—we are not entitled to be pessimistic about the oil simply disappearing—it is nevertheless now clear that, at any rate for the foreseeable future, production has peaked and we are unlikely to go back to the era of very high oil prices. As a consequence, the huge opportunity that North sea oil presented to us to break out of our economic problems has now gone. It has been lost and wasted. The Bill shows that the Government recognise that.

We are now back to the old and familiar grinding problems—this time without the wonderful prospect of North sea oil on the horizon to come to our rescue. The Government have simply wasted that opportunity through incompetence, and one of the many charges that will be brought against them—on which they will be arraigned before the electorate — will be the charge of incompetence in the handling of a precious national asset.

4.42 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Bill. As the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said, it is quite short, and even though he called it a sad little measure, as if it was a new wine just brought over from France, it is a Bill that we should welcome. Bad Bills may be long or short, but I am certain that, almost by definition, the best Bills are short, on the basis—to paraphrase one of our previous leaders from a long time back—that, "Sorry we have prepared you a long Bill; we did not have time to prepare you a short one."

The one thing about which I am certain is that bad Bills fill this House as hon. Members try to correct and improve them. The fact that there are so few hon. Members present for this Bill indicates that it is very good. It must be, as hon. Members are content to allow the few of us here to speak and to get the measure through as they approve it by their absence.

The advance petroleum revenue tax is inevitably involved with cash flow. It was introduced to get the maximum amount of cash out of the oil companies early on in the development of the North sea fields. Not only is APRT adverse cash flow for the oil companies, but it is preferential cash flow for the Government, who receive the money at an early stage of oilfield development.

It is strange that APRT should ever have been introduced in the way that it was, because when a major or minor oil company wants to develop a field, that is the time at which it needs a good cash flow to be able to pay for the investment. Unfortunately with APRT, the cash flow was squeezed out of those companies just at the very time when they wanted it.

By the same token, the Government will want maximum cash flow at a time when the oilfields are beginning to dry up, but APRT has meant that the Government have received their cash flow at the beginning of the development rather than at the end. I can therefore well understand why APRT has not received much acclaim from the oil companies, and I can also understand why the Government have realised that at the end of the development they may be starved of cash themselves.

APRT is based on gross revenue which is estimated at the production stage when a field is only in the minds of the geologists and explorers and when the oil is still under the sea or underground. The basis of APRT has therefore been speculative. The Government have set a level of taxation to be paid and at the same time have said to the oil companies, "Once you have paid this you may in due course offset it against the petroleum revenue tax." That means that, although it skews the cash flow of the oil companies, it is still a fair tax in the sense that it can be offset at a later date against taxes which the oil companies would have had to pay in any event.

Advance PRT is coming to an end. We are now in the last quarter of its operation. It is therefore a dying tax, and it is wholly appropriate that we should curtail it now and bring it to a sudden death rather than allow it to dwindle on for another two years as it would otherwise have done. It would have dwindled on, not in the sense that the tax remained, because it will finish at the end of this year, but in the sense that those who had paid more than they should have paid would not have received their repayment of APRT until 1988. Although the companies would have received it in due course, the longer it took, the more their cash flow would be strangled, and, particularly at a time of low oil prices, the more difficult it would be for them to invest in further fields and to keep their business running in the way that we would all wish. The oil companies have overpaid this tax over a period of years, and at a time of difficult trading for oil companies the Government are wisely and compassionately saying, "We will now pay back the tax that you have overpaid at a time when cash flow is difficult for you."

I am sure the House realises that this debate and the Bill are primarily about cash flow. In the first instance, the tax was introduced to improve the Government's cash flow at the expense of the cash flow of the oil companies. Now, in their wisdom, the Government are allowing the boot to be put on the other foot and are allowing the cash to flow back in the other direction to assist the oil companies.

I congratulate the Government and my right hon. Friend on bringing the Bill forward. It must be a difficult measure to introduce at a time when oil prices are falling and when the Government's revenue from North sea oil is less than we would like and less than the Government and my right hon. Friend would wish. The revenue from North sea oil will be down by £1 billion this year compared with the estimate made at the time of the Budget.

At a time when revenue from North sea oil is down by £1 billion, to be able to concede the more prompt payment of the APRT is a bold, generous measure on the part of the Government. It is, of course, helped by the fact that revenue from non-oil sources is up by £2 billion. Thus, the Government have balanced their books well and are able to be flexible and responsive to circumstances as they develop. There is every indication that, despite the lower revenue from North sea oil, there will be an expected surplus for this year of around £500 million. Of course, that is not money that can be given away, because expenditure is running at £500 million over and above the figure planned at the time of the Budget.

Government expenditure is increasing because my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made it clear that, because non-oil revenue is up by £2 billion, there are now funds available for roads, education and the health services. That is to be welcomed.

Without a strong and good economy—the economy that we have at the present time—it would have been impossible for my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to introduce this measure this afternoon.

[Dr. Michael Clark]

Therefore, on behalf of the oil companies, which, I am sure, are taking a great interest in the Bill, I am grateful for the measures that have been taken.

The Bill is prudent and wise and will have a good, positive effect on the oil industry. It will enable the oil companies to have more money available for investment. The Bill will prevent the smaller, speciality companies in Scotland and the north-east — which built up their businesses and provided employment on the basis of the North sea oilfields, their exploration and from which the companies have derived revenue—from being obliged to go to the wall. Many such companies are already in difficulties, and it would be difficult to start many of them again at a later date.

This measure will cost around £300 million in this financial year. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on introducing the Bill, which will help the cash flow of the companies. Indeed, it will help to provide employment opportunities in the hardest hit areas.

4.52 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I support the measure, which is much needed and long overdue. Perhaps the Minister will recall that during the passage of the Finance Bill earlier this year I moved a specific amendment which, although not identical to the legislation introduced by the Government today, was none the less aimed in the same direction. The amendment sought to use the tax system and fiscal stimuli to encourage oil development and ameliorate some of the profound problems that we are now witnessing in the North sea oil industry and, indeed, onshore with the oil-related industries.

Although I welcome the Bill, I am concerned that perhaps it is too little too late. That sentiment may well be echoed by other Scottish Members — although I note that those Scottish Members who sing long and loud about the effects of North sea oil economics on the Scottish economy are not here this evening.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Who are those Members? Is it the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson)?

Mr. Kennedy: I refer to the hon. Members representing the Scottish Nationalist party. It is a significant omission that they are not with us tonight, but not one that I wish to dwell upon.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): They are campaigning on behalf of Scottish oil.

Mr. Kennedy: Well, I take my support from wherever I can get it.

I welcome the Government's move to repay APRT in 1987, which I believe will total some £310 million. However, my welcome is somewhat grudging because it is only a first and small step towards providing the necessary conditions for encouraging oil development work.

There is no doubt that the outlook for the oil industry in Scotland is extremely gloomy. A year ago it directly employed about 90,000 people, but that figure has already fallen by about 7,000. Among many others, the Royal Bank of Scotland has recently estimated that another 11,000 jobs could go in the next three years. Indeed, that appears to be a somewhat optimistic analysis when compared with the analysis by the Fraser of Allander Institute or, indeed, the projections of the Scottish Development Agency.

My constituency has borne painful witness to some of the massive economic problems that have been associated with the downturn of oil-related activities. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) mentioned Howard Doris, which has gone into receivership. Equally, other oil yards in the Highlands—I do not wish to dwell on this tonight, as I had the opportunity of initiating an Adjournment debate on the issue last week—are facing the prospect of rather lean order books in the months and years ahead.

The great problem in this part of Scotland is, perhaps, slightly different from that experienced by those who witnessed the recent catastrophic changes at Scott Lithgow. Those changes are devastating for the local community, for which I have much sympathy. The problem for the Highlands is that in the 1960s, under Labour and Conservative Governments, there was a prolonged effort to encourage people to move out of the central belt to repopulate the Highlands. One way of achieving that was to site major industries in the Highlands—for example, a pulp and paper mill at Fort William and an aluminium smelter at Invergordon along with all the attendant spin-offs from the oil-related industries.

What happens when things go wrong? What happens when the pulp mill closes, the smelter closes and the oil industry begins to go into a tail spin? The people of communities utterly dependent upon a certain industrial concern and its wellbeing for their wellbeing find themselves, in the words of the Prime Minister, with "no alternative". It is no good saying, "Get on your bike and go somewhere else," because there is no opportunity, least of all in the Scottish economy, to transport skills that have been built up in the Highlands and in my constituency. There is no genuine opportunity to take those skills elsewhere and try to make a go of it.

Dr. Godman *rose*——

Mr. Kennedy: I shall give way in a moment.

The appalling social implication of industries closing and recession within the oil industry is mass unemployment. I do not use that term lightly, as the unemployment level is 40 per cent. in the major towns of Invergordon and Alness. The subsequent misery and lack of opportunity for young people in that part of the country do not encourage them to feel that they can have a job and a career or to market their skills. The result is the age-old problem of exodus and depopulation that has blighted the Highlands for so long. It is sad that in the frontiers of new technology, which the oil industry should have represented, that effect is now coming through.

Dr. Godman: I am deeply grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his sincere expression of sympathy with the people of Greenock and Port Glasgow at that terrible decision. May I point out that unemployment on the lower Clyde is just as miserable an experience as it is in Ullapool? Besides the commonality of that miserable experience, does the hon. Gentleman agree that the communities are joined in the traditional Scottish response to unemployment, which is migration?

Mr. Kennedy: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and I agree with his sentiment. Although in some ways the

social impact may be different because the two communities are different, the human effect is identical, appalling and unacceptable. I also agree that the historic consequence of pursuing the type of economic policy that the Government are pursuing is migration from Scotland. That is perhaps the saddest reflection of all.

As has been said, in welcoming the Bill we are welcoming the Government's somewhat grudging and overdue acceptance that we have got it wrong in the oil industry. Our international competitors, who must see what we have done with this one-off gift of oil reserves, must shake their heads in disbelief. As I said earlier, the Howard Doris yard at Kishorn has gone into liquidation. That is having appalling implications for unemployment and the fairly fragile economy of the Highlands.

The road infrastructure to that yard is an international joke and everything that should have been contributed to such a major industrial concern has not been contributed. The company is at the forefront of construction and engineering in the oil industry, but it has had the most massive disincentive to be competitive and to win orders and contracts. That is because it has been placed in an isolated community and has received no real Government support over the years. I am not speaking about any Government in particular. The whole institution of government has not recognised how crucial is that facility and its infrastructure. It is sad that the Government must introduce this measure largely as a result of matters outwith their control—the policies of OPEC. In some ways that is a recognition of failure and is depressing.

Although the Bill is welcome, I have mixed feelings about it. Throughout the year my colleagues and I have advocated a package of tax reforms along the lines of those which have already been submitted to the Government by various oil companies. Such a package included the immediate repayment of all APRT. It is worth putting on record that the Bill will provide for repayment, but £500 million will remain in Treasury coffers and will not be accounted for. I agree with the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) that the package has to do with cash flow and that £500 million will have a major impact on the cash flows of a considerable number of companies.

On top of that there should be a relaxation of the PRT ring fence principle, more support through the tax system for incremental investment in existing fields, permission to offset onshore exploration and appraisal expenditures against tax liabilities elsewhere, and improved depreciation terms. Moreover, there is a possibility of establishing a modified enterprise zone status for the North sea. All those matters should be considered, and I hope that in his March Budget the Chancellor of the Exchequer will introduce developments along those lines.

The aim of the package before us tonight should be, not to line the pockets of oil companies, but, in a self-interested national context, to encourage spending on exploration and development. At current oil prices such work simply does not represent a reasonable return on investment, so this type of stimulus is sensible.

I do not want to be a Jonah, but the introduction of the measure means that the country—not any particular Government—has mishandled the opportunity presented to it by North sea oil. I agree with the analysis of the hon. Member for Dagenham that so much of this unforeseen bonanza for Britain has been frittered away on non-productive returns, such as paying people to do nothing, when a little more long-term enlightened investment could have helped to cushion the economy, which is weak enough, against the downturn that we are experiencing.

In his March Budget the Chancellor of the Exchequer pledged that the Government would

"introduce at the earliest opportunity any changes which may prove necessary to ensure that worthwhile projects are not frustrated by the fiscal regime." — [*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c.174.]

He was correct to say that, but complacent in the time that he took.

This is a welcome measure and should command all-party support and support throughout the country. It will certainly be a ray of hope to the Scottish economy, which is suffering so badly, but it should have come much earlier. The Chancellor recognised the need for it in March and I am amazed that he took so long to act on his good rhetoric.

I am reminded of the illustration that my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) gave when, in his Budget speech, the Chancellor sanguinely predicted a collapse in oil prices and the losses to the revenue associated with it, saying that if we could manage our affairs during such an unexpected catastrophic fall in 12 weeks, surely we could be relaxed over the fact that the oil would run out over 12 years. My right hon. Friend said that that was like a man who throws himself off the top of a skyscraper and halfway down, passing floor 12, says, "So far so good. No damage done." We are beginning to reach the end of that tumbling fall and we shall see great problems in many communities, especially in Scotland, as a result of the mismanagement of our most precious international asset.

I welcome the Bill, which is a sensible step. More needs to be done, and much of this should have been done a long time ago.

5.8 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) gave a grudging welcome to the Bill, and I agree that it does not go far enough to address the problems being experienced in the oil supplies industry. I cannot agree with the Minister when he talks about generous concessions constituting a powerful incentive. I should like to see the effects of that powerful incentive, especially on the fabrication yards and on the one remaining semi-submersible rig yard, that of Scott Lithgow.

I do not oppose the Bill. It is a useful measure, especially for small firms which have suffered from cash flow problems. My major concern is about the effects that it will have, if any, on the job prospects in the offshore fabrication yards in Scotland. Unless there is a dramatic increase in activity in the offshore oil and gas fields, the massive erosion of jobs in Scottish industry will continue. We shall not see any new jobs in the offshore oilfields, except in demolition work, as is clear from the terms of the Petroleum Bill which had its Second Reading a week ago and which refers to the dismantling of oil and gas structures.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye rightly said that job losses in the industry were of the utmost importance to Scotland, given the continuing decline of much of our manufacturing industry. The Bill will not generate orders and jobs for the fabrication yards, and that is regrettable.

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

What is needed — I share some of the objectives outlined by the hon. Gen'eman—is a judicious blend of changes in tax measures which could restore confidence, and which might even persuade companies to explore the deeper waters to the west of Scotland. Such measures might include a much more generous offsetting of the expenditure on new fields against the income from producing fields. By "new fields" I mean absolutely new fields where exploration has not yet started; for example, in the deeper waters well off the west coast of Scotland. I am not convinced that a sufficiently powerful incentive exists at present, or that the power of such incentives as exist will be enhanced by the rather short Bill before us.

In its quarterly report published on 29 May 1986 the Fraser of Allander Institute reported on its survey of the attitudes of companies employed in the industry. Regrettably, there was growing pessimism everywhere. It reported a decline in the total volume of output, and also in the number of orders and contracts. The consequences of those facts are with us now. The hon. Gentleman mentioned that the Howard Doris company is in receivership. McDermotts of Arderseir is in a terrible shape. The company now has only a few hundred employees, yet four years ago it employed between 3,000 and 4,000 people. Highland Fabricators, which recently won an order for the Ida field, is now down to 1,000 employees, from 5,000 employees three and a half years ago. The yard at Methil is halfway through an order for Shell, but that yard — like the others that I have mentioned—faces a deeply worrying future.

Last week, Scott Lithgow of Port Glasgow announced that it is to dismiss about 1,500 employees. The future is bleak and intensely dismal for those who are to lose their jobs, given that the male unemployment rate in Greenock and Port Glasgow is about 26 per cent. Those redundancies — together with job losses in ancillary industries—will take that rate to well over 30 per cent. Apart from the inner areas of London, no constituency in southern England suffers such a grievous burden. As I have said, many people employed in both large and small companies will be affected by those dismissals.

Last Thursday *The Scotsman* reported that Scott Lithgow's

"main product, floating exploration and production platforms for the perimeter of the Atlantic continental shelf, is now unlikely to be needed in any number before the next century."

That shows the dismal future of the one remaining United Kingdom yard that is capable of producing those technologically advanced vessels and structures. The correspondent in *The Scotsman* said that it is unlikely that there will be any more orders until the next century. As he said,

"That's a very long time for the remaining 700 core workers to maintain a presence on the Lower Clyde."

It is extremely unlikely that those who have lost their jobs in the recent past, or who will lose their jobs in the near future, will find work in the service industries. They will not all open tea shops or become potters down on the lower Clyde. It is essential that Scotland maintains its manufacturing base. Some of those dismissed may, of course, be encouraged to migrate to the south-east of England, but for the overwhelming majority that simply is not the sort of option that they can consider. As I said in an intervention earlier today, migration has been the traditional response to unemployment in Scotland. Today, that is quite unacceptable.

In its own little way, the Bill is a worthy piece of legislation, but it will not help those people at all. It will do nothing for my constituents, many of whom are highly skilled. Many are welders who have been trained to meet the exacting standards required, for example, by Norske Veritas, and for offshore oil and gas construction work.

Scott Lithgow is the one remaining company in the United Kingdom with the capability to build dynamically positioned semi-submersible exploration and development rigs. In terms of winning orders from offshore oil and gas industries elsewhere in the world, it is essential that that capability is retained, especially in the light of the demise of other first-class fabrication yards in Scotland.

Despite the Minister's words, the present tax concessions and this legislation are not a powerful incentive to exploration activity for oil companies. It is essential that that comparatively new element of Scottish manufacturing industry is encouraged to grow and is not allowed to decline. Its decline must be halted.

At present, the only new jobs likely to emerge in the offshore oil and gas industries will, as I have said, be in demolition. Some observers, including the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), have suggested that up to 100,000 new jobs may be created in that sort of highly technical and highly skilled demolition work. However, we want more than demolition jobs in Scotland. Even if those skills are employed elsewhere in offshore industries——

Mr. Kennedy: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Does he agree that one of the most pointed remarks consistently made about the Government's attitude to the industry, and their behaviour in eventually bringing forward legislation, is that for too long they have hidden behind the false argument that there was no substantial evidence of worthwhile North sea oil projects being frustrated by the existing fiscal regime? Those hon. Members who, like myself, support the measure but feel that more should have been done do not contest that, but say that that is not the root of the difficulty. Nonetheless, further steps should have been taken a long time ago through the fiscal system to encourage more North sea oil exploration and development work.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. The history of this new industry is characterised by the complacency of Ministers. It has also been damaged by the Government's failure to determine a sensible and systematic depletion policy. That has been generated by that complacency, so I agree with much of what the hon. Gentleman said.

Much more needs to be done for those constituencies, whether in the Highlands or on the lower Clyde, which have been severely harmed by the decline in the number of orders coming from the offshore industry. Much more needs to be done for my constituency by the Scottish Office. That assistance must come by way of the Scottish Development Agency and the Inverclyde initiative, which has been financed by a pittance of £6 million, given the magnitude of the economic and social problems that we are experiencing on the lower Clyde. The Scottish Office's appalling blend of indifference and optimism is harming my constituents, particularly the young.

The aim of the Bill should have been to encourage much more activity in exploration, particularly in the deeper

waters, but that, as I have said, will not be brought about. There is not a powerful incentive for the oil companies to go into deeper waters, so the Bill will not address the problems faced by the supplies industry and all those who remain employed in it. Much more needs to be done. We require more radical fiscal measures and their aim must be to generate activity in exploration as well as in demolition.

5.22 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): We shall not oppose the Bill, but we shall seek to draw the Minster's attention, tonight and on Report, to some of the fears and concerns of those who are employed in the industry and who, perhaps, have as large an axe to grind as the United Kingdom Off-Shore Operators Association.

The Bill saw its birth in the five demands sent by UKOOA to the Chancellor. It demanded the immediate repayment of advanced petroleum revenue tax; the removal of royalties; the extension of petroleum revenue tax treatment of exploration and appraisal costs to design and engineering expenditures; a modified enterprise zone status or the relaxation of the petroleum revenue tax ring fence for a defined proportion of new development expenditure; and support for incremental investment in existing fields.

That pressure made its way into the rig builders' yards and resulted in many hon. Members on both sides of the House who happen to have a rig building yard in their constituency receiving correspondence from the United Kingdom Module Constructors Association. It in turn put pressure on its employees, whether presently employed, laid off or likely to be laid off because of the failure of offshore oil companies to order rigs.

Therefore, we have all been expecting the Government to say something, but the Bill gives us the opportunity to raise some of the concerns of people who have worked in the North sea and who are affected by the activities of the offshore oil companies. If the demands of those companies are met by a Bill, it is only right that the demands of trade union members and workers employed offshore and onshore should also be heard. I hope that we may put those on the record so that the Minister can respond.

As a direct response to such pressure and the concerns shared by the National Union of Seamen, the trade unions involved in rig building and construction and ship yards, and those employees that have been made redundant, there was a meeting in Aberdeen on 20 October 1986 which I had the opportunity to attend with other colleagues to discuss the anxieties of those working in the industry. We brought forward some demands ourselves which are just as relevant.

If the companies are to have the advantage of the return of advanced petroleum revenue tax, it is only right that the Government should start asking some fairly searching questions of those companies to ensure that Britain and its workers receive the benefit of that.

At the moment 40 per cent. of rigs in the North sea are laid off and with a 30 per cent. reduction in the number of oil and gas fields likely to be developed between 1987 and 1996 there will be even more cuts in drilling activity. To make matters worse, the United Kingdom operators, vessels, rigs and offshore workers do not have a fair share of charters and contracts. Nearly 30 per cent. of the 98 supply vessels active in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea operate under foreign flags, with Norway having the biggest share. Yet in the Norwegian sector 99 per cent. of vessels are Norwegian operated and crewed. Over 70 per cent. of the 29 drilling rigs active in the United Kingdom sector are foreign registered, but only 25 per cent. in the Norwegian sector are foreign registered. Everyone in the industry recognises that there is a desperate need for the Government's direct intervention to reserve all contracts in the United Kingdom sector for United Kingdom vessels and rigs.

It is the Minister's responsibility to tell us tonight the Government's policy towards activity in the North sea at the moment. The Government's failure to ensure a fair deal for United Kingdom supply vessels and drilling rigs is only part of their lack of a coherent policy to develop our offshore oil and gas fields. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said earlier, the Government require the high level of oil and gas production to help to pay for the massive unemployment. If oil revenues fall without any real determination by the Government to reduce unemployment, it will be even more important that whatever work there is in the North sea is retained for the workers in British yards and for the employment of British people in the North sea.

Dr. Godman: One of the added problems for those who are made redundant in the fabrication and rig yards is that welders, who possess a skill that is of immense value in the industry, have to be tested every six months. That is fairly easy to do while they are working, but when they are unemployed it is enormously difficult for them to reach the efficiency levels that are required for such tests.

Mr. Ross: My hon. Friend is right. In "Panorama" on Monday 17 November academics and people with financial interests made the same point. Professor Alexander Kemp said:

> "The worry I think is that the longer the recession goes on that we're going to lose a lot of the expertise that has built up in the off-shore supplies industry and in the construction yards, and the fields which are being developed may have some difficulties in executing their projects because, you know, some companies are going bankrupt already."

That real fear is shared by a host of people who are concerned about groups of skilled workers being broken up and attracted to contracts in the middle east and elsewhere. If we start exploring in the North sea and building in British yards again, we shall not have the expertise to take advantage of such expansion.

The Government must tell us during this short debate what they will demand of the oil companies for the return of the tax and also to show us that they have a policy for the depletion of North sea oil and gas and to conserve the resources that are there.

The United Kingdom offshore industry must face the full logic of Thatcher market forces. Exploration activity dropped by one third between April and June 1986, and 40 per cent. of supply vessels and drilling rigs are idle. More than 700 redundancies have been declared among the National Union of Seamen's offshore workers. Offshore supply boat crews had to take substantial reductions in terms and conditions of employment, including a one-year pay freeze. Therefore, they have the right to demand to be mentioned in the debate. As I said earlier, and will continue to repeat, they have a right to demand that the Minister says what benefits will accrue to the workers in the yards and the workers offshore and onshore when the petroleum revenue tax is handed back.

It is clear that oil companies want a period of stable prices. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure

[Mr. Ross]

stability in the oil price market so that the oil companies will resume exploration. Although consumers may have benefited slightly from the sharp price drop, the nation will definitely pay dearly in the long run with an increase in unemployment and a period of reduced self-sufficiency in oil.

Unless the Government intervene, 10,000 jobs will probably go out of the industry in 1986-87 alone. The Government must say what they intend to do about our failure to fly the flag in the North sea. The rapid fall in exploration and development has given even greater urgency to the need for the United Kingdom sector to be reserved for vessels and rigs registered and crewed in the United Kingdom. For several years, the National Union of Seamen, among others, has urged the Government to intervene and to take positive steps to assist United Kingdom operators. The Government have simply castigated operators for being "uncompetitive". They should compare them with operators in other countries which give favourable credit terms and tax incentives to keep down costs. Other countries have applied pressure on their oil companies to use national flag vessels. In contrast, the free trade policy of the United Kingdom merely offers opportunities to countries which bar United Kingdom operators from their areas.

During the past 10 years, vessels and rigs from countries which reserve trade for their own flag, such as the United States, West Germany, France and Panama, have operated freely in the United Kindom sector. The result is that the United Kingdom offshore sector is the most open market in Europe, and probably the world. The Government must give some direction and impose some controls if they are to protect seafarers' and rigworkers' jobs. We do not just want to see benefits for the workers who are working offshore and on the rigs. Benefits could also come to our shipyards if there was planned development and control of our production of oil and gas. Our shipyards could, and need to, benefit from any exploration and development in that area. As my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) said, shipyards face a desperate crisis. Since 1979, 32,000 jobs have been lost and a further 3,000 will go by the end of 1986, leaving a rump of about 5,000 jobs.

The Module Constructors Association, which supported offshore oil companies' demands for a return of advanced petroleum revenue tax, estimates that 33,000 people could be employed building rigs and other modules for offshore work if the right conditions prevailed. Yet the lack of Government intervention which the association highlighted has meant that, during 1986, construction yards closed and will continue to close. Requiring supply vessels and rigs to be built in United Kingdom shipyards would provide much-needed work, prevent further closures and redundancies and establish a basis for the long-term survival of the British shipbuilding industry. The survival of the British shipbuilding industry would ensure the survival of the steel industry, the marine engineering components industry and the complex electronic products industry, all of which are required on rigs and offshore platforms. That beneficial knock-on effect would go right through the economy and help every part of the country. The argument is not concerned only with Scotland. The effects of an order for a rig or a platform are felt throughout the United Kingdom.

The involvement of foreign nationals in our offshore oil and gas fields must be controlled. Controls are necessary if some of the worst anti-trade union activities are to be eliminated and the full range of expertise in offshore technology is to be maintained in the United Kingdom. If the advance petroleum revenue tax is returned to those companies, the Minister must be responsible—to those employed in the industry and those who will be employed in it—for ensuring that the anti-democratic, anti-trade union policies which are operated on some of the rigs and by some of the offshore oil companies are stopped and that normal trade union rights and conditions are enjoyed by workers in the North sea oil and gas fields.

During the meeting in Aberdeen, we accepted and supported the need for the offshore oil contractors to be given some assistance by the Government, but we also made some demands. I shall leave those with the Minister to see whether he can confirm that while he is fighting for the big boys in the industry, the offshore oil operators' conglomerates, he is also looking after the workers—the people who build the rigs, the people who are employed on them and the people who give us the oil from the North sea. We want co-operation at international level to achieve stable oil prices. We want a plan for exploration and development to ensure long-term self-sufficiency in oil and reduced imports of gas. We want to reserve the United Kingdom sector for supply vessels and rigs registered and crewed in the United Kingdom. Future supply vessels and rigs operating in the United Kingdom sector should be built in United Kingdom shipyards, thereby providing employment. We want to develop expertise and ensure high standards of employment by requiring work permits for non-European Community nationals.

If the Minister answers those questions, the Bill will be welcomed in those areas of the country where the debate is being observed.

5.37 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I should declare an interest. Since long before I came to the House I have had a connection with Chevron Petroleum. I was interested to learn about the provisions of the Bill because the company welcomes it enormously. The company has made what the Minister described as a "forced loan" to the Government on the Hutton field and looks forward with pleasure to getting that loan back since the change in the oil price means that it is unlikely to pay petroleum revenue tax on that field or, if it does, the payment will be postponed for a considerable time. The return of that forced loan will be very welcome.

It is fair to say that the hope that development work will be saved by the Bill is well worth expressing. Undoubtedly, that will be the case. There is no doubt that Chevron Petroleum is busily engaged in enhancing its development work in the Ninian field. The repayment of the advance petroleum revenue tax will undoubtedly assist in that. It may even assist the company to bring forward new projects, although I doubt whether that will happen immediately.

It is important to consider the oil price as something which is not just a temporary aberration. It may prove to be much closer to the realistic long-term price of oil than the very high rates that have been in place since the first OPEC hike. Recently, some Members in the House and in another place attended a presentation on oil prices. The

message seemed to be fairly clear that the oil price is much closer now to what has been the norm than what we have experienced during the past 10 years.

If that is the case, everyone will have to adjust to it. I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) imply that the Government should create conditions in which the international price of oil should not be wholly effective in Britain. We must remember that there is a glut of oil on the international market, that there is likely to be a glut for some considerable time and that, in those conditions, no Government—certainly not the Government of a country the size of Britain—could conceivably stand against the international tide.

In those circumstances, it was interesting to hear the hon. Gentleman say that one group of workers had accepted a pay freeze. Everyone must consider how he adjusts his behaviour towards this long-term problem. There is little doubt that, historically, adjusting one's expectations downwards is harder in unionised activities than it is in non-unionised activities. I welcome the assurance of the hon. Member for Dundee, West that the trade unions will engage in negotiations on the matter, but I am not altogether surprised that some oil companies have done their best to keep trade union activity to a minimum. Only in that way can they remain competitive.

Competition is the key in this area. Every company in Britain which is not British-based, and even many British national companies, are weighing up whether they can get a better deal in the North sea than they can elsewhere. The companies consider many factors, not least political stability, which Britain can offer. Let us hope that it long remains so. The competition for money is international and when even the largest of oil companies is considering whether to develop further in the North sea or to take its money somewhere else, such as Indonesia, the United Kingdom must compete.

That is why taxation is enormously important. One need only consider, at the downstream end, the price of a gallon or a litre of petrol to see the enormous proportion that is represented by tax. The position is similar at all stages in the exploration, development, production and sale of oil products. The Government must be extremely careful in handling the oil companies, which, it is clear, greatly welcome the Bill, and nothing that I say should demean that welcome. But tomorrow will be the first sitting of a Standing Committee to examine the Petroleum Bill. There is great anxiety among many oil companies that the Bill, as drafted, will cast a shadow over the balance sheets even of the largest companies. If the Government can pursue each company to recover the cost of demolishing or removing the structures in a field that has come to the end of its useful life, it will become a contingent liability on the balance sheet, which will cause several companies to look at it askance.

Dr. Godman: Given the hon. Gentleman's expertise in this area, can he tell me the position of American companies on the abandonment of rigs and structures? I am given to understand that the Department of the Interior insists that the seabed be restored to its original condition.

Mr. Rowe: I have no experience in the United States. Chevron Petroleum is anxious for the establishment of a sinking fund to pay for the costs of demolition or removal of structures in the North sea. It believes that it would be entirely appropriate — my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary may wish to say something about this when he replies — for the Government to grant a tax concession or deferment on money put into such a fund. Indeed, Chevron suggests that the fund should be constructed by the purchase of Government bonds and that it should be built up with no liability to tax. If the fund grows too large for the demolition or removal of the structures in any field, tax should be paid on the balance.

The result would be that the Government would have the money in their hands from day one and could then defer tax until they knew the price of removal. The advantage is that it would then be possible for the operator to ensure that the money was paid into the sinking fund while the oil was flowing. That would give the company the right to insist on the fund being built up, even by the smallest participants. If not, they would not receive their share of oil royalties. That would be a vastly more satisfactory solution than the one provided in the Petroleum Bill. I was relieved to hear that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Energy is willing to consider alternative proposals, but it is the 11th hour. I hope that the oil companies, the Department of Energy and the Treasury can get together to achieve a more satisfactory solution.

To return to my basic point, in an internationally competitive market, anything that casts a major shadow over the balance sheets of companies, large or small, is undoubtedly a disincentive to undertake further development work.

I pay great tribute to my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary and the Treasury team for their efforts to resolve several difficult tax problems, not least the Californian tax problem, which is only half resolved. I say good luck to them and I hope that the matter can be resolved sensibly. I am nothing like as gloomy about the long-term prospects for North sea oil as are many right hon. and hon. Members. I believe that much more oil remains to be discovered. The trick is to provide a tax regime that encourages companies to look for it. In its modest way, the Bill plays a useful part in that.

5.49 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) said that the trick is to get the tax regime right to encourage exploration and to find out whether his hunch about North sea oil reserves is justified. The Opposition are gently cynical about whether that trick has been performed on this occasion. However, that will not surprise the Financial Secretary to the Treasury.

It has been a very quiet, introspective and almost retrospective debate. There has been much contemplation and analysis of past mistakes and of the lost opportunities that litter the last decade's North sea oil policy. However, that should not hide from the House or from any other interested party the seriousness with which the Opposition view the crisis and the serious impact of the present decline in oil prices on the economy of the United Kingdom as a whole and upon Scotland in particular. I cannot endorse what I hope was the deliberately naive assumption of the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) that the apathy towards this debate, shown by the attendance of hon. Members, even on the Government Benches, is a vote of confidence in the adequacy of the Government's reaction to the crisis, as embodied in the Bill.

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

It is a modest Bill. The revenue forgone, amounting to £310 million, is substantial by my standards, but compared with the reduced take from oil companies and petroleum revenue tax, it is a comparatively small sum. I do not agree with the hon. Member for Rochford who described the Bill as a bold and generous measure. If that is the limit of his ambition, it suggests that he moves cautiously in a closed and restricted world.

The Opposition do not object to the measure. We give it a somewhat limited welcome. However, our worry is that it will not deal with the crisis and that it will not coax the oil companies to increase production. Production will continue; the investment has been made and one needs only a very low price for oil to justify continuation of a production run. However, I doubt whether the Bill will encourage any form of exploration, or the introduction of new projects.

I do not pretend to have the personal experience of the hon. Member for Mid-Kent. He struck an optimistic note towards the end of his speech. However, when he referred to the company with which he was connected, Chevron, he said that, although it welcomed the concession and thought that it would benefit to some extent from the repayment of advance petroleum revenue tax, it was not sure that this would lead to new projects in the immediate future. That is the test that many people will want to apply to this measure. I fear that the hon. Gentleman's cautious approach, although his general attitude towards the Government's efforts was fairly loyal, may, sadly, be justified.

I am conscious that I am not one of my party's specialists in this area. I do not lay the entire blame or a significant amount of the blame for the drop in the price of oil at the Government's door. It may have been sensible to discuss more positive international measures to try to control the price of oil, but this disaster would have befallen any Government. The question is what should be done about it, how the Government should react and with what sense of urgency. It can be argued that a fall in the price of oil stimulates world trade. If there is to be an expansion of world trade we hope—although we have been unsuccessful so far—to get our share of it. Lower fuel costs also help industry. I do not belittle or deny those facts. However, the problem is that exactly the same competitive advantages are enjoyed by the industrial might of West Germany, France and Japan. I am not sure that we shall do particularly well out of it.

Everybody regards the oilfields in the North sea with considerable ambivalence. I am occasionally tempted by the case for a depletion policy. I have pointed on previous occasions to the extraordinary folly of flogging as much as we can possibly get out of the ground at the disastrous bottom end of the market. That does not make a great deal of sense. At the same time, I have urged the Government to take measures to encourage further exploration, with a view to maintaining a flat-out production policy. I accept that there are difficulties and contradictions. However the balance is struck, the present policy has undoubtedly created enormous difficulties for Scotland and for the Scottish economy, and I intend to spend a few minutes dealing with them.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) has a direct constituency interest in these difficulties. He referred to the recent Royal Bank of Scotland projections for the likely course of events between 1986 and 1988. The Royal Bank of Scotland adopted a much more down market and depressed scenario about production levels in the North sea and about the level of oil prices that would condition production levels. It produced the now famous bracket of a possible total loss to the Scottish economy of between 22,000 and 33,000 jobs in that two-year period. A substantial multiplier was built into that bracket. However, in terms of direct job losses it referred to a minimum loss of about 12,000 jobs.

A very substantial number of job losses has already taken place. Even in Grampian, which was directly linked and strongly connected with the oil boom and where unemployment historically has been low, in Scottish terms, we are beginning to see a marked deterioration in unemployment, which is a justifiable cause for concern. According to the latest unemployment figures, unemployment in Grampian has reached 10 per cent. Over 22,000 people are standing in the dole queues, and in other different and contrasting areas of Scotland the impact has been serious.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye has an unemployment rate of 21·7 per cent. in his constituency. There are a large number of travel-to-work areas—for example, Invergordon and Dingwall—where the impact of the rundown in the North sea will build a damaging new factor into an already desperate and depressing problem. Howard Doris at Kishorn is in receivership. McDermotts at Ardersier is limping along. If it had not been for the fact that they got some work from the Conoco jackets, which was the result of a misfortune at Wallsend, they would have been in a difficult position. None of us takes pleasure in that kind of knock-on effect.

The impact of the rundown in North sea oil will be severe in the rural areas, especially in the Highlands. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) rightly returned to a point that I know is not far from his mind: the problems facing the Scott Lithgow yard. I remember the battles of yesteryear when the yard left British Shipbuilders. However, that is all in the past. The tragic present is the loss of 1,500 jobs and the uncertain future that faces the core of 700 men left in the yard. The problem that faces the lower Clyde is just as important and just as difficult to handle as the problems in the northern part of Scotland to which I referred earlier. It is common ground that the rundown in North sea oil will have a dangerous impact and that it will probably become considerably worse, if present projections are accurate.

I recognise that there are no simple answers. My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) also has North sea interests in his constituency, in Kestrel Marine and Dundee, but I think that he would accept that we cannot isolate ourselves completely from the impact of the fall in oil prices. It would be silly, and perhaps dishonest, to pretend otherwise. However, we are entitled to say that this modest measure should not be seen as the Government's last word. The Government must keep an eye on how the situation develops. We should like to see an across-the-board approach from the Government.

With drilling rigs parked in several firths, such as the Cromarty firth and the Firth of Forth, and with daily rates literally plummeting, things will not be easy. However, I hope that some thought will be given to the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West. I do not

suggest that everything that happens in other sectors of the North sea is good while everything that we do is bad, but there is a case for looking hard, say, at the use of supply ships and at the implications for employment in our areas.

I hope that the Government are prepared to fight hard over shipbuilding, for example, where key negotiations are going on in the Common Market over the intervention fund. The Minister may not be the relevant person, but I ask him to suggest that his colleagues read the application by the Department of Trade and Industry to the European regional development fund. It includes a substantial number of important infrastructure developments that might go ahead in areas that will be particularly hard hit by the rundown or depression in the oil industry. I think, in particular, of Easter Ross and similar areas.

I shall not abuse the patience of the House or, more importantly, your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by reading out quotations or by reminding the House of the many infrastructure projects that were given priority, and which all seem likely to be left on the shelf if present policies continue. Things will not be easy. The Minister noted the marked effect of the fall in the oil price on economic activity, but he then congratulated himself and his colleagues on the fiscal arrangements that he said gave a powerful incentive to exploration. That smacks of complacency, and I am not convinced that—to use the phraseology of the hon. Member for Mid-Kent—the trick has been worked.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said that he feared that in some ways the results of this measure would be arbitrary and capricious. We may want to pursue on Thursday some of the arguments about who is excluded and included, and about exactly how these expedited repayments of interest-free loans will work out. But the most important thing is to underline that, if the Bill is valuable, it is because it is an attempt to help by targeting those areas where help is needed and where there may be some reaction.

I do not know whether the Bill will be successful, but I agree with the principle that when faced with a crisis, one does not just sit back and watch it happen, adopt a laissez-faire approach, or allow events to gain a momentum of their own. Governments have a duty to think about employment, the quality of life and the future of communities at risk. If this small but, I hope, useful adjustment to the tax and fiscal regime is successful, all well and good, but it will not be enough on its own.

I hope that the Government will adopt a much more courageous and far-reaching approach towards the economic problems in the areas hit by the present recession. Opposition Members will remember that in the late 1970s we had problems in the construction yards on the upper Clyde. The Minister will recall the problem of the Marathon yard. I was not in a position to watch the battle closely, but I could hear the noises. The outcome was that an order was placed on a speculative basis. Ultimately the rig built was sold and the yard, now UIE, is still competing and perhaps at risk, as all companies are in this industry. However, it also still employs men in an area where the unemployment problem is particularly difficult.

Thus there are examples that one could draw on from the past, and I hope that the Government are prepared to adopt a much more sensible, flexible and pragmatic approach than they have so far. The Bill may help on the margin. It is supposed to be targeted at achieving an effect. If it is not successful, I hope that Ministers will return to the House, and that the same principle will be applied more widely. Otherwise, the consequences for Scotland will be very serious indeed.

6.6 pm

Mr. Norman Lamont: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate.

As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, this has been a quiet debate, although it has been marked by concern about the effects of the fall in the oil price on industry and unemployment in the Highlands and in the Clyde area. This is not the first time that I have heard the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) describe the position in his constituency. As he will acknowledge, I am extremely familiar with it, alas, through my previous involvement with the affairs of Scott Lithgow. I know that what the hon. Gentleman says about his constituency and the employment situation there carries a lot of weight and is all too depressingly true. The Government share that concern about the economic consequences of the fall in the oil price for employment in those areas, along with its effect on the oil supplies industry and the oil companies, and that is why we have introduced the Bill. We did not first adopt a laissez-faire approach. We recognised that action was demanded.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) made a slightly predictable speech. With great respect to him, I must say that he gave us a bit of a lecture on the role of North sea oil in the economy and did not say much about the Bill. I make no great complaint about that, although one could take issue with some of his points.

The hon. Gentleman debated at some length the pros and cons of a high oil price versus a low one. He sought to draw on different remarks that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer had made about the oil price at different times. He implied that my right hon. Friend had said that when the oil price was high it was good news, and that when it was low it was also good news. I am not sure that it is always such a bad thing to be of an optimistic predisposition. However, there is no great confusion about it. Different prices have different effects on various groups of people. Obviously high prices are good for Government revenue, while low prices are good for consumers and world trade, although perhaps less good from a Government's point of view.

If we had not had the very careful stewardship of our finances that we have had for the past few years, we would not have found it easy to cope with the halving of the price of oil within such a short time. The hon. Member for Dagenham seemed to dislike us making that point, but we do so strongly because it is true and quite justified. This country rode out the effects of a halving in the oil price because of the very careful policy that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer had pursued over the years.

The hon. Member for Dagenham also repeated accusations that the windfall of North sea oil had been wasted. We strongly reject that accusation. Thanks to North sea oil public expenditure is higher than we could otherwise have afforded, and borrowing is lower than would otherwise have been the case. It has provided us also with the opportunity to build up a substantial portfolio of assets overseas that will be of benefit to Britain for many years to come.

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

The hon. Member for Dagenham blamed the rise in unemployment since 1979 entirely on the effect of oil on the exchange rate, thus leaving some mystery as to how unemployment had doubled in certain other European countries which do not have the benefit of being oil producers. The hon. Gentleman talked at some length about tax cuts and said that they had not been delivered and now never would be. I cannot comment on his second assertion, but, whatever the arguments on either side of the Chamber, it is clear that if we had had the public expenditure policies implemented by Opposition Members, tax rates would be much higher than they are now. There can be no argument about that.

The comments from the Opposition Benches show that there is a certain unease—Opposition Members seemed to be switching from one foot to another — over depletion policy. I think that the hon. Member for Garscadden acknowledged that unease in his reply. If the action which the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow was pressing on us had been followed and implemented, I am not sure that that would have been conducive to building up the confidence of the oil companies or conducive to a high level of exploration.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) said that he approached the Bill with mixed feelings. With great respect to him — I always enjoy listening to his speeches—his mixed feelings might arise from his slightly mixed up arguments. He seemed to think that by introducing the Bill the Government were confessing that they had it all wrong. I do not think that that argument can seriously be maintained. The tax regime that is appropriate at a price of $30 a barrel is different from that which should apply when the price is $14. We have a regime that is price sensitive, and through the refunding of APRT we are introducing measures that will be targeted on companies that are likely to carry forward development. These will be companies that will be able to carry out a greater amount of exploration as a result of the resources that will be transferred back to the North sea and to the oil companies as a result of this measure.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister is aware that there has been some scepticism among Opposition Members about the impact of this measure on exploration, the bringing on stream of new developments and the pushing into marginal areas of work in the North sea. Does the Minister expect to see an upturn in that sort of activity as a result of the Bill?

Mr. Lamont: I think that that would be looking into the crystal ball. The hon. Gentleman would be amazed if I attempted to answer his question and to make any firm predictions. The feature of the Bill that has been missed in the response from Opposition Members is that it is targeted on companies that are involved in fields that have not yet reached payback. By definition, that is the position in which a cash shortage is a constraint and is likely to inhibit development expenditure. That is what we mean by the Bill being targeted, and that is why we think that it will ultimately have an effect upon exploration and development. Certainly those activities will be at a higher level as a result of the Bill.

I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) and for Rochford (Dr. Clarke) for talking in positive terms about the Bill. The welcome that it has received from Opposition Members has been extraordinarily grudging. The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye said, predictably, that it was too little and too late, but I am sure that any action we took would always be described as too little. Even the hon. Member for Garscadden had to acknowledge that something that puts back into the North sea companies £310 million is a substantial measure by anyone's standards.

As I have said, the Bill is targeted very much at the fields that have not yet reached payback. We estimate that 75 per cent. of the benefit will go to the medium-sized and smaller companies, and we hope, therefore, that these companies will be able to proceed with development and more exploration.

It has been said that the benefits will not be confined to United Kingdom companies. We say that it would be wrong in principle to seek to discriminate between United Kingdom and non-United Kingdom companies. Some leading companies in the North sea have been non-United Kingdom companies. It is extremely important that we should not discriminate in the tax system between United Kingdom companies and foreign-owned companies in the North sea. The non-United Kingdom companies that have played a leading part in the development of the North sea are entitled to the same treatment in respect of APRT as United Kingdom companies that are operating in the area. I am sure that on reflection hon. Members will agree with that principle.

We look forward to hearing further in Committee what the Opposition have to say about the targeting of this measure. For the reasons that I have explained, we think that it is targeted in a way that will bring forward some development and ensure the continuation of other developments. We recognise fully what has been said by Opposition Members about their concern over what is happening in parts of Scotland or in their constituencies. We believe that this is a useful measure, and I am only sorry that Opposition Members have not given it a more generous welcome, but have been slightly grudging. We believe that the Bill will be welcomed by the industry and will be of practical use. Therefore, I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Committee tomorrow.

Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I inform the House that the Examiners have now reported on the Bill and are satisfied that the Standing Orders have been complied with. It is therefore in order for the Second Reading to proceed. Mr. Speaker has selected the Instruction in the names of the hon. Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells) and the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann).

6.18 pm

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning (Mr. William Waldegrave): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

With the permission of the House, it might be convenient to debate the Instruction in the names of my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) with the Bill's Second Reading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the Minister have the leave of the House to take that course? The Minister has leave.

Mr. Waldegrave: For their part, the Government are minded to advise the House to accept the Instruction.

The Bill provides for the establishment of a new statutory authority to develop, manage and conserve the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads. The landscape of the Broads is largely manmade and is unique. The Broads cover an area of about 111 square miles in the valleys of the Rivers Bure, Ant, Thurne and Yare in Norfolk and the Waveney on the Norfolk-Suffolk border. There are navigable waterways, open broads, reed, fen and carr woodlands, reclaimed grazing marshlands and some cultivated land. There are 42 broads covering slightly less than 2,000 acres and 124 miles of navigable, lock-free waterways. The true Broads were formed by peat-digging in medieval times. A rise in the sea level during the 13th century led to the general flooding of the excavated pits.

The waterways of the Broads attract many thousands of visitors from all over Britain and abroad. There are now more than 12,000 hire and private boats on the Broads and over 250,000 people visit or holiday in the area each year. This brings great benefits to the local economy, but it is obvious that it must bring pressures and problems too.

Visitors who have been coming to the area, as many have for 25 years or more, confirm the indisputable fact that there has been a decline in that period in the natural beauty and scientific interest of the Broads. This has resulted from the cumulative effect of a set of complex and interrelated factors. They include water pollution and eutrophication, a loss of riverside reed beds and other fringing vegetation, particularly on the northern rivers, which has exposed banks to erosion from the washes and mooring of the increased number of boats. In addition, the conversion of marshland to arable land has led to the loss of some of the characteristic features of the broadland landscape.

The problem has been to find effective solutions when so wide a range of local, regional and central Government agencies are involved. The matter has been argued over for 40 years. Some suggest that a national park designation would provide the solution, but there were counter arguments. In 1945 John Dower, for example, a great man and chairman of the committee of inquiry into national parks in England and Wales, noted:

> "There are many complications both of drainage and navigation . . . and of existing misuses and disfigurements, and the requirements differ materially from those of a regular National Park. It may prove better to deal with the area by some ad hoc scheme of combined national and local action."

On the other hand, the 1947 Hobhouse report—another great name — did not accept those reservations and recommended the creation of a Broads national park. That recommendation was not accepted by the Government of the day.

In 1965 the NCC published its "Report on Broadland", reaffirming the importance and the problems of the area. It called for a strategic approach to the problems. In response to this report, the Broadland Consortium was formed to bring together the local planning, river, and navigation authorities. In 1971 the consortium published the "Broadland Study and Plan". Although it raised the possibility of a new authority with

> "overall resonsibility for administering the affairs of the area",

the final recommendation adopted by the consortium on this subject was that the river authority should assume navigation powers over the rivers and Broads. The plan was adopted by the local planning authorities as the basis for development control, but its organisational recommendations were overtaken by local government reorganisation in 1974.

In 1976 the Countryside Commission reopened the question of the future management of the Broads by raising again the possibility of designation as a national park. Out of these discussions came the proposal from the local authorities in the area, particularly the district councils, for the establishment of the present voluntary local government-based, non-statutory Broads Authority.

This was established in 1978 as a joint committee under sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972. It consists of nominated members of the two relevant county councils and six relevant district councils, with representatives from the water authority, Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners, and the Countryside Commission, which latter body has supported also the authority with grant-aid for staff and administrative costs and some project work. This voluntary authority has done good work and I pay tribute to its members and officers, and to the local authorities involved.

None the less, when, in 1983, the Countryside Commission carried out a consultation exercise on the future arrangements for managing the Broads, it found that the ecology had continued to deteriorate. In March 1984, the commission published its conclusions that a special statutory authority should be established for the area with powers to manage both land and water. The new authority it proposed should, it said, not only take over the functions of the existing Broads Authority, but also assume the navigation functions of the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners over most of the Broads rivers system. The commission saw it as critical to transfer the navigation to the new authority to enable it to exercise integrated management and control over the rivers, broads and associated land areas. Many of the problems and opportunities in the Broads area occur where land and water meet. The commission considered that divided responsibility would not permit these problems to be tackled effectively.

[Mr. Waldegrave]

That was the genesis of the attempted private Bill, the principles of which the Government endorsed, which all the relevant local authorities agreed jointly to promote. Norfolk county council took the lead, and I authorised the Countryside Commission to grant-aid the cost of the Bill's preparation. There was then extensive public consultation during 1985, and by last November the local authorities were ready to introduce their Bill. They were then advised by the House authorities that it was unsuitable for introduction as a private measure. Therefore, we were all back at square one.

The Government regretted that outcome and remained convinced of the urgent need for a statutory authority of the kind proposed by the private Bill. The voluntary authority was showing signs of breaking up. In any case, it did not have the powers that it needed, since it had only what the local authorities could delegate to it. The funding was increasingly ad hoc. We agreed with all those who, since 1947, saw the need for a durable statutory basis for the management of the Broads if the continuing deterioration in the ecology of the area was to be halted and reversed. We therefore adopted the principles of Norfolk's Bill and promised to introduce our own. I apologise to the House for this long preface, but it is how we have arrived at where we are, and that is why the process has been so prolonged.

The private Bill proved to need substantial recasting to make it suitable for introduction in a form more appropriate to public legislation. Therefore, the format and structure of our Bill is different from that of the private Bill—it is, for example, much shorter with 26 clauses instead of 112 and under 50 pages instead of 80—but its substance is not radically different from that of the private Bill.

Our approach has been to establish the new authority as far as possible on the general local authority model, with the appropriate general powers and responsibilities. We have had particularly in mind the powers and duties of national park authorities, adapted as necessary to suit the special characteristics of the Broads. In particular, we have looked closely at the navigation provisions. Norfolk did not achieve consensus on this with the various interests. We have worked hard to ensure that there are proper safeguards for seagoing freight shipping on what we have described as the Norwich navigation—that is, the rivers Yare and Wensum up to the port of Norwich—which is still important for commercial cargo vessels. We have also made adjustments to the proposed membership to ensure that, on the one hand, boating interests are properly respresented, while, on the other, we have provided for one member to be appointed by the Nature Conservancy Council. These and other changes that we have made have been designed to improve the Bill in response to legitimate criticisms of detailed aspects.

Given the need to introduce legislation as soon as possible to enable the authority to assume its functions on 1 April 1988, subject to Parliament's approval of the Bill, we have not had enough time to conduct a second formal consultation about the Bill's proposals in addition to that which Norfolk conducted on its Bill. In any case, as I have said, our revised Bill is closely modelled on its predecessor. Furthermore, a number of bodies and individuals have made representations to us about the possible content of the Bill. Their points have been carefully considered and many have been reflected in drafting our Bill. Moreover, since our Bill could be examined by a Select committee, in addition to the normal Standing Committee procedure, there will be ample opportunity for those interested to make their views known. We shall be ready to discuss and explain our proposals and to consider suggestions for further detailed improvement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): The Bill is a splendid example of my hon. Friend's interest in the countryside, and we welcome it. However, there is one grave concern—that conservation interests have not been considered sufficiently and that too much regard has been paid to landscape and boating. Unless we have regard for the conservation of habitats, we shall lose much of the interest of the Broads. My hon. Friend has said that during the passage of the Bill he will listen to the views of all interests. Will he do so in relation to representations made by specific conservation bodies?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind words. The heart and origin of the Bill is to conserve the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads for ever for those who wish to enjoy them. The Bill will not achieve its purpose if it does not secure conservation in proper form. The Instruction proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells)—the Instruction tabled by the hon. Member for Newham South (Mr. Spearing) was not accepted—advises us that it is possible to satisfy those conservation interests and, at the same time, meet the legitimate interest of boat owners. In the end, those interests must be the same. Boat owners go to that area—many of them go there faithfully year after year—because of its unique nature. They and responsible boat organisations recognise that it is in their interests that the Norfolk Broads should be properly conserved. I take my hon. Friend's point. If there are further measures to discuss, we shall have time to do that in Committee.

I have said that we shall listen to the detailed recommendations, so I shall put on record one point on which the Government stand firm. We need a properly integrated authority to manage the waterways and the land together. That must be the principle on which we all stand.

I shall refer briefly to the Bill's main provision. Part I sets up the new authority and gives it its functions. Clause 2 sets out the vital balance between the interests of navigation, conservation and enjoyment by the public. All three are, in their own way, equally important and the authority is required to have regard to all three aspects in discharging its functions.

Part II provides for the authority to take over from the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners their navigation functions over most of the Broads rivers system. It requires the authority to set up a navigation committee which it must consult before exercising its specific navigation functions. It also requires the authority to maintain and develop the navigation area for navigation generally, to take special steps to safeguard the interests of sea going freight shipping in the Norwich navigation area and to appoint navigation officers to discharge certain navigation functions.

Part III deals with the financial arrangements for the authority. It empowers the authority to make charges for navigation and to levy on the eight local authorities to meet the balance of its expenditure not met by grant. It

also empowers the Secretary of State to pay grant to the authority. We intend that grant should be paid at the same rate—currently 75 per cent.—as is payable to national parks. I see no reason why the total expenditure of the new authority should differ greatly from what it would have been if the old voluntary authority had continued. Expenditure was set to increase somewhat under the old voluntary authority and I have no doubt that it will do so under the new authority. I do not see why the path of increase should change much.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the size of the proposed authority, at 35 members, is too big and that it is too unwieldy and expensive? Is my hon. Friend rigid about that figure, or will there be some give and take as to size?

Mr. Waldegrave: I share my hon. Friend's bias that an authority of this size is much bigger than one would have liked. I have used a pocket calculator in a number of ways, but have found it impossible to imagine a smaller authority on which all the differing interests are properly represented. We have kept the authority at this size partly to demonstrate to the boat owners and other interests, some of which are not mentioned in the Bill—such as anglers—that there is room to represent them. I should like the authority to be smaller, but every time I try to make it smaller the balance is upset and some vital interest is left out. Although it is likely that there will be an executive sub-committee or similar body to carry forward the management of the authority's affairs, I hope that the Select Committee and the Standing Committee will come to our conclusion that it is difficult to represent everyone on a much smaller body. I must point out that I started with exactly the same bias as my hon. Friend.

Returning to the financial arrangements, the main difference is that, as we are now recognising the national importance of the Broads, it is right that the funds for the authority, which will not increase dramatically above what they would otherwise have been, should come more from the central taxpayer and less from the local taxpayer. That seems to be a fair balance. Many of the welcome visitors to the area come from other parts of the country. One of the Bill's overall purposes is to say that, as with the national parks, central Government back their words with money. We say that we shall put in 75 per cent. of the grant rather than one third, as has been the case in recent years under the voluntary authority. Normal local authority controls will apply to the authority's borrowing.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): Can my hon. Friend give an assurance that the new authority will cost no more than the present one?

Mr. Waldegrave: I cannot give that assurance. It will be a matter for the local authority, balancing the interests of ratepayers. Future Secretaries of State will face the same pressures for grant. I think that the new authority's expenditure will be about the same as the expenditure planned by the voluntary authority, which has increased from about £700,000 a year to £900,000 or £1 million a year. I see no reason why there should be any increase in the overhead expenditure as opposed to the project expenditure on necessary items. Most of the people now involved in doing the work under the voluntary authority will work for the united statutory authority.

Part IV contains provisions for the necessary transfers of staff and property. The present authority has an office in Norwich, which I think it will retain, and does a lot of the work by using people who work for the local authorities, and I think that that will continue. Some staff will have to be transferred to the new authority. Depending on the exact negotiations on navigation with the Yarmouth port and haven commissioners, some staff are likely to be needed, but I see no reason for a large net increase in staff compared with present numbers. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) to some extent.

The Bill recognises the Broads' national importance and special needs. It gives them a status equivalent to that of a national park, but with wider powers. It reflects and respects the interests of boat users and commercial shippers, and that is why I see no difficulty in accepting the Instruction proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone. The Bill balances those interests with the overriding need to maintain and conserve for ever the Norfolk Broads for the enjoyment not only of boat owners, but others, such as anglers and bird watchers, who want to continue to enjoy the area and to conserve and maintain its distinctive and unique character. We believe that the combination of powers, duties and a firm financial base for the new authority provided in our Bill should provide the means whereby the future of the Broads can be secured for ever.

Next year sees the beginning of the European Year of the Environment. There are few more positive offerings that this Parliament could make to that year than to secure the passage of a Bill providing permanent protection for the Broads. I commend the Bill to the House.

6.37 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I think that few hon. Members would disagree with the words of the Hobhouse committee as far back as 1947 when, discussing the Broads, it said:

> "Here is a potential national park which seems to belong to another world, so widely does it differ from the mountains and wild moorlands of the North and west, or the rolling contours of the South Downs. Slow rivers creep between its fields and fens. Wide, shallow meres — the Broads themselves — lie along their courses, their edges merging into reedbeds or waterlogged alder carrs."

We all recognise not only those sentiments but the fact that the environment has been threatened since 1947. Unless we act quickly, there will be further damage to that unique landscape. We recognise that as a House because we have designated 16 sites of special scientific interest and three national nature reserves and other sites have already been identified as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar convention. There is no difference between the two sides of the House on the need to protect that environment.

In principle, we readily support the Bill's concept, but we have a number of reservations. I was pleased to hear the Minister say that he would be open at a later stage to alternative ideas and proposals which may have a sound basis. The Labour party has a double interest in welcoming the Bill. The Bill is not only right but, perhaps more importantly, it reflects straight Labour party policy, unanimously approved by our last party conference. If we can help to improve the quality of life in Britain by bringing in a bit of sensible Socialist policy, in the midst of this sea of depression caused by the Government, we shall obviously be pleased.

[Dr. David Clark]

As the House knows we have generally been supportive of the Government in any proposals to try to promote measures that might improve our environment. This Bill is no exception. The Bill's aims and objectives are welcome and we shall do all that we can to try to improve the Bill where we think that it is lacking.

I was interested to hear that the Minister sees this as his testament to the European Year of the Environment. I welcome his conversion. However, I wish that he had gone a little further and perhaps brought some other Bills before us. I do not know why he did not bring in a commons Bill. Such a step is already agreed by amenity bodies such as the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association. Indeed, the commons are referred to in the schedule of the Bill. We doubt the Government's absolute and real commitment to conservation and environment. There are certain aspects of the Bill that reinforce our doubts. However, basically we are supportive of the Government. Obviously, there are parts of the Bill with which we are not satisfied, but we support the Government in the general aim and give the Bill a guarded welcome.

We believe that the Bill, as the Minister said, is slightly different from and more truncated than the Bill put forward by Norfolk county council. We believe that in the shortening of the Bill the Government have probably weakened it in one respect and strengthened it in another. It seems that they have strengthened it especially with reference to the navigational interests.

One of the great strengths of the Bill is that it was born out of concern by the local people. In a sense, the genesis came out of the decisions of the local county councils and district councils which, over the years, have tried to preserve the environment. That is not unique because, as the Minister pointed out, the Dower committee has considered the matter and the Hobhouse committee recommended that it should have national park status. As the Minister said, the local authorities and people of the area know the problems. They love the environment and have been concerned about the effect of the pressure of tourists, navigation and other things on the environment. It is interesting that the demand for special protection comes from the local authorities. I join the Minister in paying credit to the existing Broads authority. It has manfully tried to tackle the problems in a non-statutory way with considerable success, and it has tried to marry the often conflicting problems in the sensitive inter-relation between waterscape and landscape. It deserves thanks for its endeavours.

It is interesting that the authority has recognised the problem and published its own report in 1982 about the Broadlands area. It has been very active. Indeed, it was from its endeavours that we orginally had the Bill before us in the form of a private Bill. The Bill represents the aspirations of the local councils, both district and county, and if one looks at the authority's reports, it is plain to see why. In the 1982 report and those that followed it came up with four major problems: polluted rivers, diminishing wildlife, erosions of the bank sides and the unique traditional landscape being dramatically affected. On a number of occasions we have debated the problem of the landscape, for example, when we were talking about the Halvergate marshes. Perhaps the Minister will deal with that when he replies.

I understand that the present regulations affecting agriculture support, established in 1985, were to run for three years—the summers of 1985, 1986 and 1987. If the Bill becomes law it will not become operative until April 1988. Does the Minister foresee any difficulty in the cessation of the period covered by the present agriculture regime which ends in 1987 and the new one which takes over, if the Bill becomes law, in 1988? It would be helpful if we knew. It would also be helpful to know whether he has any general comments about environmentally sensitive area status, the workings of that and how it would dovetail with the present Bill.

It is universally recognised, not only by the existing Broads authority but by everyone, that the pollution in the water of the rivers and the Broads is increasing. The authority is particularly concerned about the unchecked run-off and the effluent-rich nitrogen which is going into the water. Can the Minister tell us how he envisages that the new authority could tackle the problem of increasing nitrates? As I understand it, it would still rest with the Anglian Water authority to tackle that problem. Would the new Broads authority be allowed to require the water authority to take action to clean up and reduce the level of nitrates in the water? Similarly, on the problem of the erosion of bank sides, am I right in assuming that the new authority would have the right to impose speed limits on craft in the Broadlands area? From what I was told when in the Norfolk area it seems that the speed of vessels is one of the major causes of erosion of the bank sides. There is also the general problem of the character of the Broads landscape. As the Minister knows, 25 per cent. of the traditional landscape has been lost over the years. How can we retain the remaining 75 per cent?

We are worried by a number of things in the Bill. In a sense, what worries us most is the Bill's general tone. Obviously, various interests have to be balanced. The Minister quite rightly spelt them out to us. Those interests are reflected in clause 2 of the Bill which deals with the functions of the authority in general. Clause 2 states:

"It shall be the general duty of the Authority to develop, conserve and manage the Broads for the purposes of—

(a) navigation:

(b) preserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Broads; and

(c) promoting the enjoyment of the Broads by the public."

In total we would not object to any of those. We accept that those are the three pressures in the Broads area. However, we are worried because navigation is at the top of the list. It seems to us that the major aim of the legislation ought not primarily to be to protect and control navigation but to preserve and enhance the natural beauty and ecological balance of the Broads.

By putting navigation up front it seems that the real conviction of the Government is tested. I cast doubts on the Government's deep commitment to the environment and that is another aspect which leaves us, and most environmentalists in the country, worrying about the Government's real motives and whether they are really committed to achieving the ecological and environmental needs of the Broads.

I am further worried by the Government's announcement today. As I understand it — I may have misunderstood—the Minister said that he was agreeable to the instruction proposed by the hon. Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells). I do not object to that particular point, but it lays greater stress on the representation of boating interests. The instruction of my hon. Friend the

Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) puts the other side of the coin and represents the views of the Opposition which is that the emphasis should be on the preservation of fauna and flora in the environment.

Mr. Waldegrave: It was not open to me to be agreeable to the instruction proposed by the hon. Member for Newham, South. I am not too sure where we differ on this. The hon. Member for Newham, South said that he did not object and I said that I agreed. There does not appear to be much between us.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): There is a difference, in my opinion.

Dr. Clark: The key point is, does the Minister agree with the points that we are not allowed to discuss this evening? That is the dilemma. I do not question your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my hon. Friend's instruction should not be called. However, the Government are placing navigation as the first general duty of the new Broads authority, yet they then state categorically that they are happy to accept the instruction tabled by the hon. Member for Maidstone.

Mr. Spearing: I believe that the formal position is that we are allowed to discuss the instruction. However, because of the selection by the Chair, which, of course, we accept, we are not allowed to reach formal conclusions about its merits. That would not prevent the Minister from saying that in general, without prejudice, he would not have opposed the instruction had it been selected. That is a matter for the Minister.

Mr. Waldegrave: It might be for the convenience of the House if I say that, in that hypothetical situation, I do not think that I would have sought to urge my hon. Friends to divide the House against the hon. Gentleman's instruction.

Dr. Clark: I think that we have made history today. That is the first time that I have heard a Minister answer a hypothetical question. I am grateful that he has done so and I accept his assurance.

It is worrying that the words fauna and flora do not appear in the Bill. That worry was compounded in a press release issued by the Department of the Environment. A careful examination of that press release reveals that the emphasis lies in the navigation aspect of the Bill. Apart from a handful of words referring to status equivalent to national parks and the point about notification of specified operations, there is nothing in the press release that suggests that the Department is concerned about the environment. That causes great concern. I am somewhat reassured by the Minister and I hope that when he replies he will give us further reassurance on that point.

The Minister mentioned that it was difficult to reduce the size of the authority and I accept his point. Some bodies must be represented. The Minister specifically referred to anglers. I have read the Bill very carefully and I can find no reference to anglers or to anyone on the authority to represent their interests. Bearing in mind that far more people will be fishing on the Broads than boating, is that not an omission? Should there not be someone on the main body—if not the navigation committee—to represent the views of anglers? We need assurance on that, because the present Administration's appointment to the national parks authorities have not been encouraging to the amenity lobbies.

As the Minister is aware, there has been much anxiety within the environmental lobbies that they have not been properly represented as they were under previous Administrations—both Labour and Conservative—so that a balance can be achieved between the various interests in national park areas. Not only should the environmental lobby be represented—probably in a non-Government capacity as well as through the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission—but we strongly believe that the tens of thousands of anglers who regularly use the Broads should also have some form of representation on the authority.

I have outlined our worry about the emphasis on navigation and some of the shortcomings of that. However, there are one or two specific points that cause us anxiety. Much depends on how the Government regard the various powers that would be permitted if the Bill reaches the statute book and how they are operated. That is especially true with regard to the management of the water space. Although clause 8 provides for the transfer of navigation powers from the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners to the new Broads authority, clause 10(10) virtually allows by agreement the full or partial delegation of those powers back to the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners. I realise that under the following subsection the Great Yarmouth authority would have to work under the general remit of the Bill, yet it is still worrying that the Government are allowing the powers to be delegated back to the Great Yarmouth authority. It is all a question of priorities.

Clause 5 is central to conservation control. It deals with the:

"Notification of certain operations within the Broads."

It is primarily concerned with potentially damaging operations. How does the Minister envisage that the orders will work? They are akin to those that operate at present in the national parks. As I read the Bill, they only have the power to delay potentially damaging operations. If someone wanted to damage irreparably parts of the Broadlands, unless a management agreement was negotiated, there is nothing that the Government or the authority could do after the 12 months to prevent that damage happening. That is one of the Bill's shortcomings.

That leads to the issue of landscape conservation orders. During the passage of the Agriculture Act 1986, the Government promised that there would be a statement on landscape conservation orders. Indeed the Minister claimed in a recent Centre for Policy Studies publication:

"We have gone out to consultation on a proposal for a limited Landscape Conservation Order power, an initiative that has not had the impact it should have had. Again it represents a potential breakthrough."

I do not disagree with that. However, as far as I know, the consultative paper has not been published.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is correct and he is right to rebuke me in that sense. I had hoped that the consultation document would have been published by now. Unfortunately it has not been published yet, but it will be out very shortly, in any case before Christmas.

Dr. Clark: We are really making progress today. Not only has the Minister answered hypothetical questions but we have had an intimation that the printing industry works more effectively and faster than he had imagined. I am very pleased that the consultative paper will appear so that

[Dr. Clark]

we can discuss it in parallel at a later stage during consideration of the Bill. It is essential that there is some power to prevent potentially damaging operations.

We are happy to accept the Bill with the understanding from the Minister that he is prepared to listen to advice and other points of view. I hope that he will be very open in Committee.

I end as I began. On both sides of the House, we recognise the unique environment of the Broads. We recognise that it must be preserved and protected. Unless we do that, the pressures will get worse. I hope that the Government will adhere to the Minister's words and listen to us in Committee to ensure that the conservation, ecological and environmental aspects are given more—certainly at least—the same sort of status as navigation rights.

6.59 pm

Sir John Wells (Maidstone): I must first declare an interest, as for many years I was joint proprietor, with my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior), of a fairly well-known boatyard on the Broads and have subsequently maintained close contact with the Ship and Boat Builders National Federation, although I no longer have a direct financial interest in the Broads.

I very much welcome the Bill as a vast improvement on the county council's previous proposals. The whole House should know, because it is a fundamental truth, that the boat owners of the Broads were extremely perturbed by the earlier Bill. Fleets on the canals of this country have been, and are, increasing, but in the years leading up to that Bill there was disinvestment in the Broads, the number of hire boats declined and owners invested on the continent. Some hon. Members may see that as a good thing, but it is not good for Norfolk and Suffolk, because every hire boat brings in about £10,000 per year, about half going to the owner and the other half to the local community, so it is of great importance both in terms of employment and in terms of the spending money brought in by the tourists.

I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Minister has got the beginning of clause 2 the right way round. The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) would have preferred it to be the other way round, but I believe that it is just right. In congratulating my hon. Friend the Minister on achieving that, I should like to take the unusual step of congratulating Mr. Walley, the civil servant substantially responsible for the negotiation and arrangement of the proposals and a gentleman of enormous ability and tact, who has done a splendid job for which the whole House should be grateful.

I, too, would have liked the main authority to be half the size. I counted the animals out of the ark two by two, and sometimes four by four, and I had hoped that we might be able to halve the number, but I entirely take my hon. Friend the Minister's point about the need to maintain a balance in the peripheral membership. I was glad to hear my hon. Friend mention anglers, but I was absolutely fascinated when the hon. Member for South Shields came like St. George to their defence. I thought that angling was a dirty word in the Labour party. I almost expected the hon. Gentleman to suggest some special representation for the South Norfolk Hunt or whatever. It was certainly an interesting about-face.

Dr. David Clark: I should make it plain that the Labour party has no plans or proposals to oppose fishing or, indeed, shooting. We have said that we find hunting with dogs reprehensible and we oppose it, but I state once again without any qualification that we are not against any form of fishing or any form of shooting.

Sir John Wells: It may have been out of order, but that was a delicious admission of guilt by the hon. Gentleman.

I believe that my hon. Friend has got the Bill substantially right, but I am still anxious about one or two small points. I have pointed out the great financial input of the boating industry in providing employment, but I also understand that the boating community, in the broadest sense, will be providing more than 50 per cent. of the authority's revenue. My hon. Friend the Minister was at pains to point out that central Government would pay more than half the grant and that the local authorities would pay less than half. A great deal of financial input to the authority, however, will not be grant, and I understand that more than half will come from the boating community. I believe, therefore, that the boating community should be given a little greater strength on the navigation committee. I welcome the fact that it seems —I stress that word— to have a majority, but it is possible that people on the authority apparently with marine or boating interests might not be so directly pro-boating as one might hope. I hope that we shall have an assurance that there will be a true majority of boating interests on that committee.

Consultation of the navigation committee by the authority is most important. As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, there are excellent and praiseworthy precedents for using the words

"to take full account of the views of"

rather than the words "to consult". There is a great deal of difference. I hope that my hon. Friend will consider that. If the boating interests can have that assurance, I believe that they will be much relieved.

Clause 7 raises a slight difficulty, because when the Bill becomes law changes in its operation will be made by order. During the passage of the Bill we have the opportunity for a very full debate, for a Select Committee and a Standing Committee, and representations can be made to Members of Parliament, but once it becomes an Act Ministers will be able to alter it by order, which gives rise to some fears about lack of consultation in the future.

There is another area of anxiety. Under the Bill it seems just possible that the authority will set up its own boatyard and hire cruiser fleet. There is an extremely unhappy parallel with the British Waterways Board doing just that on the canals. I should deplore any intrusion into the trading situation by the new authority, and I seek an assurance that that cannot and will not take place.

There is also the question of temporary and permanent closure of navigations. Temporary closures will be subject to public inquiries and all the rest. That is excellent, but on my reading of the Bill it seems that a permanent closure can happen simply at the stroke of a pen. I hope that I am wrong. Clause 10 provides full scope for consultation about temporary closures, but I can find no provision that there must be consultation and a public inquiry about a permanent closure. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can reassure me about that.

Another slight fear concerns the deregistration of boats. Clearly, a boat that is clapped out, dangerous or

unsuitable in some way should not be registered, or should be deregistered, but this could be a weapon in the hands of some cranky marine architect who thought that a broad stern, a narrow stern or some funny, fancy hull shape would be better for some obscure purpose, and the authority could simply deregister any boat not of that design. The registration of boats — or, worse still, the deregistration of boats already plying — must be examined very carefully.

Lest the House think that I am just a former boat-owning crank anxious to push one point of view, I should inform my hon. Friend the Minister that I was the unhappy under-bidder when the How Hill estate was gobbled up into the maw of the county council because my purse was a great deal shorter than that of my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss), who, I believe, was a county councillor at that time.

Although I failed to buy How Hill, I am delighted that the county council has now had the nous to privatise it, and I commend to hon. Members in all parts of the House the How Hill Trust, which is perhaps one of the most imaginative attempts at bringing the environmental charms of the broadland area to the nation as a whole and to local people living in the great conurbation around Norwich. After all, Norwich is not simply a small town. There are large villages nearby, the residents of which are almost townspeople. It is marvellous that the charms of an area such as How Hill should now be brought to the notice of the public, and I congratulate the county council on that privatisation.

I have a final warning for the Minister of State. The late Lord Colyton, once an estimable and admirable Member of this House, when Minister of State, one day foolishly said "Never", and he was translated to the House of Lords for his foolish sin. My hon. Friend has three times said that the aim of the Bill is to preserve the Norfolk Broads "for ever", yet at the beginning of his speech he said that the thing was man-made in the first place. Lest the environmental lobby gets too big for its boots, it should be pointed out that nine tenths — even virtually ten tenths — of the landscape of lowland Britain is entirely man-made, and those who think that preserving it in aspic, as it were, follows some great preservation ideal have got it wrapped round their ears. Agriculture, forestry and the needs of the day — digging turf, as the Minister said — have created the landscape of Britain. Let it continue for another thousand years to be a man-made, altered and living thing, rather than preserved as a fossil.

7.12 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Like the hon. Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells), I must declare some interest in this matter, although not a commercial or financial one. I have been visiting the area for at least 45 years and have hired boats from at least eight yards. I am a member of the Inland Waterways Association, with a particular concern for navigation, and also a member of the Royal Yachting Association, which nominates to the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners, to whom I pay annual dues as a private craft owner.

As a navigator I enjoy the total environment of the area, along with many others, although I consider navigation to be part of that environment. While the hon. Member for Maidstone is right in that this is a man-made natural environment, and while we do not want to preserve it in aspic or anything else, there is a sense of trusteeship for the totality of the British landscape and its resources that we must maintain — [*Interruption.*] I am glad that the hon. Member for Maidstone agrees, and I fancy that there is much more agreement on the Bill across the Floor of the House. I welcome that.

As I see it, our statutory problem is how to reconcile the many potentially conflicting interests in this lovely and important area. We now have the privilege of providing a statutory framework under which those potentially conflicting interests can work together and, we hope, provide a better total environment from which all can gain. That is almost self-evident, but in the end success will depend on the Bill's framework when it reaches Royal Assent and the good sense and willingness of the people of the area — which is an important characteristic — to operate whatever framework we provide.

That may not be easy. For example, my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) mentioned nitrates, but the quality of the water in the area will depend not solely on the quality of farming within the area itself but on the quality of farming in the total catchment area that extends far beyond the Broads.

There is also the question of optimum water levels and whether or not Halvergate will continue. There is also the control of what the Bill describes as "operations" within the area, such as the encouragement and maintenance of the traditional growing of reeds. That is something that we should all like to see continue.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields also referred to fishing interests. I do not know of a fisherman who wants to see boats anywhere near the area. Equally, some conservationists would say, "Let there be no power boats, just sailing or rowing boats." I would not go along with that view, although I have great sympathy with it. On one occasion when I was sailing a boat silently among the reeds thinking how marvellously ecological it was, I was confronted by an ornithological warden who shouted, "Take that boat away. Those sails will frighten the birds." Therefore, every interest has its own extremity with which we must deal.

Success of the Bill will rest on the quality of the trusteeship and the way in which these groups and interests work together within the authority once it is established. Like my hon. Friends, I very much welcome the Bill in principle.

The Minister made a kindly reference to my instruction, for which I thank him, but I was disappointed with the Bill when I read it. I did not have the privilege of looking at the various drafts, and therefore did not know what to compare it with. I felt that the Bill did not specify well enough what we are about — the maintenance, development and management of these man-made natural resources in such a way that maximum balance is obtained and maximum enjoyment, preservation and conservation is attained by all. There is nothing in the long title which suggests that. The duties spelt out in clause 2 do it to some extent when it states:

"It shall be the general duty of the Authority to develop, conserve and manage the Broads for the purposes of—

(a) navigation;

(b) preserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Broads; and

(c) promoting the enjoyment of the Broads by the public."

But there it ends, and I am not all all sure whether that provides a sufficient, well-defined statutory base for the duties of this authority. In my opinion, those duties must go well beyond what is contained in clause 2. I concede

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

however, that we cannot define the powers that subsequently follow until there is a reasonable agreement about what the duties should be.

I shall return to that aspect in a moment, but I now want to refer to the navigation point and the instruction of the hon. Member for Maidstone. In passing, I ought to say that I have visited the yard in which he and his right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) were interested. In my view, it is one of the cleanest, neatest and best-managed yards on the Broads. I even put 50p in the water box which went towards the profits of their successors.

We must pay some attention to navigation, because up to now the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners have had the specific and sole statutory responsibility for dealing with navigation. The navigation to Norwich is particularly important. It is part of our coastal shipping, and long may it remain so. That is why I make no complaint about the specific powers and duties of the navigation committee contained in clause 9, although I well understand the concerns of the hon. Member for Maidstone that due regard should be taken of what that committee says and the potential danger of outvoting by non-navigational interests.

There is some danger in that point of view because of what, in the past, has been loosely referred to as boating interests. Even the Bill provides that three members of the authority must represent boating interests. Boating interests are not necessarily united, and there are many different boating interests on the Broads.

First of all, the Broads are already very well promoted by the holiday industry, such as Blakes and Hoseasons which are almost household names. I wonder how far the promotion of the Broads would be additionally helped by the authority. Rather than promote the Broads, perhaps the Bill's common objectives or duties should be to enable the public to enjoy them.

Whereas until recently many of the boating yards were locally owned by well-known local persons who put a great deal of effort and time into these classic private enterprises, more recently the boating yards have come under the influence of what might be called the national holiday industry. Boating yards have been sold lock stock and barrel, many of them having been bought and sold pretty rapidly.

In recent years the owners of such yards have included a national motor garage proprietor and distributor, bingo hall operators, brewers, holiday camp operators and even betting shop chains. They are interested only in making the maximum return from capital invested. That is natural but, because they are not locally based in the way that the industry used to be, there has been a degree of criticism and some controversy about how the boating pressures have impinged on environmental matters and indeed upon other boat users in the area. Boating interests, other than the major boat letting firms, such as those who sail for competition in the well-organised yachting clubs, those who cruise and those who own private craft are perhaps not too keen on the way in which some of boat letting companies carry on their affairs and, in particular, the problem of wash. I mention wash not just on the banks but the turbulence caused on the shallow river beds by the high-powered diesel cruisers with their screws. Those of us who remember the Broads before the war wonder whether it is necessary to have 40 or 50 horse power diesel engines churning away inside vessels when moderately powered engines were used before. All the diesel engines do is push up the water and the vessel does not go much faster. There is little need for speed on the Boards over and above 4 or 5 mph. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Maidstone is nodding in agreement.

In the past 10 to 15 years the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners were not entirely active in dealing with these problems. Many things could have been done but were not, for instance, on speed, wash or noise. Often modern boats emit a noise that is a cross between a light aircraft and a combine harvester. Therefore, there is no one boating interest.

What about the extent of navigation? There are arguments for extending it. I would certainly like to see North Walsham canal extended up the river Ant, but should that canal be available to cruisers? I rather doubt it. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Waveney knows the river from Geldston to Ellingham. It would be a good thing if that stretch were extended for dinghies and skiffs up to Bungay or perhaps from Coltishall to Buxton. These boat lanes could be improved so that one could go in smaller craft by hand or sail as far as Aylsham. I do not think that anybody would argue with the extension of navigation of that type, but they might be against the extension of navigation for larger powered vessels.

While the interests of navigation must be of special regard because of the demise of the Yarmouth port and haven commissioners as the sole statutory authority for navigation, it must be placed within a satisfactory envelope of general duties, and that does not exist. That is why I had a shot in my instruction at putting down something of what I thought the general duties of the Broads authority might be, using what I knew of conservation, ornithology, angling, fishing, navigation, boating, and leisure interests.

Although my instruction has not been selected for debate, I hope that it could be the basis for further discussion, especially if there were petitions later. It is by no means perfect. I have suggested that when any petitions are referred to the Committee, it must satisfy itself that

"the Bill will provide adequate duties and powers to the proposed Broads Authority that will enable it to:

(a) ensure the conservation and preservation of the fauna and flora of water, land and air and their habitat;"

There may be marginal encroachments on that under given conditions and given safeguards to encourage and implement the other objectives, but that must be the overriding purpose.

My instruction continues:

"*(b)* arrange for the management of the natural environment in a manner that, whilst permitting public access and maintaining rights of navigation, ensures the maintenance of the essential ecological equilibrium of the area;"

Of course, there are matters beyond the area that the Broads authority does not have the power to control, but within the area the overall ecological equilibrium or, indeed, the restoration of it to the equilibrium that existed just after the war would be generally acceptable and a good objective for the management.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there are real dangers in that proposition? Although it sounds very worthy as he has put it across, the Broads are very much a living area with

people, housing, business and commerce all mixed in. Although one must support his general good-natured ideas, there are dangers in what he suggests.

Mr. Spearing: I am not sure about the dangers—perhaps the hon. Gentleman could spell them out. If he will bear with me, I shall quote the third section of my instruction, which states:

> "*(c)* encourage the provision and management of recreational and other facilities that, without prejudice to the preceding objectives, assist the maintenance and enhancement of the natural resources and beauty of the area for the benefit of inhabitants and visitors to the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads."

Perhaps that could be slightly modified because "without prejudice to the preceding objectives" might be a rather tight instruction. If it read "without prejudice to the overall preceding objectives", that might be a well merited amendment. I am pleased to see the hon. Gentleman nodding.

Without some more definite spelling out of the general objectives and duties of the authority, any proposals or restrictive measures, and the merits of those measures and of the management and operations within the area, cannot be adequately judged. Unless they can be adequately judged on an agreed criterion, the relationship between the different interests is likely to be less easy than if there were a commonly agreed template. Once that exists it becomes a matter of good relations—give and take—and of working towards solutions to difficult problems over time. If that template is not in place, there is a danger that different parties and interests in the authority will try to get their way by dominating the committee, having an annual general meeting or acting harshly rather than by conciliation and consolidation.

We can assist in this important objective and give the Broads authority a good send-off by providing it with more specific duties than are in the Bill. In that way we shall ensure that those who live in and visit the area can say, "Those people in Parliament have provided us with a satisfactory structure and we, as trustees, will get on with the job."

7.30 pm

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): I shall begin my remarks by——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I called Mr. John Powley.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): I thought that I heard the name correctly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I would have given way to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell), had it been your wish.

Two of my hon. Friends will be unable to speak this evening. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder) is, regrettably, absent because of his temporary indisposition. I pay tribute to him for his work behind the scenes, promoting this Bill and its predecessor for the good of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads. The Bill is the result of his hard work. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) has lobbied assiduously behind the scenes to improve the Bill.

Mr. Waldegrave: I strongly agree with my hon. Friend, and what he says is correct. Both of our hon. Friends have played a major part. It is rash for any Minister to think to refer, let alone to refer, to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, but he has also played a helpful and supportive part in the Bill. I hope that he will continue to do so in all the multifarious ways open to him.

Mr. Powley: I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for that addition.

There cannot be many people born in East Anglia who do not have a high regard for the Broads, commonly referred to as the Norfolk Broads, which include the Suffolk Broads. Of late, the Broads have attracted people from a much wider area than East Anglia. They are now known internationally and people throughout the world hold them in high regard. When I told my mother yesterday what I would be doing today, she reminded me that my first holiday on the Broads was 40 years ago and produced a faded photograph of me on a motor cruiser. That all goes to show that in East Anglia there is great feeling for the Norfolk Broads.

The Norfolk Broads cover a wide area and spread into my constituency. Indeed, the river Yare runs into my constituency. The Broads authority headquarters, which were established in 1978, are also in my constituency. In one way or another a great many of my constituents have an interest in the Broads. They work on or for constituent parts of the Broads or they take their recreation there.

I have the honour to represent many boat owners, including pleasure boat owners who ply for hire, and many nature lovers who use and frequent the Broads. Many constituents take their recreation there and some have second homes there. That may sound strange, but they tell me that they need to relax from living in the fine city of Norwich, so they spend their weekends at their holiday homes on the Broads.

It may come as some surprise to hon. Members that the river Yare has sea-going coasters. During the miners' dispute, pickets were sent to the port of Norwich to prevent the dispute being broken by coal imports. Every year 70 ocean-going vessels come to Norwich. That may not sound many and, indeed, it is not compared with some ports, but I mention it because people do not think of Norwich as a port. Of that 70, 36 go to Cantley. That opportunity to bring business to my constituency is important and those involved need representation.

The boat hire industry brings many tangible benefits to the region. About £16 million a year is estimated to be generated by the industry and about 650 people are employed full time in boat building and another 500 in servicing boats during the high season. It has been calculated that between 5,000 and 6,000 full-time and part-time jobs depend on the various industries of the Broads. Therefore, not only do the Broads bring a great deal of pleasure to many people, but a great deal of work and income to the region. The city of Norwich and constituencies in East Anglia are trying to promote tourism. We have an ideal opportunity in the Bill to enhance the status of the Broads as a tourist attraction.

Nothing stands still and it is evident to those of us who have known the Broads for a considerable time that they are no exception. They are changing and as more people use them, unfortunately, they deteriorate. Over the years the river banks have eroded. Through a little research I found that the banks are eroding at a rate of about 3 metres in 10 years. It must be obvious to everyone that we cannot allow that to continue. The position would become impossible. The Bill's provisions will help in the work to strengthen the river banks.

[Mr. Powley]

Over the years the water quality has deteriorated. Naturally, farmers use fertilisers and chemicals on their lands which find their way to the rivers and the Broads. Measures need to be taken to improve the quality of the water. The bird and plant life has been affected. Those and other matters need urgent attention and can be given great attention in the Bill.

The present Broads authority is administered by eight local authorities—Norfolk and Suffolk county councils, North Norfolk, South Norfolk, Broadland and Waveney district councils, Great Yarmouth borough council and Norwich City council. Any right hon. and hon. Members who have been in local government will understand that sometimes difficulties——

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. I was involved with the formation of that Broads authority. Is my hon. Friend aware that the authority now operates as a coherent whole, having had powers delegated to it by those various local authorities? The situation after the local government reorganisation of 1974 was exactly as my hon. Friend describes, but since the formation of the Broads authority there has been the most unusual animal of eight local authorities working together, having delegated powers and having financed the authority that my hon. Friend is discussing.

Mr. Powley: Of course, I recognise the work that has been done by those eight local authorities. My hon. Friend has great experience from his membership of Norfolk county council. However, any policy put forward in the past has to be considered and approved by the constituent authorities, and the resolution may not necessarily be accepted by all eight local authorities. The new authority will have functions that will enable it to go forward more positively than it has done previously.

I pay tribute to the Broads authority and hope that many of its policies will continue in future. The Broads authority has done a significant job in improving the status and use of the Broads in the past. Through Broads information centres it has brought to the attention of tourists and holiday makers messages about conservation and information as to where they can benefit from the tourist facilities. It has run a successful programme of guided walks, visits and events for the public entitled "Fun in the Broads". It has improved facilities at quays for boat-borne visitors and has also improved the quality of the moorings. Since 1978 it has performed a vital function, but its function could be improved by the authority given under the Bill.

Some hon. Members may be concerned about the staffing content that may follow the establishment of the new authority. That remains to be seen. I share the fears voiced by many hon. Members about increases in staffing. I have spoken to the Broads authority and also to the local authorities. The Broads authority currently employs 20 full-time staff on an agency basis, and also uses the staff of the various local authorities concerned. I am given to understand—and I have no reason to doubt—that a watch will be kept on the staff taken on by the new authority. However, I understand that there may be a modest expansion of four or five new staff. The achievements that can be made under the new authority will make that modest increase worthwhile.

Some people have commented that there has been inadequate consultation on the Bill. One or two of my constituents have written to me saying that there has been a great rush to get the Bill on to the statute book. I have never understood the great rush to get any Bill on to the statute book. It takes an inordinately long time to do so—rightly in many cases.

The Bill is similar to that promoted last year by the local authorities. Considerable consultations took place then, and this Bill is not very different from what was under consultation then. Three public meetings were held last year, in Norwich, Great Yarmouth and in Lowestoft, and they were well attended. Many boat owners and other interested parties have had an opportunity to make their representations known. All the local authorities concerned have discussed the matter in open council and the public have had the opportunity to lobby their councillors before they reached agreement. The matter has been public knowledge and the public have had the opportunity to lobby their Members of Parliament on the issue. When the Bill goes into Select Committee, following today's Second Reading, the public will have yet a further opportunity to make their representations known. Therefore, although I can understand some of the comments about lack of consultation, close examination of what has happened does not bear out such accusations.

There will undoubtedly be some consideration in Select Committee and at future stages. However, I hope that all right hon. and hon. Members will take the view that the provisions of the Bill will be of overriding benefit to the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads. We should rightly discuss the nitty-gritty in Select Committee and in Standing Committee and there will also be discussions in the other place. We should keep in our minds the overriding benefit that the Bill will bring to the Norfolk Broads, and approach all our discussions with that in mind.

7.47 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I hesitate to take up too many of the comments by the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) in his speech, which was part travelogue and part history lesson. It could have been a maiden speech, but it was longer than most maiden speeches.

As all other right hon. and hon. Members have done, I should like to declare an interest. While I have no territorial ambitions for my constituency, I have spent most of my life in Suffolk living less than 10 miles from the southern extremity of the Suffolk Broads. Unlike the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), I do not give a guarded welcome to the Bill; I welcome it wholeheartedly. It is a splendid Bill, although like most Bills it should have come sooner, and as with most Bills one would seek to change the emphasis. However, that is the purpose of a Committee and I am delighted to learn that the Bill will go to a Select Committee. That is the ideal way of obtaining expert evidence and of correcting the emphasis.

I was disappointed by the fact that the spirit of the Prime Minister's letter to David Puttnam did not seem to be reflected in the small print of the Bill. However, I hope that this will be put right in Committee. The empasis should be more on conservation than on navigation. I have considerable sympathy for the Minister in trying to marry the interests of the navigators and the anglers, for nobody has yet found a satisfactory solution; the passing of a boat

infuriates fishermen and the existence of a line creates considerable hazards for boaters. I represent a constituency with as many drains, canals and dykes as any hon. Member and, therefore, I know how difficult it is to get the two sides to accept a similar point of view.

I want to speak for a moment about the constitution of the Broads Authority, which is called a body corporate. I wish it were not so corporate. I wish that there was more leanness about that body because 35 people are almost incapable of coming to a good, proper and fast decision. I am sorry that, as the hon. Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells) put it, everything seems to have been multiplied by two, which enhances the confrontational nature of district councils, and I am sorry that there seems to be no immediate access by parish councils to that authority. I hope that one of the nine members of the new authority will be nominated by the Secretary of State for the Environment to be responsible for taking the opinions of the parish councils, which tend to know more about the Broads than do the district or county councils in that they have minute and proper knowledge of them.

I have never believed that Whitehall knows better than the people on the spot, and I hope that the Minister will bear in mind the need for a mechanism under which parish councils have access to a member of the new authority. The local politics of East Anglia, which will benefit immensely from proportional representation when it comes, tend to give the impression that of two members from each district council, one will be Labour and one Conservative or one alliance and one Conservative, which better reflects the political opinion of East Anglia.

We in the alliance wish the Bill well and hope sincerely that in Committee even more thought will be given to matters such as nature conservancy. That is not specifically mentioned in the Bill. It mentions natural beauty and it might be useful to explain what the Government mean by that. Does it mean that the Broads look pretty? That does not necessarily ensure good conservation. Clause 2 outlines the duty of an authority to preserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Broads and that should be more specific.

I do not know how much navigation there will have to be for natural beauty to be retained, but I am sure that that will be sorted out by the experts. I simply reiterate that we wish the Bill well. We think that it is the right Bill and high time it were here. We shall hope, in the Select Committee, to make it even more environmentally conscious and perhaps give less to navigation and commerce than it does at present.

7.53 pm

Mr. James Prior (Waveney): I apologise for not being here at the beginning of the debate. I thought that the debate would start later than it did.

I declare an interest, in that I used to have a commercial interest in the Broads. I am delighted that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has taken advantage of it in the past, and I hope that he will do so in the future.

I have lived in Broadland for longer than any of my colleagues, although I have not been such an active participant on the Broads as have a number of my colleagues in the House, so some may speak with greater authority than I can. All I know is that it is a lovely and unique part of England, and all of us recognise that something had to be done.

It has been difficult to get people to decide what should be done. Therefore, I can only say that I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for grasping this rather tricky nettle and for satisfying, as my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells) said, most of the interests. However, he will know, or will learn from experience, that it is impossible to satisfy every interest of a Norfolk or Suffolk person. That would be asking too much, and with that there should not be too much disagreement.

I have some short points to make. The natural environment of the Broads is not as good as it was 50 or 25 years ago, but it is nothing like as bad as some would make out. Some of the reports that I have read over the past few years bear no resemblance to the Broads as I know them or as I have seen them recently. The last time that I was taken on a tour of the Broads was by the Norfolk county council. It complained to me that a lot of reed was disappearing. I happened to see a gaggle of greylag geese busy eating the reed on the side of the river, and I quickly found out that the geese had done more damage to the reed than had almost anything else. Mr. Harry Cator of Woodbastwick introduced about three pairs of geese in 1936. They have bred exceedingly well, as have Canada geese, and I like to see them.

It is pointed out to me that the ecology of the Broads does not stand still. The balance of nature changes. In some respects it has changed for the worse; for example, the quality of the water, and some of the things that have happened. Undoubtedly one welcomes the conservation measures that the new authority will be able to take, but we should not get too steamed up and think that everything has gone wrong, because it has not.

Boat owners have worries, and not all of them get on with fishermen or conservationists, as the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) said, but, on the whole, those who go on the Broads for holidays are interested in the conservation of the Broads, want to see them kept in a decent state and want the peace and quiet which the skies and flat country of Norfolk are particularly capable of giving. Therefore, I hope that the navigation people will not be neglected on the Committee and that their interests will be looked at reasonably.

I am a little worried about the bureaucracy. I agree with the points that have been made about the size of the authority, but I see ominous words at the end of the explanatory note:

"A small number of new posts may be created."

I wonder how many times that has been thought at the beginning of an organisation such as this and how the number has grown afterwards. I hope that a careful check will be put on that, because I can see some busybodies busying themselves about this and I hope that they will not be allowed to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone and others have pointed out that the Broads are man-made. The one thing that could easily destroy the Broads, and nearly destroyed them in 1953, is an abnormal tide flooding large parts of broadland. The same thing could easily happen again. Several of my hon. Friends and myself have made strong representations to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that more money should be allocated for coastal defence and protection. It would be useless to give the Bill its Second Reading today and subsequently to put it on the statute book if we do not give the Broads the protection from the sea that they need.

[Mr. James Prior]

I shall give an example which may fall in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) or in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder) who, as a Government Whip, is unable to take part in the debate. In 1936 there was a serious flood in Horsey. The coastal protection there is pretty poor. If the sea got in again and swept right across Horsey Mere, it could do enormous damage. As the Broads are man-made, they must be protected from time to time by man-made operations. I hope that that fact will be borne in mind because it would be little short of a national tragedy if the entire ecology of the Broads was once more disturbed by an influx of salt water and the weight of water which would result from another flood of 1953 dimensions.

I apologise to the House for not being present at the beginning of the debate. We all wish the Bill well. We hope that it will be considered properly in Committee. We are grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for introducing the Bill and for grasping this difficult stinging nettle.

8.1 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): No hon. Member who has heard the comments of the right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) can help but respect his obvious love for his home area and the expertise and depth of knowledge with which he has spoken. He said that in Norfolk or Suffolk it was impossible to satisfy every interest. That characteristic applies also to Wales.

I shall demonstrate the truth of the right hon. Gentleman's words by saying that I for one am not entirely satisfied with the Bill as it has been presented to us by the Minister. The Minister has a difficult task to perform. We all recognise that everyone who is involved in the economics of land use, be he Minister, environmentalist or someone concerned with conservation, realises that it is a difficult task to reconcile the interests of, first, those who depend on the land for their living, secondly, those whose concern is the protection and furtherance of the environment and, thirdly, the genuine interests of those who seek to use land for recreation. In the Broads there is a fourth dimension—the demands of those who wish to use the Broads for navigation purposes.

The Government should be holding the reins. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure that, depending on the sensitivities of a given area, those varying demands are properly met. The Government have not got the balance right. They have not given conservation its rightful priority. From the wording of the Bill, it appears that conservation is one of the lowest priorities of the Government.

That is not only my view. I have had representations made to me, and I am sure that other hon. Members have received similar representations. I received a brief from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It says on the subject of nature conservation:

"Throughout the Bill there is a presumption in favour of preserving and enhancing the landscape of the Broads with insufficient regard for nature conservation."

The Council for the Protection of Rural England—it gives me great pleasure to quote this—said:

"The Bill appears to CPRE to give insufficient emphasis to conservation and too much to navigation. At many points in the Bill the conservation interest is played down or absent."

The Council for National Parks, which has done sterling work in Wales, said:

"But as the Bill stands it is open to very wide interpretation. It is even possible to read it as a navigation Bill, with conservation responsibilities seen as an added extra. This is upside down and would negate the value of the Bill."

Those three quotations fairly represent the breadth and strength of feeling in the conservation lobby. That is why I recounted them.

I have some specific reservations about the Bill and I shall mention them to the Minister as briefly as possible. My first reservation refers to clause 2. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) mentioned this. Clause 2 places duties on the authority. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said, those duties are navigation, preserving the natural beauty of the Broads and promoting their enjoyment by the public. I am disappointed that nowhere in that clause, which lays down specific duties, is conservation mentioned. I disagree with the hon. Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells), who unfairly dismissed the arguments of those who advance the cause of conservation. Under clause 2, specific provision should have been made and a specific duty should have been placed on the Government to promote those measures which protect or enhance the habitat, especially with regard to our mixed flora and fauna.

Clause 5 gives discretionary powers to the Government so that they may specify activities within the area covered by the Act.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): I wish to understand clearly what the hon. Gentleman has said, so that I may reply to him. He seems to be arguing that conservation is not covered in the objectives of clause 2. Is he arguing that preserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Broads does not cover conservation, or is he arguing that that does not go far enough or is not specific enough?

Mr. Davies: The Bill as it stands is specific. It refers to the preservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Broads. If the Minister says that that is a comprehensive omnibus definition which places clear responsibilities for the enhancement and preservation of nature conservation and refers specifically to flora and fauna, I shall be grateful. However, the Bill does not say that. If the Government intend to make provision for that, we are perfectly entitled to ask that they make their intention clear in the Bill.

Clause 5 gives powers to the Government to vary or to specify the agricultural activities that may be carried out. I am disappointed with that, because it gives a discretionary power to Ministers. Elsewhere in the Bill the Government have made it clear where they are placing responsibilities. Clause 5 says:

"Ministers may by order specify".

That does not put any requirement on Ministers. Presumably, therefore, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in its negotiations with the Department of the Environment, will say that there is no mandate or requirement for the Department of the Environment or the Ministry to ensure that agricultural policy is in tune with the overall objectives set by the Bill. I accept that we may have to consider the detailed points at great length in Committee. That series of reservations adds up to what is, in my opinion, a deficient Bill.

There is no reference in the Bill to any serious discussions between the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. There is no reference to the agricultural strategy. When the Minister opened the debate he made great play of the fact that the Broads are a large agricultural area, with well-established agricultural practices, some of which have given rise to problems of pollution and degradation of the natural landscape. I am disappointed and surprised that no reference is made to the overall agricultural strategy to be carried out within the Broads area.

What is happening to our much-heralded Broads grazing scheme? The Minister made no reference to it. It is due to end in 1988, after its experimental introduction in 1985. During that period £1·7 million was allocated. How does that fit in with the new strategy? Are the Government introducing a total strategy? If I understood the intervention of the Under-Secretary of State, it would appear that the Government are concerned with the whole question of the environment. Are we to assume that the Broads grazing scheme — that welcome experiment by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food — will be taken out and that agricultural provision will be separate from the provisions in the Bill? Perhaps the Minister can also say what financial provision will be made. The £1·7 million that was allocated will finish in 1988. What will happen then? Will the cost of the grazing scheme come from the additional moneys that will be made available for the overall Broads scheme?

My fourth point relates to the unfortunate overloading with navigation interests of the committees provided for in the Bill. The hon. Member for Maidstone and other hon. Members wish to protect the cause of those who regard boating as their prime pastime. That is perfectly valid. However, I disagree. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South related the anecdote of the birdwatcher who shouted at him for sailing in an area because his sails would frighten the birds. I must tell him that if he was sailing in the wrong place at the wrong time in a sensitive area, the birdwatcher was right to shout at him. There is a case for placing restrictions on boating interests. If vital and distinct environments are being destroyed by those pursuing leisure activities, we should be prepared to place restrictions on them. There is a disagreement between us, and I hope that it can be explored in Committee.

Mr. Spearing: I hope that my hon. Friend is referring to the hon. Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells). Although I agree with zoning and with some restrictions on sailing, I think that my hon. Friend would draw a distinction between the Broads and the navigable channels.

Mr. Davies: I think we are agreed that neither of us would frighten the birds.

It is unfortunate that there is a clear majority of boating interests on the navigation committee, because some of those interests are clearly to the detriment of the natural environment. Pollution, intrusion into areas which should be protected, noise and the effects of backwash at sensitive times, are all important. If the navigation interests control the navigation committee, they will have their way at the expense of all of us. I do not suggest that they are insensitive, but we are all politicians and we all realise that a majority is there to be used for the furtherance of an end.

There is a clear majority of navigation interests on the authority generally——

Sir John Wells: No.

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman says no, but my reading of the Bill shows a clear majority. I know that the hon. Gentleman disagrees and that he argued earlier for stronger representation, but if we assume that the representatives of the county councils and the district councils are neutral, at best, two members will be appointed by the Countryside Commission and one by the Nature Conservancy Council. Others will be appointed by the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners and the Anglian water authority. The Secretary of State will appoint nine, three of whom will represent boating interests. If we assume that the representatives of the local authorities are neutral, the authority will have a majority of boating interests.

Mr. Carttiss: What on earth makes the hon. Gentleman think that the representatives of the local authorities will be neutral in what he has presented as an argument, or a battle, between boating interests and conservationists? As my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) said, those who go on the Broads for boating holidays are equally concerned with conservation. I do not understand how the 18 local authority members will be neutral in a battle between conservationists and boat hirers. Indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells) said, boating interests are not represented on the main authority anywhere near enough to match the significance of their industry.

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman made two points, the first relating to the political complexion or leanings of the local authority representatives, and the second that those who use the Broads for recreational purposes are by their very nature unaware of their responsibilities for conservation. That was not my case. I said that the activities of those who wish to use the Broads for recreational purposes can, in some circumstances, damage the environment. I mentioned especially the problems of pollution, backwash and noise.

As for the political complexion of the local authorities, all that I can do is to examine the Members of Parliament who represent constituencies in that area and make some assumptions. If the hon. Gentleman tells me that those assumptions are wrong, I stand to be corrected. I should be grateful if the representatives from Norfolk county council, Great Yarmouth borough council, South Norfolk district council and Waveney district council would put to one side all the pressures placed on them by hon. Members here tonight, by commerce and by the tourist industry and say, "We must ensure that the habitat is protected and that restraints are placed on those who use the Broads." I doubt whether that will happen, but if it did, I would be pleased to be proved wrong.

My last point on the overloading of navigation interests is that the Bill provides a power of delegation to the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners of some or all of the functions of the Broads Authority. The Bill allows the complete delegation to the commissioners of some of the powers contained in the Bill. Does that mean that the authority can, in some circumstances, relinquish its responsibility to protect the natural beauty of the area? If we accept the explanation given by the Under-Secretary of

[Mr. Davies]

State that the Government are responsible for nature conservation, can we assume that the authority will be given the opportunity to delegate those powers to the commissioners? That is the case as the Bill stands. It shows that the Government have got the balance wrong and that — I am loth to use the expression — they have gone overboard in favour of navigation interests.

The Minister referred to the legacy of the past 50 years and spoke with great sincerity about the damage that had been done to the Broads by man's activity, especially during the past 50 years. If he accepts the damage that has been done and that there is a case, not only economically but in terms of conservation and of preserving, enhancing and developing the Broads for recreation in its broadest sense, the Bill should have made some reference to the functions of, or the finance to be made available to, the Broads Authority to enable it to begin to right some of the wrongs that have been done. There is a clear consensus across the Chamber that many areas of the Broads have been damaged, although not irreparably, in recent years. When establishing the Broads Authority, the Government should give it specific powers, if not a duty, to start to remedy some of those ills.

The Bill will receive an easy passage this evening because there is consensus, although there may be disagreement on the emphasis which the Government have placed on boating and on conservation interests. However, the Bill will not have such an easy passage in Committee or on Third Reading unless the Government are prepared to recognise that there are valid conservation arguments. In Committee, we expect the Government to make significant moves in this direction.

8.20 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I am grateful to you for calling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a particular pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies).

This is a memorable evening in many ways. The Government have cause to be proud of introducing the Bill. It is also a memorable evening for Norfolk county council. It worked very hard when preparing the original Bill, the forerunner of this Bill, and I pay particular tribute to Martin Shaw, the director of planning and property, who worked tirelessly for this Bill.

It is also a memorable evening because my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) is to address us. It is a rare privilege for the House to have the benefit of my hon. Friend's oratory and knowledge. However, he is to break his silence tonight. I suspect that what he has to say will be well worth listening to. He does not subscribe tonight, as he often does, to G. K. Chesterton's great dictum, that silence is the most difficult argument to refute, or, alternatively, to the dictum that silence is the most perfect expression of scorn. My hon. Friend has adopted a different course. I am therefore looking forward to hearing his speech. He knows more about the subject than any hon. Member in the House tonight, with the probable exception of my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior). I hope that my hon. Friend will not mind if I trespass on his terrain. The Norfolk and Suffolk Broads are of interest not only to Norfolk but internationally. That is why this is such an important debate.

My constituents are very concerned about progress being made on the Bill. There is monumental concern about countryside and conservation matters. By taking the Bill on board, the Government have risen to the occasion. There are problems, but my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney was quite right when he said that they have been exaggerated.

I have been concerned for some time about water pollution, in particular about the release of phosphate from sewage works and nitrates from agricultural run-off. The two make a particularly unpleasant concoction, with the result that the nutrient build-up encourages algae which suffocate water plants and disturb the delicate relationship between fish and plant life. The result has been a massive decline in a wide variety of plant species. Furthermore, damage has been done to the banks. That is partly related to the build-up of nitrogen. It has made the reed beds unstable and therefore more likely to be torn away by the wash from boats. When reed beds are torn away they become exposed and therefore eroded. Silting is encouraged, which leads to the need for dredging. It is a vicious circle.

Another problem that has been exaggerated is the decline in the marsh and woodland management practices that did so much to conserve the unique habitat of the Broads. Many would refer to this as the "Halvergate syndrome." The vast majority of landowners and farmers in the Broads area are as concerned as anybody about preserving the unique character of the Broads. My right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney referred to Harry Cator who introduced the grey lagged geese. His two sons, Francis and John Cator, are two of the most responsible landowners and farmers in the Broads area. It is a very small minority of farmers who have got farmers and landowners a bad name.

Action has been taken in the last few years. Anglian water has made a number of major attempts to reduce phosphate levels. A big initiative was taken recently by Anglian water, the Broads Authority, the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission, and quite a lot has been done about bank erosion. Since its inauguration, the Broads Authority has made numerous attempts to introduce new ways of managing recreation and sorting out the inevitable conflicts between sailing, cruising, angling and sports such as water ski-ing, to say nothing of the importance of ornithology.

I have referred to the action that has been taken to protect traditional grazing techniques. The hon. Member for Caerphilly referred to the Broads grazing marsh conservation scheme. I compliment my hon. Friend the Minister of State upon having seized the initiative over the "Halvergate" problem by introducing this imaginative scheme, and I hope that it will be continued. There is no reason why it should not be continued after the three-year trial period. Within the context of the new Broads authority that will be created by the Bill, there is a far better chance of continuing that excellent scheme.

A great deal of action has been taken over the establishment of the Broads authority. It is to have the status of a local authority joint committee, and local planning powers are to be delegated to it. It is to have close links with waterways and navigation. It has made an effective start, but insufficient progress has been made on waterways and navigation. It has been impossible to

provide a comprehensive management framework. There is a case, therefore, for transferring navigational powers to the new authority.

The new authority needs to have integrated management powers in order to control the rivers, the Broads and the associated land areas. It must be given navigational responsibilities. If the new authority is not provided with those responsibilities, it will inevitably become land-based and very little different from the bodies that govern the national parks. The case for comprehensive management is overwhelming. I await with great interest what my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth has to say.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells) that some navigational matters need to be sorted out. One of the problems is that the authority will be too big. When I intervened earlier, I mentioned that fact to my hon. Friend the Minister of State. I think that 35 is an unwieldy number. The interests of boat owners and also the navigational interests will be diluted by the sheer size of the authority. I should like those interests to be not just consulted but listened to very carefully.

A few problems will be caused by clauses 4 and 5. Those clauses will apply sections 42 and 43 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to enclosed farmland for the first time. We are referring to traditional grazing areas. They are very different from grazing areas in national parks. They have been enclosed for many years. I am wondering whether the Bill is the right vehicle for a precedent of that nature.

I have reservations about subsections (6) and (8) of clause 5, which grants to the new Broads authority powers of entry without notice to establish whether an offence has been committed. We are referring to a minute number of farmers and landowners who have abused the responsibilities of countryside management that have been entrusted to them. Those powers could lead to unnecessary conflict and possibly to ill feeling, even to aggro, in the farming and landowning community. I urge my hon. Friend to examine carefully the great powers that are contained in those subsections.

This is a good Bill, and this is possibly our last chance effectively to save one of the unique elements of our national heritage. The Broads are a very special part of that national heritage. It is to the Government's credit that they have risen to the challenge and seized the opportunity. The Bill falls into the pattern portrayed by the Government's great concern for the countryside and conservation. I do not think that any other Government has done more for the countryside and conservation—*[Interruption.]* That is why the people of Norfolk and Suffolk are grateful. They are glad that a Conservative Government are in power. I do not think that a Labour Government would introduce such a Bill. The hearts of Labour Members might be in the right place, but we often hear a lot of hot air and rhetoric.

Many people in the Broads feel that some of the policies advocated by the Opposition amount to nothing less than an assault on the fabric of our rural community. Anglers in my constituency are frightened, because, although Labour Members say that angling will not be abolished, they intend to launch an attack on field sports. Many anglers enjoy hours and hours of sport, exercising their ancient freedoms in the Broads. They are fearful of what would happen under a Labour Government. They are grateful for this Conservative Government, who have shown such wisdom in introducing the Bill. I certainly wish it well.

8.30 pm

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I shall be reasonably brief. Perhaps I can reintroduce a note of harmony to our proceedings. There is a great deal of common feeling about the Bill on both sides of the House. My constituency does not quite take in the Broads, although it is close to them and I know them quite well. However, I cannot speak with the same depth of experience or feeling as some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, particularly my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior), who clearly knows the area jolly well.

I have an interest in conservation, sailing and in anything to do with the environment. The Broads are world famous and unique, but they are also industrial relics. We all know that they are old peat diggings, and it is interesting that former industrial workings should now be regarded as natural features that have a recreational facet to them. We get a lot of pleasure from them, but they also have implications for gravel pits and the like. With a little imagination, today's industry could well be tomorrow's recreation, provided that we put our minds to it.

As a small boy, I read Arthur Ransome's books. I do not know how many of my colleagues read them, but those children got up to various things. One of the books, "Coot Club", was all about the Broads and the efforts of those children to preserve a coot's nest so that the chicks could hatch out of the eggs and could go on to reproduce. I believe that the ogres in that book were people who owned a particularly noisy and fast motor launch, and, if my memory serves me right, they nicknamed them the "Hullabaloos". They surged up and down the Broads and the children felt that they did everything that they could to destroy the coots' nesting habits. I make that point to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), because the problems that we are wrestling with today obviously existed before the war and are not new to us. Sadly, we have not learnt much since then, and that is why the Bill has proved necessary.

The wash caused by boats travelling too quickly is very detrimental to the banks of waterways such as the Broads. Having heard the comments of hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber, I can say only that if boat owners cannot be dissuaded from travelling too quickly, firm action must be taken. I care for the environment. One can stand on the river bank and watch the boats going by while realising, minute by minute, just what damage is being done. All the interests must be balanced, but if it is a choice between strict regulations on speed and causing such damage, there should be firm restrictions on the speeds at which boats can travel.

Mention has been made of the quality of our water. I do not want to go into too much detail about nitrates, heavy metals and all the long-term problems involved. Obviously, boats have a pollutant effect, too. However, I have a general point to make that also relates to the Broads. Nowadays, we tend too often to set our water quality standards at the minimum. We should bring all our modern technology and ideas to bear so that we think not of minimum standards but of dramatically improving the quality of water year by year so that future generations can

[Mr. Michael Lord]

see what we have done. In many ways, that involves farming and industry, but it also applies to the Broads. Sometimes we think about what we can get away with instead of how dramatically and rapidly we can get back to much purer water.

Conservation is essentially about balance. It is sad that in this day and age people still need to be controlled. But judging from what we have heard tonight, that control is still necessary. I hope that I have made it clear that if it is a choice between control and permanent damage to our environment or even loss, controls should be put in place. As a Parliament, our duty is not just to guard and preserve what we have but, as I hope that I have made clear, to use all our modern techniques to improve our surroundings for future generations.

Points have been made about the size of the authority to be established. I hope that the authority will be large enough to do the job asked of it, and that it will not expand and lose sight of its purpose. Local people and local authorities want this Bill. We must trust them to ensure that it works, and I congratulate the Minister on it.

8.37 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am happy to join my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) in generally welcoming the Bill, and to join hon. Members in all parts of the House in their almost unanimous welcome for the general principle behind it. I am also pleased to join my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) in paying tribute to all those involved in the preparatory work on it.

I am quite fortunate to be able to join other hon. Members in having a copy of the Bill, as in Norwich there has been some difficulty in obtaining it. During the past few days my constituents tried to get it, but were unable to do so. Consequently, I found myself last night reading out clauses to constituents and trying to put at least some of their fears at rest. That, of course, also bears on the whole question of time for consultation. Although this Second Reading debate has come upon us pretty quickly, particularly for those who wanted to read the Bill in advance, there has been a lot of consultation in the past. I am sure that there is also a good deal of consultation to come while the Bill is in Committee.

My constituency is adjacent to that of Mid-Norfolk, which contains a large part of the area under discussion. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) in regretting that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder) is unable to be here tonight. I join in the tribute paid to the work that he did in preparation for the Bill.

Part of the Broads authority area lies in my constituency, in Thorpe St. Andrew, alongside the river. But although most of my constituents do not live in the Broads authority area, they are actively interested in the Bill either because they have interests in boating, conservation or land use, or because they have leisure pursuits to follow at the weekend. Consequently the Bill is of great interest to my constituents.

Through the good offices of the Broads authority, I have been able to see some of the excellent scientific work that is being done in the Broads area, which is relevant to many of the matters are that is being discussed this evening. Before anyone fears that I am about to launch into a scientific discussion, I remind the House that as a physicist and an engineer I am singularly unqualified to talk about such matters. I appreciate, however, the good and relevant scientific work that is being done.

There is widespread support for the Bill, but in my constituency there is genuine concern as well, which in my brief speech I shall try to express. We want to get things right because we are talking about the future of the Broads area and of Norfolk for tourists and everyone else. There is support for the Bill because it is recognised widely that the quality of the Broads environment has been deteriorating for many years. Indeed, it can be said that that has been happening ever since my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) first visited the Broads, but I am sure that there is no connection between the two facts.

The quality of the environment of the Broads has been monitored for 40 years and it is evident that there has been a serious deterioration. Many factors can be blamed for this, but I shall make no attempt to list them or to point the finger at any one cause. The various factors have been discussed adequately on other occasions.

I shall outline briefly the areas of concern which have been expressed by my constituents over the past week. First, will the new Broads authority be as good as the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners were in the control of navigation? It is a fair question, and I am sure that it will be asked again this evening. I look forward to the answer of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport.

Another area of concern that has been referred to already this evening is the size of the new Broads authority. Will it be too large with a staff of 35? On the face of it, such a staff appears to be too large, but any attempt to reduce it would bring us up against problems of balance and conflicting interests. Possibly I am prepared to go along with a figure of 35 on the basis that it just has to be that large. I merely say that it would appear to be unwieldy.

A third area of concern that has been expressed by some of my constituents—it has been referred to already by my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells)—is the navigation committee. Will the committee have enough power? As the Bill is drafted, only consultation is available to the committee. I share my hon. Friend's concern when he talks about whether consultation is sufficient, or whether full account should be taken of the committee's views. I am sure that others more expert than I will speak more about that issue as the Bill is considered further. It is important to achieve the right balance.

There is a measure of misunderstanding in Norfolk about the constitution of the navigation committee. Many of my constituents, some of whom I was speaking to on the telephone last night, think that there will be only one representative of the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners on the new authority. My reading of the Bill is that there will be more than that. I have no doubt that I shall be corrected if my understanding is wrong.

Mr. Carttiss: The commissioners will have two members on the authority as the Bill stands, but only one will serve on the navigation committee. Does that help my hon. Friend?

Mr. Thompson: I thank my hon. Friend for his help. There is some misunderstanding and I hope that my hon.

Friend will have the opportunity to set out exactly the committee's composition and that of the authority from the point of view of the commissioners. These are not matters on which I am an expert, and I can say only that there is concern in my constituency. I thank my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention.

I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Minister has gone a long way towards increasing the representation of the boating interests. He has done the right thing and achieved about the right balance, but many will be pressing for greater representation, On the other hand, we have heard hon. Members say that in their opinion the representation of boating interests has gone too far already. Perhaps I take the middle and commonsense view that it is about right as it stands. I received today a letter from the Royal Yachting Association which states:

"There has been a considerable improvement over the earlier version of the Bill and a more even balance."

It expresses, however, some concern about other matters.

There are some other areas of concern to which I shall address myself. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take seriously the real concern on Norfolk about the relationship between local authorities, the new Broads authority and the Anglian water authority and its responsibility. This issue may overlap with that raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) when he talked about flooding and coastal erosion, which are serious issues causing a great deal of concern.

There is concern about whether a pressure group, a conservation or boating group, will have its way and destroy the proper balance. It is vital that in considering the Bill we arrive at the right balance. Finally, my constituents are worried about whether toll charges might act adversely on those who have to pay them. Under the new financing arrangements there could be an element of cross-subsidisation. Those who pay tolls or other charges might find themselves paying indirectly for other activities of the authority which have nothing to do with their boating activities, for example. There is real worry about that and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will address himself to it when he replies.

The Bill is the culmination of many attempts over many years to solve a serious problem. There is support for it, but the Government and hon. Members generally have a duty to ensure that the right balance is struck between the various interests and concerns. The Bill is significant environmentally and very important. That is why we should all put our concerns to one side for a moment and welcome the Bill. As I have said, it is of great significance.

There is a danger of the Broads authority going forward in some way that will cause us to be unhappy. We do not want the Bill to result in a growth of bureaucracy. With respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South, in whose constituency this could occur, we do not want to see a vast building being erected at great public expense following the Bill's enactment. Provided that that does not happen, I am sure that we can put aside some of the fears that are being expressed.

We do not want the Broads area to become an overcrowded and over-busy tourist area that will destroy the natural environment. We do not want to see the area become one vast marina with boats everywhere and nothing else. We do not want to see this lively and living area deadened by the wrong sort of emphasis on conservation. I hope that no misunderstanding will arise about that because we are all in favour of conservation, but the right balance must be struck.

The new authority will have the duty to develop, manage and conserve the Broads area, and I hope that the Minister will consider carefully the issues that have been raised under clauses 1 and 9. The Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners have a fine tradition and, judging by the letters that I have received from my constituents, they are well respected for the work that they have done, and are much appreciated. I hope that their views are taken fully into account as the Bill proceeds through the House. It gives me great pleasure to support the Bill's general principles and I hope that the concerns that I have expressed, which are those of my constituents, will be debated fully and taken fully into account.

8.49 pm

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): I echo many comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson). He is the first of my hon. Friends to suggest that the Minister has got it about right when it comes to the size of the authority. I underline that fact. I understand the arguments that have been put forward for a smaller authority. The present Broads authority, set up by the local authorities, has a membership of 26. In some speeches there was confusion between the membership of the authority — people appointed by local authorities — and the other interest groups, the Secretary of State and the staffing elements. I understand the points made about the size of the authority. The Minister has got it about right.

I never was and still am not much of an admirer of Government quangos. I was elected as a Conservative Member when my party, in government, was dedicated to reducing the number of quangos. It is steadily increasing them. The Countryside Commission is a quango of long standing. I was concerned about the original proposals to set up too small a body. The Countryside Commission deserves a tribute for its initiatives over several years. It was in response to its initiatives some six or seven years ago that the local authorities directly concerned set up the Broads authority. Incidentally, for the benefit of my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley), it does not have to have its decisions ratified by the constituent authorities. It was a remarkable move forward to get eight local authorities to give their powers to another body over which they had no control, and, moreover, give up money provided by ratepayers over which they had no control. That is a remarkable achievement in any part of the country.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) said, to achieve it in counties such as Norfolk or Suffolk is a tremendous example of our determination to recognise the importance of our Broads heritage. The Minister, with all the power he has at his disposal, must resist suggestions that the authority's membership be reduced.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) referred to the fact that I do not very often have the honour of addressing the House. That is because, once I get up, I cannot stop. I am aware that we have an opportunity to suspend the Ten o'clock rule. I promise not to intrude on time that the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) and my hon. Friend the Minister of State will want.

[Mr. Michael Carttiss]

The reason why I do not speak very often, apart from the length of time I normally want to take, is that I share a room with my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West. He usually picks up my notes and makes a speech before I realise the notes have gone. He did not have my notes tonight. If he had, he would not have made those absurd comments about the importance of transferring navigation powers from the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners to the Broads authority. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North correctly said that his constituents, those of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder), my own constituents and people from all over the country are greatly concerned about those powers.

It is not unusual for our friends in the alliance parties to attend the start of a debate, welcome what is happening and then disappear. The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) was uncharitable when he referred to my hon. Friend the Minister as making too long a speech about history, giving a travelogue and, also, a maiden speech.

Mr. Powley: It was me.

Mr. Carttiss: I beg my hon. Friend's pardon. That just goes to show that I probably did think my hon. Friend the Minister for State gave hon. Members a travelogue and too much history. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for missing his opening remarks. He kindly allowed me to look through his notes. My hon. Friend made one of the best speeches that I have known him to utter. I have read my hon. Friend's speech. It was good.

This is an opportunity to refer to one of our distinguished local newspapers which referred to the scuppering of the "private Member's Bill." They are the newspaper's exact words. It was not a private Member's Bill; it was a private Bill which the newspaper says had got lost in the parliamentary mire. They are the newspaper's words, not mine. It did not get to the parliamentary mire. One does not expect someone who writes an article for a newspaper in the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Norwich, South and for Norwich, North to know the difference between a private Member's Bill and a private Bill. Nothing was lost in the parliamentary mire. It was a badly drafted Bill. Some of my colleagues drew attention to the fact that this Bill is much better. To do credit to that local newspaper, it referred to it as a much sharper and shorter Bill. It went on to state:

"The only safe course is for the Broads Bill to glide smoothly through the discussion channels . . . Anyone risking the rocks in defence of a narrow interest cannot be deemed a true friend of Norfolk."

A true friend of Norfolk will give the Bill careful and detailed scrutiny. That is a case not of losing it in the parliamentary mire, but of conducting what this honourable House and the other place were created hundreds of years ago to achieve—that the legislation that we pass takes account of all interests for which they are legislating.

I trust that the Bill will have a safe passage, but it will have a passage in which there will be a few waves. My right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench may occasionally need to draw in their oars, lower their sails, or whatever. I cannot think of anyone better than my hon. Friend the Minister to pilot the Bill through the House. I look forward—if it is the wish of the House—to serving with my hon. Friend on the Standing Committee to try to achieve a better Bill than the one he presents now, though I acknowledge that the Bill is good anyway.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East mentioned a point that needs to be considered, certainly in Committee—parish councils. In a district council in Norfolk, whether it be Great Yarmouth, North Norfolk or Broadland district council, parish councils have the opportunity to convey their views on every planning application within their area. They do not go to the local district councillor; they have a right to submit their observations on planning applications within their areas direct. The executive area of the current Broads authority has been given planning powers by the local authorities. I want the new statutory authority to be able to ensure that parish councils have the opportunity, in respect of those matters which come within the executive area of the Broads authority, to project their views, for much the same reasons as those put forward by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West implied that I would make a terrific oration. I said at the time that he usually takes my notes, but he could not have done that this time. If he had, he would have known that the Bill is not about water quality. That still remains essentially the responsibility of Anglian water. Some of us wonder why it is necessary to transfer the navigation powers of the port and haven commissioners to the new Broads authority when it is possible to leave Anglian water and the land drainage committees with their powers intact and acknowledge that there must be some association between them.

When I was a very small child, living within 200 or 300 yards of the Broads where my grandfather fished for eels, as his great-grandfather had done before him, for Squire Lucas to sell on the London markets, I did not think that I would one day have the privilege of speaking in a debate about the setting up of a Broads authority. As my hon. Friends have said, this is an historic occasion, because the international character of our broadland heritage is being recognised.

Some of my hon. Friends have spoken of the importance of the Broads to our economy in Norfolk as a centre of tourism. Great Yarmouth, which includes a substantial part of the Broads, attracts 1 million to 2 million visitors a year. The Broads alone attract well over 250,000 visitors a year. Those visitors bring essential cash into our economy. I represent a constituency with 17 per cent. unemployment, and we certainly do not want anything to inhibit the development of tourism. For that reason, the continuation of the boat hire and building industries is vital. They employ 3,000 people. Many thousands more benefit directly from the existence of the Broads.

Hon. Members have referred to their interests. My interest is that of a descendant of many generations who have lived in and worked on the Broads. In 1966, as a new county councillor elected to represent Broads villages, I had the privilege to be one of the early members of the Broads Consortium which was set up following the Broads review report of the Nature Conservancy Council. That was 20 years ago. I have already, in an intervention, reminded the House that I had the opportunity to be a

founder member of the Broads authority when I represented Great Yarmouth borough council. I have the privilege also to serve on the staffing appointments committee. I put in my vote for Aitken Clark as our chief executive.

This is my opportunity to pay tribute to the members of the the local authorities—Norfolk and Suffolk county councils and the district councils, of which Great Yarmouth is pre-eminent, although I acknowledge the other districts which are represented here. I pay tribute also to Aitken Clark for the way in which he has managed and advised the authority in the development of policies aimed at ending some of the difficulties identified in this debate. He has given eight years of distinguished service. I am sure that he will look on this debate with pride to think that the Government no less have considered the Broads important enough to warrant this measure.

I pay tribute also to the clerks of the authority, the navigation officers and the rivers inspectors of the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners who have given equally dedicated service and shown as much concern for conservation as to navigation during their 100 years of responsibility. I have yet to be convinced that there is a case for taking away their powers. I acknowledge that today we need to begin the consideration of a Bill that proposes to set up a new approach for the next 50 years at least in terms of our Broads and their environment. Therefore, there is no reason for looking back at the past.

I should like to identify clauses in the Bill that I believe will need to be the source of much discussion in Committee. I do not think that the clauses need result in the Bill being materially affected. I have had an opportunity to discuss some of the clauses with my hon. Friend the Minister, and I know that he is prepared to consider my representations along with all the others he will have to consider such as those suggested by the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies).

The powers of the Broads authority will be the subject of great concern, as will the financial arrangements. Again, we have to strike a balance between the need to spend money to preserve the Broads and to encourage tourism. I have already talked about the importance of the tourist industry to Norfolk and my constituency. Its international character has been referred to by colleagues. Many people come across the North sea on the Norfolk line ferry every day in the summer time from Scheveningen, the port of The Hague, to Great Yarmouth and then go on to the Broads. My hon. Friends the Members for Norwich, North and for Norwich, South have the airport at Norwich with its frequent flights from Amsterdam to Norwich. In the summer that regularly brings continental holidaymakers who appreciate and value our broadland environment. It is important that the authority should have powers and that the Government should commit themselves to the sort of financial arrangements that are laid out in the Bill.

I acknowledge the lateness of the hour and the concern to complete the debate by 10 o'clock and I recognise that many of the details I wish to talk about should be dealt with in Committee rather than on Second Reading. However, I would like to draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to a few points of concern in my constituency. I should add that for five years I served as a Norfolk county council nominee on the port and haven commission. I relinquished that position on the passage of the Great Yarmouth Outer Harbour Act 1986 at the end of the last Session.

The boundaries of navigation jurisdiction between the Broads authorities and the commissioners—clause 8(1) and clause 24 of the Bill—are one major cause for concern that will need to be carefully examined by the Select Committee and the Standing Committee.

The second major point of concern is the Broads area as defined and the overlapping powers in the area of the haven. That refers to clause 2(1) and (2).

Another concern is the definition of the navigation area with particular reference to banks—clause 8(1). I shall need to address the House on that if given the opportunity at a later date.

The next area of concern relates to the provisions for dredging in relation to the maintenance of the flow of water through to the haven. That point could take 10 minutes to explain, but I will not detain the House nor weary your patience, Mr. Speaker, by dealing with it tonight. However, it is a serious point that the House will have to consider at some stage.

The provisions relating to the transfer of staff and property give cause for concern. I am surprised that I have heard hardly a reference tonight to the lack of consultation with reference to the staff. The Bill appears rather to regard staff as so many boats to be conveyed from one owner to another. The rivers inspectorate of the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners are not local government staff to be transferred willy-nilly to another authority.

Much of the emphasis of the Bill lies in its character as a kind of local authority Bill. It ignores the fact that the commission is not a local authority and that its staff have much expertise and will still be needed for the navigation functions that the commissioners exercise in the haven.

Clause 10(6) relates to schedule 5. We need to have clarification of the duties and responsibilities of the harbour master of Great Yarmouth and the Broads and the Norwich navigation officers. Some people expressed anxiety about bureaucracy. There is one navigational officer now working in some loose association with the Broads authority, but there will be a different association in future. Under the Bill, there will be three officers. It has always been a fundamental principle of the Government, whom I have the privilege to support, that they should not create three jobs when one will do.

I am also concerned about the membership and remit of the navigation committee. I am in complete agreement with my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells) on this point and must disagree with the hon. Member for Caerphilly. However, that is certainly a point that we can debate together in Committee. Hopefully, we shall have the privilege to serve together on the Committee.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South expressed an awareness and concern for the commercial traffic travelling to the port of Norwich from Great Yarmouth. He also referred to the importance of coastal shipping in terms of the sugar beet factory at Cantley in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk. I share his regret that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk is unwell and cannot be here tonight. However, I know that he would be the first to acknowledge that the major part of the Broads area that falls within his constituency was, from 1951 to 1983, part

[Mr. Carttiss]

of the Great Yarmouth constituency and many people there have made representations to me as well as to my hon. Friend about navigation matters, not least because of their awareness of the importance of seagoing freight traffic on the river Yare.

I should like to draw attention to some of the letters that I have received from all over the country. The notion that the Broads is purely a Norfolk and Suffolk concern has been well and truly buried by the debate tonight. There has been wide recognition that the Broads are a national and, indeed, international heritage. The Ship and Boat Builders National Federation has entered comments that it has circulated to many hon. Members. We must pay attention to some of its concerns. One of those relates to the Broads authority being obliged to consult only the navigation committee. There is no requirement for it to follow the navigation committee's advice. To some extent, that reveals the difficulty of having a Broads navigation officer, a Norwich navigation officer and a Yarmouth harbour master responsible for navigation in the haven, when it comes to him wearing that tricorn hat and serving two masters, without clearly understanding which has the main responsibility.

Time is running short, but I shall detain the House a moment longer to draw attention to a letter from a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone). Having had 30 years' intimate knowledge of the Broads, she says:

"The expertise of the Commissioners in their particular field has been built up over a continuous period of more than 100 years, and, of all the authorities concerned with the Broads, I have never heard a single word of criticism levelled at them. The tolls which they collect are substantial and they regulate navigation strictly and to the very highest standards."

That lady, Mrs. Mont, has great experience of public bodies and the way in which local authorities work and is leader of East Sussex county council. That endorsement of the port and haven commissioners' work comes from right outside Yarmouth and from a person with no vested interest.

I shall not detain the House by quoting from letters to other colleagues making the same point, but I cannot refrain from drawing attention to a letter from the chairman of the planning and local affairs committee of the Yarmouth chamber of commerce, which also expresses concern about navigation provisions in the Bill that it is anxious to discuss with me and to see recorded in due time.

Whether the Bill provides for an agency, which we discussed with the port and haven commissioners, Norfolk county council and the Countryside Commission before, or whether it is a co-partnership arrangement are matters that the press has questioned and to which I shall return in later debates.

Acknowledging the general movement of opinion towards the importance of the Broads authority having navigation powers, although I am still prepared to argue about that, the principle to which I have already adverted and to which I now draw attention as being of the utmost importance is the issue of commercial traffic on the river Yare, which in my view is not adequately covered by the Bill. We have had a great deal of discussion about that, but I shall conclude by referring to a letter from the Earl of Caithness, then Under-Secretary of State for Transport. In a letter addressed to the leader of Norfolk county council, he referred to the importance of safety on the river Yare. That letter, dated November 1985, was discussed with my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), who was then at the Department of the Environment but is now at the Department of Education and Science, so it was written with the knowledge of the Department of the Environment.

To illustrate the need for further discussion about the navigation clauses, I quote the following passage:

"There is also a need to maintain control over the movement of commercial shipping on the Yare between Norwich and Yarmouth. Yarmouth, particularly because of the two opening bridges in Yarmouth. The Department's view is that it would be undesirable, on safety grounds, for there to be more than one authority responsible for control of navigation in the area consisting of Yarmouth harbour, the River Yare up to Norwich, the River Bure up to roughly Acle Bridge, and the River Waveney up to roughly St. Olave's Bridge. The Department would see no objection, on safety grounds, if there were a different authority responsible for navigation on the remaining part of the Broads."

I know that the Under-Secretary of State will respond to this point when he replies, but it is one on which we shall have to spend some time in Committee.

May I conclude — [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Labour Members may say "Hear, hear," but this happens to be important to a constituency with 17 per cent. unemployment. Labour Members pretend that they are the only ones who care about unemployment, but I care about it as do my hon. Friends, including my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench.

The navigation clauses will have an effect on the boat hire and boatbuilding industries which have an employment content and potential within the constituency of Great Yarmouth and neighbouring constituencies. Those navigation proposals will also have an impact on the port of Great Yarmouth and on the commercial traffic that goes along the river Yare, which the Department of Transport acknowledges needs to be looked after by one navigation officer. I know that the Bill allows for one navigation officer, but I remind the Government of the difficulty of a navigation officer serving more than one master.

I am sure that we shall return to these details. Accepting that they will be examined carefully, I know that the local newspaper was right when it said that the Bill would have a smooth passage. However, on the way, we shall have to change some of the arrangements inside the boat.

9.22 pm

Mr. Rowland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I do not intend to follow the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) either in his argument or in the length of his speech.

A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House have declared an interest. It is unnecessary for me to do so, although I take the opportunity to mention my interest in water resources and in the Washington waterfowl park. I am sure that my hon. Friends will expect me to say that it is the best waterfowl park in Britain.

The Labour party is always anxious to support measures that lead to an improvement in the environment. Consequently, I wish to emphasise several important points that were made by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). We give the Bill a guarded welcome, but it contains too little on conservation. Nevertheless, I join my hon. Friend in supporting the Bill in principle.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) made a valuable contribution, and I assure him that we shall support his Instruction.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) made four important points. The first was the need to achieve the right balance between the interests involved. The second was the lack of conservation, and if the Government intend to talk about conservation they should say explicitly what they mean. My hon. Friend also referred to the agricultural strategy and to the Bill's apparent emphasis on navigation.

The hon. Members for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells) and for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) referred to the Labour party's attitude to angling. I shall deal in a moment with the scurrilous misrepresentation of our policy and our support for angling.

The hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) said that he had difficulty in obtaining copies of the Bill. That is a matter that he must take up with the Government Front Bench.

The right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) referred to the importance of protecting this beautiful and important area from sea flooding.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields, in his informed and carefully researched contribution, developed the Labour party's position on the Bill and its views on general conservation. In my short contribution this evening I wish only to raise a few questions and to underline the questions raised by my hon. Friends. I shall put them into different sections, and my first question concerns managed access. We consider that this is an important facility and amenity for the local population —this has been mentioned by many hon. Members this evening—and also for helping tourism.

Jobs are important. The hon. Member for Great Yarmouth mentioned the high level of unemployment in his area. Most hon. Members on the Labour Benches represent constituencies with very high unemployment levels. If we were in government we would do something about it, and if the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth wants to reduce the level of unemployment in his constituency, he should talk to his hon. Friends about it.

Obviously, we are interested in maintaining jobs that are already in existence and also in creating new ones. The hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) quoted some statistics, which I noted. He said that 650 jobs in the region are concerned with boat hiring and that an additional 500 jobs are available during the high season. I am well aware that about 300,000 people come into the area during the holiday period, and most spend a considerable amount of money — somewhere in the region of £20 million. That money adds to the economy and, one hopes, will help to protect jobs.

I appreciate that the Minister will not be able to answer all our questions this evening, but I hope he will answer our questions concerning access to the area. Someone to whom I spoke today about the area said that unless one owns land or owns a boat it is difficult for many local people to get on to the Broads.

Much has been said this evening about the balance between different interest groups—the balance between farming, navigation, boating, leisure and conservation. We have argued, as have some Conservative Members, that there is too much emphasis on navigation. My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly mentioned that the Council for the Protection of Rural England has said that the Bill appears to give insufficient emphasis to conservation and too much emphasis to navigation. The Council for National Parks has said:

"as the Bill stands it is open to very wide interpretation. It is even possible to read it as a *navigation* Bill."

We are concerned about the lack of conservation measures, but I shall give the Minister the opportunity to answer without any further comment.

Much concern has been expressed about the excessive speed of boats, which is causing erosion and the loss of reed beds in the northern rivers of the area. I was interested in the explanation given by the right hon. Member for Waveney about the geese. In my waterfowl park—it is perhaps rather arrogant to call it my waterfowl park—there is a tremendous collection of geese and ducks as well as other wildfowl. About 7,500 hectares of marshland have been transformed for farming purposes. That, together with the improvements in drainage on some remaining land, has impoverished the aquatic flora and fauna of much of the dyke system and left most marshes too dry to be suitable for nesting sites for red-shanked snipe and other wetland birds. We regret that.

Hon. Members have mentioned noise and speed, and I should add overcrowding to that. Overcrowding reduces the quality of the holidays and recreational experiences of people, especially those from other areas who go to the Broads to enjoy them and for a holiday. In a letter, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds stated:

"it is essential that the new Authority have sufficient powers to control activities on water . . . the closure of any part of a navigation channel"

should be a possibility. Under what circumstances do the Government envisage clause 5 being used? Is it part of a long-term strategy, or will it be used only in environmental emergencies? Perhaps the Minister could answer that question.

I am tremendously worried about the pollution of the waters caused by the addition of nitrates, phosphates and other chemicals from agricultural run-off and the domestic sewerage system. Urgent action is needed. The Council for National Parks is explicit on that and states:

"The Bill permits the Broads Authority to carry out works and make grants for the purpose of improving water quality in consultation with the Anglian Water Authority. There is, however, no specific additional conservation responsibility placed on the AWA as a result of this Bill."

Perhaps the Minister can look into that.

In a discussion about land on the Broads the Nature Conservancy Council in its June 1986 topical issue stated:

"the Broads are suffering from a surfeit of nitrate and phosphates, and this has had a devastating effect on the ecology of the region. All but four small Broads are now virtually devoid of waterweeds and their associated invertebrates."

Will the Minister consider carefully the problem of water pollution on the Broads?

Many hon. Members have spoken about the balance of interests and have shown concern about the emphasis on navigation. It is possible that half the committee could have an interest in navigation. The Secretary of State can select nine members. Will the Minister tell us how the Secretary of State intends to use that gift? Will he ensure that there is a balance of interest on the authority?

The RSPB emphasised the possibility of boating interests being over-represented. In a letter it stated:

"It is conceivable that over half of the members of the Broads Authority may represent boating interests. This is excessive and should therefore be limited to no more than four (of eighteen) to ensure an equable representation of interest."

[Mr. Rowland Boyes]

The hon. Members for Maidstone and for Great Yarmouth made remarks on angling about which I feel strongly. I defy either of them to find any reference in any of our documents or party manifestos——

Mr. Carttiss: At no time did I speak about angling, and I certainly did not mention the Labour party.

Mr. Boyes: I just need to find the right constituency. Two Conservative Members made that point. What the hon. Gentleman said does not negate my argument; it just gave him the opportunity to add to his overlong speech. I see in "Dod's" that one of the hon. Gentleman's recreations is talking, and I presume that he was using that opportunity to put that interest into practice.

I defy any Conservative Members to find any documentation which says that the Labour party will abolish angling or is even threatening to do so. I put it on the record this evening that the Labour party has no intention at the next or any other election to abolish angling. I go even further. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields and I would say that a Labour Government would ensure that the angling interest was represented on the Broads authority. I cannot be any more specific than that. If any Conservative Members want to misrepresent our policy, we now have it firmly on the record.

On this matter we speak with one voice. I am aware that Norwich city council is Labour controlled and that Norfolk county council is Tory controlled, but they agree on the need for the Bill. The Labour parliamentary candidate for Mid-Norfolk has said that the Bill is a step in the right direction and the RSPB has said that it welcomes the Bill as an important step in ensuring the conservation and enhancement of this ecologically important area.

Labour Members welcome the Bill. The Liberal and Social Democratic Benches are, as usual, empty at this time of night. The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) gave the Bill his wholehearted support. All of us on the Opposition Benches have said that we will support the Bill this evening, but that we have reservations, and we hope that they will be raised in Committee and accepted by the Government.

9.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): This has been a measured and informative debate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) said, we have been dealing with a matter not just of local interest but of great national concern.

Many detailed points have been raised and I sense that the House wants to bring this debate to a fairly rapid conclusion and to move on to the next business. Therefore, I apologise in advance for not dealing with many of the points raised. The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) generously said that it would be impossible to answer all the detailed questions and we shall be writing to him on some of the points that he made. Obviously, as will be apparent to many of my hon. Friends, many points will be dealt with in detail in Committee. I hope that hon. Members will bear with me if I do not give way too often during the rest of the debate. I wish to answer specifically some of the points that have been made. I shall take them in chronological order because I cannot think of a better way of dealing with them.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) made one or two points, some of which were repeated during the debate. I shall try to answer what I consider to be his main points. On the recurring point about pollution and the position of the Anglian water authority, as the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) recognised, the water authority will remain responsible for the quality of the water. There is no change in that. Nor would it be appropriate, for the reasons given during the debate, for that to change. That is only a fairly modest part of the entire water system. It must remain under the control of the water authority, although the Bill imposes a new responsibility on the authority to consult the new Broads authority. That is a new constraint vested in it. Speaking off the top of my head, I would be surprised if that was repeated with respect to many water authorities in a comparable position.

Several hon. Members asked about the important matter of the agricultural experiment and whether it would be continued. The three-year experiment in Halvergate will end on 31 March 1988. From 1 April 1988, the new arrangements under the Agriculture Act 1986 will then apply. The Broads have been designated as an environmentally sensitive area. The Government will offer incentive payments to farmers to continue traditional farming methods as implied by the experiment.

The powers to stop damage raised some complicated issues. I know that the matter is of enormous interest to the hon. Member for South Shields because he has been deeply involved in the amendments of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Section 42 of that Act is, in effect, the model upon which the Bill is based. The powers contained in section 42 are comparable to those in this Bill which require farmers and foresters to notify the national park authority before carrying out any activities which may contravene the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The penalties involved will be comparable in this Bill to those in the Act that is already on the statute book.

My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells) asked about the percentage that the boating fraternity would have to contribute towards total costs. I have the detailed figures—their contribution will be 30 per cent. My hon. Friend and other hon. Members may wish to debate in Committee whether that contribution is too high or too low. My hon. Friend raised a rather difficult and technical, but important, point on the difference between temporary and permanent closures. The power of an authority to close a part of a navigation channel permanently is limited. It may be done for the purpose of nature conservation. It must not be used to shut off a navigation channel other than the very end of one, or to create a serious obstruction to navigation. The temporary closure powers have a much wider range of purposes. That is why an elaborate procedure with safeguards is set out.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) made a point about coastal defences. The Broads authority will have no powers in respect of those defences. They will remain with the local authorities. Nothing in the Bill will change the present position in that regard.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) and others asked whether the Government have the balance right. That theme ran through the debate. The hon.

Member for Newham, South asked whether we would try to make the definitions and objectives of the authority more clear-cut. That theme ran through his speech. I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Caerphilly to ask whether he could not conceive that the objective in clause 2(1)*(b)* would meet the point that he had made. I was pressed by the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington to say a little more about this. On reflection, I should say that clause 2 confers a duty to preserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Broads and requires the authority to have regard to the desirability of protecting the natural resources of the Broads. That wording certainly takes into account flora, but it is arguable whether, to the same extent, it takes into account animal life or fauna. This matter may properly be the subject of further discussion in Committee. I hope that my remarks give some assurance to the hon. Member for Caerphilly and those who argued for a tighter definition of conservation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) argued that clauses 5 and 6 contained powers that were too strong, although some others argued that they were too weak. Access management and the powers associated with it will be discussed at some length in Committee.

Several hon. Members asked about the size of the authority. Some have argued that it is about right and some that it is too large. Its composition was certainly a recurring feature of the debate. I hope that the House will agree that the matter can properly be discussed in Committee. My hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning said that part of the problem was gathering together a wide selection of interests. A recurring problem throughout the Bill is reconciling different interests, and one way in which that has been done is through the authority.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North mentioned the Royal Yachting Association letter. That is an important document for consideration by the House and by the Committee. The boating aspect has worried several of my hon. Friends, but the Royal Yachting Association says clearly that it supports the concept of a statutory Broads authority and that its representations are intended to ensure, as most hon. Members would wish, that the Bill represents everyone's best interests and that its details are properly constructed, whatever point of view one takes.

Several hon. Members were troubled by the suggestion of cross-subsidy. The accounts must be absolutely clear. The details of how they will be operated are bound to be the subject of great discussion in Committee. We shall discuss how the accounts will be treated and how we can ensure that the moneys paid by the boating interests are used for navigation purposes. There will be a great deal of detailed discussion. The principle is firmly enshrined in the Bill. Details will have to be discussed, but I hope that they can be left to the Committee stage.

I refer to two points that were made by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss). He mentioned the rights of parish councils to make direct representations. I acknowledge that that right is not included at the moment. I have briefly discussed the matter with my hon. Friend the Minister of State, and we agree that it would be appropriate to discuss it in Committee. The Government will listen carefully to what Committee Members have to say about it.

My hon. Friend also referred to a matter affecting navigation. That is why I am standing at the Dispatch Box. It is the Department of Transport's responsibility to ensure that navigational interests are balanced against other interests. The Department of Transport looked carefully at the Bill and had its doubts about the matter. My hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth referred to the early doubts about whether it would be wise to split certain aspects of control of the waters. Having consulted widely, the Department has been persuaded that if the two authorities fully co-operate divided responsibility should provide an acceptable, safe alternative. There will be discussions in Committee about the precise nature of that co-operation. My hon. Friend has raised an important and useful point, and the Department of Transport believes that it can be worked out, if common sense prevails.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House agree that the Broads are a unique heritage. Hon. Members also agree that the Broads have deteriorated in several respects. In recent years there has been a serious risk of part of the heritage deteriorating beyond repair. The Bill aims at striking a balance between the needs of conservation and the needs of those who use the waters of the Broads for commercial and recreational purposes. The fact that each set of champions on each side of the equation is calling for more attention to be paid to its side of the argument probably means that the Government have got it about right. Therefore, I recommend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Ordered,

That the Bill be committed to a Select Committee of Seven Members, Four to be nominated by the House and Three by the Committee of Selection.

Ordered,

That there shall stand referred to the Select Committee—

(a) any Petition against the Bill presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office at any time not later than 23rd January 1987, and

(b) any Petition which has been presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office and in which the Petitioners complain of any amendment as proposed in any Petition against the Bill or in the filled-up Bill or of any matter which has arisen during the progress of the Bill before the said Committee,

being a Petition in which the Petitioners pray to be heard by themselves, their Counsel or Agents.

Ordered,

That if no such Petition is mentioned in sub-paragraph *(a)* above is presented, or if all such petitions are withdrawn before the meeting of the Committee, the order for the committal of the Bill to a Select Committee shall be discharged and the Bill shall be submitted to a Standing Committee.

Ordered,

That any Petitioner whose Petition stands referred to the Select Committee shall, subject to the Rules and Orders of the House and to the Prayer of his Petition, be entitled to be heard by himself, his Counsel or Agents upon his Petition provided that it is prepared and signed in conformity with the Rules and Orders of the House, and the Member in charge of the Bill shall be entitled to be heard by his Counsel or Agent in favour of the Bill against that Petition.

Ordered,

That the Committee have power to report from day to day the Minutes of Evidence taken before it.

Ordered,

That Three shall be the Quorum of the Committee.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Ordered,

That it be an instruction to the Select Committee to which the Bill is committed to satisfy itself, having regard to any petitions referred to it, that the Bill will provide adequate representation for boating interests and will neither unduly increase the cost of, nor enable undue restraints upon, boating on the Broads.—*[Sir John Wells.]*

NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK BROADS BILL
[MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purpose of any Act resulting from the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expense incurred by the Secretary of State under that Act; and

(b) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of such money under any other Act.

—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Dairy Industry

Mr. Speaker: Before I call upon the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to move the motion, I should announce to the House that I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the leader of the Liberal party.

9.55 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9161/86 concerning emergency measures in the dairy sector, the Commission proposals described in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum of 18th November on the same subject and the Government's intention to seek agreement on arrangements to bring production in the milk sector into closer balance with consumption.

Whether the amendment is ever moved remains to be seen. However, I should perhaps start with a word of explanation of why this debate has been arranged in the absence of some of the formal documents.

The House will know that the Commission recently produced what it described as an interim report on the application of the quota system in the milk sector. That report has not yet formally been received by the member states, although we have obtained advance copies, and these were made available in the Vote Office on Friday. The report outlines a number of measures which the Commission believes would help to restore the balance in the milk market. These measures are the subject of my Department's unnumbered explanatory memorandum referred to in the motion now before the House, which the Scrutiny Committee recommended for debate.

In view of this recommendation and the widespread interest that the Commission's ideas have aroused, I was anxious that the House should have the opportunity of making its views known before this matter was discussed in the Council of Ministers next week, even though all the Commission's formal proposals have not yet appeared. Incidentally, I notice that Liberal and SDP Members have not appeared either. Where are those great enthusiasts, who put motions on the Order Paper and never turn up?

It would be difficult for me to overstate the importance of the sector whose problems we are debating tonight. The House will recall that there are 1·4 million milk producers in the European Community. In the United Kingdom milk accounts for more than 20 per cent. of the value of agricultural output. I see that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), a Liberal Member, has now joined us.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The debate started five minutes early.

Mr. Jopling: No doubt the hon. Gentleman can pick up its threads as we go along.

Milk tends to be particularly important for smaller farmers and, indeed, it is the type of production that one associates most readily with the small family farm. It has the advantage of bringing in a regular income month by month, although that is achieved only by the hard physical grind of milking two or three times a day, seven days a week, and it demands a high degree of skill and stockmanship.

It is clearly essential for the well-being of agriculture as a whole that we look after the dairy sector. The problems which the milk industry is facing now must be dealt with in a way which shows an understanding of the long-term nature of investment in milk production. This is not to say that the solutions can be painless, but they must take full account of the specific conditions of the sector.

The House will recall that for many years before milk quotas were introduced in 1984 British Ministers had argued strongly in Brussels for price restraint in order to bring milk production back into line with demand. I still believe that this would have been the best solution for the industry, particularly in the United Kingdom. Sadly, our partners in the Community in those days were unwilling to accept price cuts of the magnitude necessary to make the market work properly, and as a result quotas had to be brought in to stem the mounting surpluses.

Although the introduction of quotas gave rise to many problems, and to difficulties for many producers, the system was successful in reining in production. Whereas deliveries to dairies increased by 7·4 million tonnes in 1982 and 7·3 million tonnes in 1983, in the first quota year in 1984 there was a fall of 5 million tonnes. In fact, deliveries were 400,000 tonnes less than the total Community quota, but because milk production remained profitable and the levy penalty was too light, it soon became evident, after the quota system had begun to settle down, that there was a strong financial incentive on many producers to exceed their quotas. In the second quota year, 1985-86, the total Community quota was exceeded by around 900,000 tonnes. In the first six months of the third quota year, April to September 1986, it is estimated that deliveries were 1 per cent higher than in the same period of 1985.

I am glad to say that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) is now in his place, so two Liberal Members are present. There is still no SDP representation in the Chamber.

It is evident that milk production is still highly attractive to many farmers. This fact is demonstrated very clearly in England and Wales by the extremely high prices producers are offering for quota in connection with land transactions. Many hon. Members will have seen press reports of prices as high as 20p to 22p per litre, and in some cases as much as 26p per litre.

In the meantime, consumption of milk and milk products is stagnant. It is clear that, even with quotas in place, Community milk production subtantially exceeds all market outlets. The Commission has estimated the surplus at 9·5 million tonnes or 9·5 per cent. of production, and this is certainly no exaggeration. Indeed, it is based on the assumption that there will be a continuing high volune of subsidised exports and subsidised disposals on the Community's internal market. If these artificially created outlets are taken out of the equation, the House should remember that the surplus is now at least 20 per cent.

What this means is that the Community is offering milk producers very high prices in order to fill a quota which is far above what consumers are willing to buy. The result is that intervention stocks of butter have risen to 1·5 million tonnes and stocks of skimmed milk powder are about 1 million tonnes. The cost just of storing this surplus is currently running at about £1 million a day.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): With the cost running at £1 million a day, which is £365 million a year, has my

[Mr. Colin Shepherd]

right hon. Friend estimated what the cost of storage will be if he is successful in reducing production in the United Kingdom by 9·5 per cent.?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend should realise that I am intent on reducing production throughout the Community and not only in the United Kingdom. We cannot have discrimination.

The present situation clearly cannot be allowed to continue. In its paper, No. 645 of 1986, the Commission has therefore proposed a two-pronged attack. In the first place it wants to tighten up on the quota system, both by direct and indirect means, and in the second place it wishes to reduce the attractiveness of the intervention system so as to make producers and traders bear some of the risks of the market, from which they are, at present, effectively insulated.

The United Kingdom has clear reservations about some of the methods that the Commission proposes, but we have to agree with its basic aim. We cannot dispute—as I do not believe anyone can rationally dispute—the need to reduce the size of the Comunity quota and to reduce the absolute security of the intervention system. The Commission is aiming to reduce milk production by 9·5 million tonnes. I think it reasonable to accept that this should be our target. Of the 9·5 million tonnes, 3 million tonnes is to be found by the quota cuts which the Council agreed in April this year—that is to say the 2 per cent. quota cut scheduled for 1 April 1987 and the further 1 per cent. that is scheduled for 1 April 1988. The Commission now proposes doubling these cuts to achieve a further 3 million tonnes reduction. I do not think that it is possible to dispute the logic of this, although I fully understand the difficulties that it will present to many producers.

Like some other member states, the United Kingdom sees merit in paying compensation at a reasonable level for all quota cuts. We shall be looking for changes in the arrangements for te quota cuts already scheduled, as these do not permit at the moment the payment of compensation for across-the-board cuts. This is one of many points where I guess there will be a great deal of discussions in Brussels before the Council eventually reaches a decision.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): First, will my right hon. Friend assure me that he has no intention of seeking any changes in the current marketing year? Secondly, will he assure me that he understands very well that any drastic measures would have a major ripple effect through the rest of agriculture? Does he agree that there is a need, therefore, for an overall policy statement from him on the future of British agriculture?

Mr. Jopling: I appreciate that. At the moment, cuts in quotas are not envisaged during the course of the current milk year—that is, the year from 1 April to 31 March. I am aware of the ripple effect, particularly in view of my meeting with farmers this morning at the Smithfield show. They firmly pointed out to me the effect of reduced milk quotas on the beef sector. That is particularly what my hon. Friend spoke about.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Jopling: I really must continue. I shall not give way. This is a short debate, and I must make progress.

As well as these quota cuts totalling 6 million tonnes, the Commission proposes various changes in the rules of the quota system to produce a further reduction of 3·5 million tonnes. I fully understand why the Commission is suggesting this, but, however clear the need to cut production, we must be careful that the urgency does not push us into uncritically accepting every proposal that is put forward by the Commission. I have to say that I have serious doubts about some parts of this section of its proposals.

I have no great difficulty with the first of the changes that the Commission proposes. This is the abolition of the arrangements which allow quota undershoots in one region to be offset by the levy liability of other regions. That is known in the regulations as article 4a. This facility has been of some limited value to the United Kingdom in the first two quota years. It has been of considerably more value to other member states, but it was not part of the basic milk quota scheme as originally worked out. It was introduced during the first quota year as a temporary concession to enable the industry to adjust to the new system, and I do not believe we can quarrel with the ending of it.

The Commission's proposal to abolish what are known as formula B arrangements is much more difficult for us. The effect of formula B is that producers do not have to pay super levy unless the purchasing dairy which they supply is itself over quota. Even then, the amount per litre which producers have to pay is much less than the full rate, because quota unused by producers who undershoot their quotas is offset against excess production by those who overshoot. It is true, as the Commission points out, that this makes it more likely that national quotas will be fully used, but formula B was an integral part of the quota system agreed in March 1984. It brings a much-needed element of flexibility into a very rigid system, in that, within the area of any one Milk Marketing Board, it allows the evening-out of variations in supply between individual producers.

A major problem with any quota system is its inherent tendency to ossify the industry. We need to find ways of offsetting this tendency. One way that we have advocated from the start would be to allow the sale of quota separately from land, having due regard, of course, to the interests of landowners as well as milk producers themselves. Sadly, the Commission and other member states are not yet ready to go down this road. Therefore, in this context, we shall have to insist upon the retention of formula B. Many other member states feel the same as we do on this point.

The objective must be to get the total quota down to a reasonable level and to ensure that this new ceiling is respected, but within the new ceiling we should allow the operation of market forces to determine the development of the industry. It would not be wise to reduce the quota to a level still substantially higher than demand and then hope to rely on the rigidities in the system to ensure that production remains significantly below the ceiling.

As part of this strategy, I see a strong case for a substantial increase in the rate of super levy. The Commission's proposal on this point does not seem to be quite adequate, as it relates only to formula A. An increase for formula A and formula B would be appropriate.

In Brussels we shall be arguing that we should reduce quotas to bring them more into line with demand. I agree very firmly with those hon. Members who have said in the

past that changes of this sort must be made with full understanding of the time it takes to alter production patterns in agriculture. In discussing the proposals, and particularly in looking at the timing of their impact, I shall have very much in mind the need to look at the effect of the whole package on individual producers.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does my right hon. Friend accept that if we introduce further quota reductions when we are only 75 per cent. self-sufficient in liquid milk we shall inevitably suck into this country additional liquid milk from the continent? How can that be good for this country or for our balance of payments? How can it be good to put our dairy farmers, who are not contributing to the annual surplus, out of business and automatically reduce their incomes?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend, for once, has not done his homework particularly well. He said that we were 75 per cent. self-sufficient in liquid milk. Of course, we are 100 per cent. self-sufficient in the liquid milk market, with the exception of that tiny amount, which is imported, of UHT and sterilised milk. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be interested in the latest figures which my Department has worked out. In 1985 the United Kingdom was 98 per cent. self-sufficient in butter fat, which includes that part of our market reserved for New Zealand. If we exclude New Zealand——

Mr. Winterton: I do.

Mr. Jopling: We are 89 per cent. self-sufficient in butter fat. In 1985 we were 112 per cent. self-sufficient in solids non-fat, the other element of milk. The two figures are 89 per cent. self-sufficient in home production of butter fat and 112 per cent. self-sufficient in solids non-fat. My hon. Friend knows a great deal about the dairy industry. As he well knows, the composition of milk is roughly one part fat to two parts solids non-fat, so he will be able to work out the figures for himself.

In talking about quota cuts, I shall be insisting that they must apply equally in all member states. There is no basis for any member state, including the United Kingdom, to argue for special treatment, as the original allocation of quotas was very fair. It has been suggested that the United Kingdom could make a claim for special treatment on the basis that we do not produce all the milk products that we consume. It is important to bear in mind, however, that if we were to re-open that question, several member states could claim much more than we could. One major member state is not even able to supply its own liquid milk market in full, so it cannot be in our interests to pursue that line of argument. I shall therefore be insisting that the quota cuts should be by the same percentage for every member state.

Having achieved the cuts required, our firm aim should be to ensure that member states' total quotas are not exceeded. However, we should aim to permit the maximum possible flexibility between individual producers within the overall total.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is a wide disparity in the capacity of farmers in different parts of the United Kingdom to survive? I represent a part of Wales which was caned especially hard last time by the quotas. What does my right hon. Friend say to those farmers—one of whom has written to me saying that with 30 cows he is trying to live on an income of £3,225 a year—who proved to the tribunals that they were living at subsistence level with the last imposition of quotas and who are now asked to take a further 9 per cent. reduction?

Mr. Jopling: I have no doubt that my hon. Friend will recall that when the original quota system was put in place we paid particular attention to the needs of small farmers. I am sure that my hon. Friend has already pointed out to his constituents that, after the tribunals had done their work, we were able to take steps that brought virtually every small farmer—that is, farmers with fewer than 40 cows—back to the level of production, with quota, that they had had before the quota was introduced.

The second prong of the Commission's attack on the milk surplus is its proposal to restore the intervention system to its original function. Intervention was originally conceived as a safety net to protect producers and traders from market fluctuations. In recent years, however, that purpose has been perverted, and instead intervention has become a major outlet in its own right. During the first nine months of 1986 approximately 35 per cent. of all butter produced in the Community was bought into intervention. In the same period about 31 per cent. of skimmed milk powder production was also bought into intervention. That clearly cannot be allowed to continue.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): My right hon. Friend's memory has let him down disastrously. Intervention was sold to the British farmer as a substitute for the deficiency payments system that we had before not to even out market fluctuations. My right hon. Friend cannot get away with that new theory, which purports to alter history.

Mr. Jopling: If I may argue with my hon. Friend, he will recall that he and I stood in the 1966 and 1970 general elections on the basis of a straight swap from the old-fashioned deficiency payments and guaranteed price system to a system based on import levies. That was the balance. The method of supporting the market by intervention was a separate matter and, although it was an integral part of the Community system, my hon. Friend would remember that in the original changeover it was the swap for import levies which was part of that.

The Commission is therefore proposing that permanent intervention for skimmed milk powder should be ended in the winter months. For skimmed milk powder during the summer, and for butter at any time of the year, it is proposed that the Commission should itself have the power to suspend intervention buying if the balance of the market can be guaranteed by other measures.

I see little difficulty for the United Kingdom in agreeing to these proposals for skimmed milk powder. Provided the price is right, it is possible to dispose of very large volumes of skimmed milk powder for inclusion in animal feedingstuffs. It makes little sense for intervention authorities to buy in large stocks of skimmed milk powder, store it for many months, and then sell it for animal feed. It would be far more logical for the powder to go direct from the manufacturer into animal feed with the help of a subsidy. It is even better if liquid skimmed milk can be sold direct for animal feed without first being converted into powder.

Mr. Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Jopling: Provided the subsidy is sufficient to make the skim genuinely competitive with alternative proteins, I see no difficulty with that method of proceeding.

I do, however, have reservations about the Commission's proposals as regards butter intervention. Despite the intensive search which has been made, there is as yet no outlet capable of absorbing large volumes of butter, as there is for skimmed milk powder. That being so, I find it difficult to see precisely how the Commission intends to operate without intervention. I would very much like to be able to support the Commission on this point, as its objective is so obviously logical. So far it has not been able to give me the reassurance I would need, but I hope that it will be able to do so as the discussions proceed.

Sir Peter Mills (Torridge and Devon, West): Has my right hon. Friend considered the serious affect that that would have on dairy milk factory workers? The Milk Marketing Board has said that it would probably have to close nine plants. As well as giving compensation to the farmer on the lost quota, what about the dairy workers too?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend will understand that if one cuts milk production — we are no likely to cut the amount of milk going to the liquid market — that must inevitably mean that there will be less milk available for manufacturing. I do not know how many factories or industrial plants might be affected by whatever reduction might occur. That is a matter for the dairy trade, as it will clearly have implications.

With regard to the specific point raised by my hon. Friend, I must stress that there is a statutory arrangement for redundancies. I know that many companies and the Milk Marketing Board have their own supplement to the normal basic redundancy arrangements. These applied during previous quota cuts. I have no announcement to make with regard to further redundancy arrangements other than those that are available for all industries.

In conclusion, I should like to stress that I fully understand that many hon. Members, producers and others in the dairy industry will have serious apprehensions about the proposals now under discussion in Brussels. I do not wish to deny that the effect of the proposal will be painful for many people.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy) *rose*——

Mr. Jopling: There is no getting away from that fact, and I would be deluding the House if I pretended otherwise. However, I ask all hon. Members to realise that the difficulties that we are now facing are very largely the result of a failure in earlier years to take difficult decisions to prevent the position from deteriorating.

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): All thanks to the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), and his produce, produce, produce.

Mr. Jopling: Hon. Members should remember that successive Ministers from both Conservative and Labour Governments have continually warned the Council of Ministers of the folly of giving larger and larger price increases and encouraging more and more production.

The British Government have for many years stressed the dangers. Sadly, others were not prepared to heed the signs, and when eventually action was taken in 1984, the new system had to be imposed much too quickly, causing serious difficulties for many producers.

I am determined that that mistake should not be repeated, and it is for that reason that I shall be pressing my colleagues in the Community to agree now to measures that can be introduced at a reasonable pace. Progress on that issue will be a priority for us at the meeting of the Council next week. Only once that nettle has been grasped will it be possible to remove the uncertainty that has plagued the milk sector for so long. Only then will it be possible for the industry to get on to a more stable footing for the future.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, may I say that many hon. Members have an interest in the debate, and I appeal for short contributions.

10.22 pm

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): I shall try to make a shorter speech than the Minister. First, I understand why, in the absence of any official text, the Minister has sought to bring the matter before us. I believe that to be able to debate this matter before negotiations take place is valuable to the House.

It must be said that the first approach to the dairy regime by the Ministers and the Commission has not been a success. Costs have continued to rise and stocks have also risen. We can put the matter into perspective by stating that this is the most costly of all the common agricultural policy regimes, commandeering about 30 per cent. of total agricultural spending. We have heard about Europe-wide stocks, but in this country stocks of butter have risen by a third in the past six months.

In April, the Commission, realising that something was going badly wrong, put forward a scheme whereby 3 per cent. was to be reduced from quotas until April 1989. Now, hardly six months later, it has doubled that figure and proposes to change the other quota rules which would effectively add another 3·5 per cent. minimum to the cuts —a total of 9·5 per cent. I put it to the Minister that changes of that magnitude can hardly be passed off as technical adjustments to a fundamentally sound scheme. We must be certain that, in building on that original scheme, we are building on a sound foundation and on a scheme that is fair to the United Kingdom. If not, we should re-examine the basics of the scheme. I know that the Minister is unwilling to re-examine the original agreement for fear that other countries might be nasty to him, but the inadequacies of that scheme owe a great deal to the Government's refusal to contemplate quotas up to and including the eve of the meeting at which they accepted them. The basic problems must be taken up again by the Government.

Were we allocated a satisfactory initial quota? The only parallels that we can take are other large CAP countries with comparable populations — France and the Federal Republic of Germany. The disparity is immediately obvious. France received a quota of 27 million tonnes, Germany 24 million tonnes, but the United Kingdom only 16 million tonnes. Again, the Government are to blame, but it may not be too late to rectify the matter. The disparity was caused by accepting 1981 as the base year rather than taking average production over a number of years. As 1981 was acknowledged to be a bad milk year

for this country, if everything continues to be built on that one year we shall pay for the initial blunder many times over.

Mr. Jopling *rose*——

Mr. John: I am reluctant to give way, because many other hon. Members wish to speak, but I will give way to the Minister.

Mr. Jopling: I wish to make just two points. First, whether we chose 1981 or 1983 when the decision was taken in 1984 would have made a difference of about one-fifth of 1 per cent. in our national quota, so it was neither here nor there. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman said that we got a raw deal compared with other nations. The House may be interested to know that member states whose cutbacks were greater than ours at that time accounted for 42 per cent. of milk deliveries in 1983-84 and those with smaller cutbacks also accounted for 42 per cent., so we were exactly in the middle.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Which countries are contributing to the surplus?

Mr. John: I shall not intrude unnecessarily into that private grief, but I do not resile from my position. We did not get a raw deal in those negotiations. We got a bad deal, for which the right hon. Gentleman, despite his apologia, cannot escape responsibility.

Another point requires clarification. Responsible people in the dairy industry, including the Milk Marketing Board, which I imagine has sent a brief to most hon. Members present for the debate, consider the United Kingdom to be a deficit country in terms of production.

Mr. Winterton: That is right.

Mr. John: I have constructed an argument based on that deficit——

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. John: You, Mr. Speaker, have appealed for brevity and I know that many hon. Members wish to speak—[HON. MEMBERS: "Chicken!"] I am called "chicken", but if I give way and shut someone else out of the debate I shall be highly unpopular. I have given way to the Minister and I now propose to finish my speech. We can then hear some of the universal criticism of the Minister from the rebels on his own side.

The Milk Marketing Board believes that we are a deficit country. We need urgent clarification because, if that is so, we are the only large deficit country and that fact should be recognised in the negotiations, even though it was not taken into account at earlier stages. I understand that the smaller deficit countries obtained a special arrangement and naturally hope to continue it in years to come. We therefore fall between two stools in being a deficit country, but not a small one.

I was reassured to hear that the Minister would express outright opposition to formula B. I hope that it will be more outright than the occasion on which he said that milk quotas would not be introduced, except over his dead body. If formula B is abolished, instead of a 3·5 per cent. reduction in milk production over and above the 6 per cent., I believe that it will be between 4·5 and 5·5 per cent. In fact, compared with a European average of 9·5 per cent., our dairy production will be cut by about 10·5 or 11·5 per cent. As the Minister strongly suggested that he believed in an equal cut across the board, I do not see how he could accept that. We shall have to look at the results of that negotiation very closely.

The Minister has said—we all realise it—that cuts in the dairy sector will have a dire effect on rural economies. Therefore, none of those cuts should be undertaken lightly. He made a valid point when he mentioned the horrifying nature of the budget. We currently have an agriculture budget which is estimated at 23 billion ecu for the coming year, with a projected overrun of a further 3 billion ecu. Those are enormous sums, and those who offer the prospect of no change in dairying hold out the cruellest deception of all. We must fight for the fairest quota system, but cuts in the budget will, and must, come.

That brings me to the milk outgoers scheme which, it is rumoured, exists on a voluntary basis in this country. I say "rumoured", because one would have to be pretty lucky to have met a farmer who has taken advantage of that scheme. As ever, the figures are shrouded in mystery. When I question the Minister he takes refuge in the number of applications or interested inquiries. However, I understand that the take-up figure for the voluntary outgoers scheme is between 10 and 100 throughout the whole of the United Kingdom. In any event, the number is miserably few.

The reasons are not hard to understand, given that farmers are offered 18·6p per litre over seven years, whereas milk quotas are being sold at an upper rate of 26p per litre.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Twenty-nine pence.

Mr. John: It may be 29p, but the Minister mentioned the upper limit of 26p. That has meant that people are using milk quota sales as a subsidy for a decent outgoers scheme. That cannot last for long, and with our knowledge of the Commission we know that it will not. We must therefore insist that as part of this package there should be a fair outgoers scheme that will recompense those who are leaving dairying. An estimate of 5,000 has been placed on the number of milk producers who will go out of production if these proposals go ahead. These people must be treated fairly, and so must those who are dependent on them, whether they work in creameries or directly on the farms.

The Minister has hidden behind the statutory redundancy schemes for far too long. He has said that there is some topping up. It was pointed out to him that these days very few employers top up the statutory schemes. In the case of coal and steel, the EEC has recognised that where structural change has taken place there ought to be special compensation. In my view, those who work in the creameries and on the farms who will be displaced as a result of these schemes ought to be so compensated.

Of course, the number depends on the dairy trade industry, but the estimate that I and other hon. Members have seen is about 2,000 jobs. These creameries are large employers in rural areas, where alternative work is simply not available. Recognition of this hardship must therefore be granted both by the Government and the EEC. I hope that the Minister will say something about that when he replies.

I have set out what I believe the Government should be looking for in any negotiations. I wish the Government

[Mr. John]

well in such negotiations, because I do not believe that any Government, of whatever party, would wish to inherit a dairy industry that has been shattered. There are difficulties which must be faced, but those difficulties are increased because Agricultural Ministers are still tackling what is an across-the-board problem on a sector by sector basis.

We have heard something of the fears of other sectors of agriculture because of changes in the dairy industry. We are aware of the fears of the beef producers if the proposed changes to the dairy industry take place.

The CAP must be altered, not by palliatives but by a set of genuinely different measures which tackle and try to solve the whole problem without damaging the other sectors of agriculture. Above all, I believe that Agriculture Ministers must come to grips with the problem and shed their interminable delays. It is said that procrastination is the thief of time, but it is also the enemy of sensible solutions. I believe that the CAP badly needs those sensible solutions.

10.35 pm

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): I do not believe that the proposals are simply about the future levels of milk production and dairy products in Europe or indeed Britain or even about the levels of income of individual dairy farmers—although such considerations are important. The proposals are not solely about the need to restrict the cost of the Common Agricultural Policy to an acceptable proportion of the total European budget.

In my view, there is a further and more fundamental dimension — the social and economic structure of the British countryside. That is what is at stake and what we should be worried about. I was saddened by the reply that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gave to the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills). The Minister talked about possible lay offs purely in terms of the dairy trade. It is much more fundamental than that.

The Milk Marketing Board — I am associated with that body—has suggested that if these proposals were to be implemented in full — I know that my right hon. Friend has expressed reservations about that and I will return to it in a moment — approaching 5,000 dairy farmers could find themselves in jeopardy. Butter and skimmed milk production and manufacture would be down significantly. Possibly up to six or seven creameries might have to close involving 2,000 jobs based in rural areas.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West has already referred to the other adverse effects which may occur, and it is suggested that there would be a total loss of some £250 million from the rural economy. I find that depressing and frightening. I look to the Minister not only to provide us with assurance this evening but also, subsequently, to ensure that this assurance is backed by action in Brussels.

There is no argument about the fact that the upward trend of milk surpluses should be reversed, and that must involve some reduction in milk production. The Commission has proposed that, in addition to the 2 per cent. cut in milk production in this milk year and a 1 per cent. cut in the following milk year, there should be an additional 3 per cent. milk quota reduction across the board. I do not object to that.

The Commission has also said that there should be a change in the rules and across the board in Europe, that would mean a reduction of some 3½ per cent. in production. But if that involved the abolition of the quota B scheme the net effect for Britain would be a reduction of at least 4½ per cent. possibly 5 per cent. as mentioned by the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John). That would be positive discrimination against the United Kingdom.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that we are really talking about rural depopulation? That cannot be solved by taking or not taking note of documents, but only by national action to promote our dairy farmers.

Mr. Hicks: My hon. Friend is correct. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West expressed those sentiments.

The west country is essentially a livestock area, very dependent upon the smaller milk producers. We know of the contribution that the dairy sector makes to rural economies. No doubt other hon. Members—should they catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker — will make identical points.

I am also worried that the Commission appears to see the problem purely in terms of potential cuts. It is incumbent upon it to think in a more positive manner—otherwise the individual dairy farmer will derive little encouragement from and have little confidence in the future. If a similar position occurred, he could expect only further cuts.

Therefore, it is essential both for the Commission and my right hon. Friend as chairman of the Council of Ministers to come forward with more positive parallel suggestions, otherwise the smaller milk producer will be justified in thinking that he may have no future within the dairy industry. Will my right hon. Friend examine some parallel suggestions that I believe are worthy of consideration?

It is important to tackle the problem of the existing stocks — 1·5 million tonnes of butter and more than 1 million tonnes of skimmed milk powder. Surely a mechanism is available to Europe to move that over a phased period to those countries in the Third world that need such products, and that could have or already has developed an infrastructure involving distribution and processing, so that they can, at least, take some of the surplus stocks.

Intervention accounts for 40 per cent. of the cost of the CAP, which is a total waste of financial resources. If we could remove that cost, we could look at the whole question of milk production in a more positive light.

The next point is generic advertising. We know that the United Kingdom is the only country that drinks at least 50 per cent. of its milk output. Other European countries have a much lower percentage. In the United States, demand for dairy products has increased by 12 per cent. since 1980, in part due to promotional activities.

We should look positively, and in a financially attractive way, at a policy of set-aside. It is important that the farmers are financially compensated. I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) that

that could be offset by a lower proportion of the budget of the CAP going to support intervention stocks. I hope that when my right hon. Friend goes to Brussels he will be prepared to consider that point—not only in the context of negative milk quota reductions, but by looking at the whole issue more positively.

I return to my central theme, which is that it is not just the CAP and the European budget that is at stake, but the future fabric of the British countryside as we know it.

10.44 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I beg to move, at the end of the question to add,

'but calls on the Government to introduce measures to protect small dairy producers and those who face extreme financial hardship, while providing greater compensation for outgoers and those who work in ancillary industries, and to resist the abolition of Formula B quotas where Britain is concerned.'.

The Minister stated that there was crisis in the European Community budget caused by the over-production of milk. We certainly accept that analysis, but he must realise that by implementing these proposals he is party to wielding an axe on the British dairy industry, which is already in a state of crisis and reeling under it. That applies to dairy farmers and the dairy manufacturing sector alike. By so doing the Minister is also adding to the balance of payments deficit and wrecking the social fabric of the countryside and the rural economy.

Obviously, we must try to bring milk production into closer balance with consumption—*[Interruption.]*—but are the Government going about it the right way? We doubt it. [HON. MEMBERS: "Tell us."] I will tell hon. Members later in my speech. At present according to Milk Marketing Board figures, Britain is 91 per cent. self-sufficient in milk and dairy products. Only Italy and Britain are not self-sufficient. What is one to make of Ireland which is 264 per cent. self-sufficient, of Denmark which is 224 per cent. self-sufficient, or the Netherlands——

Mr. Speller: Would 100 per cent. self-sufficiency mean that one could neither export nor import? Self-sufficiency within a club is a meaningless figure.

Mr. Livsey: Considering the severity of the crisis facing Britain that is an academic point.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Livsey: I will not give way. I have already given way and I have not much time.

In 1984 our cut was one of the most swingeing at minus 6·2 per cent. When that is compounded with the base year of 1981, which was a bad year, these proposals contrive to hit the industry below the belt when many dairy farmers are on the ropes and some are taking the count. Since 1984, 1,500 dairy farmers have gone out of business and 7,000 employees' jobs have been lost in the dairy industry. That has been a disaster for the western and northern grassland producing areas, particularly Wales and Scotland.

In the county of Dyfed, 18 per cent. of the population depends on agriculture for its living. That is almost identical to the percentage of the population dependent on it in Ireland. Many are dairy farmers. Creameries have been shut and farmers have being going out of business. For those who remain the going is increasingly tough. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I can understand why Tory Members are so anxious about the situation: their Minister has caused their anxieties.—*[Interruption.]*

From an ADAS report the Minister must know that in Dyfed 25 per cent. of dairy farmers are financially insecure, 7 per cent. are threatened now with bankruptcy and 37 per cent. have serious financial problems. Therefore, 60 per cent. of the dairy farms in Dyfed are under threat. *[Interruption.]* Machinery manufacturers have had to close and agricultural merchants have made lasting cuts. Many small dairy farms are unviable, and 200 farms on the county council smallholding estate in Devon are in jeopardy as a result of further proposed cuts in quota. If a further 3 per cent. cut in quota is implemented, a total quota reduction of 6 per cent. will result.

We oppose the abolition of formula B quotas because, although it would cut quotas in the EEC as a whole by 2 per cent., it would affect England and Wales by minus 5 per cent. Therefore, we would lose out by a further 3 per cent. in quota compared with elsewhere. That will hit Britain most unfairly indeed.

I and the Minister know that France and Ireland are resisting the abolition of B quotas and I am pleased to hear him say this evening that he is also against B quotas being abolished in Britain. *[Interruption.]* I trust that those Conservative Members who are so noisy will assist us in the Lobby tonight to stiffen the Minister's resolve and ensure that B quotas will not be lost for Britain.

The estimated consequences of the full EEC proposals could result, as has been said, in a possible 5,000 further dairy farmers going out of production. The figures have already shown that that would have a devastating——

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): Boring.

Mr. Livsey: I may be boring, but I am sure that it will make for an exciting election.

This would be a devastating blow for our rural areas and the proposals tonight are inevitably pushing us in that direction. Before taking such severe steps the Minister should do his own calculations. The knock-on effect on the rural areas socially will be immense and there will also be a knock-on effect in the beef sector. It has been estimated that if the full weight of the EEC proposals come in there could be a further additional production of 600,000 tonnes of beef in a market that is already swamped with that product.

We must get production and consumption in balance. We agree with the Minister on that, but he must proceed with caution and sensitivity. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I demand a hearing.

We must positively identify the small dairy producers and certainly protect from further cuts those producing 250,000 litres per annum and less—[HON. MEMBERS: "How? Tell us."] We must give them direct payments to assist them in their incomes without additional production. *[Interruption.]* That proposal will not increase surplus production. *[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members will listen to what I am saying, they will hear that I am putting forward positive proposals.

We must identify producers facing extreme financial hardship and assist them, too. We must have a vastly improved outgoers scheme. We have heard that few producers have taken that up and we must at least pay the current quota sale price rate. We must introduce a scheme for cow purchase at much more attractive prices than in the market at present to get more cows out of production. That can be done over a short period.

[Mr. Livsey]

We must, as has already been said, sell out more of our dairy stocks. Why cannot pensioners in Britain, for example, share more of the surplus butter that we have in our stores? We must have a crash scheme of destocking into some of the poorer countries, and that should be linked to developments in their own agriculture. We must also give incentives to New Zealand to market its product elsewhere than in the EEC. There are opportunities in the far east and we must encourage it to market there. The EEC should accept responsibility to give incentives to do that.

The alliance has tabled an amendment and — *[Interruption.]* — judging by the furore created by Conservative Members, they will not support the amendment in the Lobbies tonight and their words about the destruction of the rural economy will prove to be empty indeed.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Livsey: I shall not give way.

The rural areas are watching Conservative Members carefully. I plead with the Minister not to abandon those areas. Their future is already in the balance, and if the Government do not act sensitively, they will stand condemned in the dock. The rural areas, and especially the western dairy-producing and grassland areas, will lose tremendously, which will be a great tragedy.

10.55 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): I must confess my astonishment, on reading through the documents that purport to be those that we are debating, to see them innocent of any mention of the effect on beef production. The document in the name of Lord Belstead contains a section entitled "Policy Implications", but one reads through that section in vain to find anything about beef. The same is true when one reads through the EEC document in the name of Mr. Lorenzo Natali. Were the people who wrote those documents wholly unaware of the collapse which these proposals would produce in the beef market?

When milk quotas were introduced, it was feared that there would be a greater rush of culled cows on to the beef market than occurred. The reason was that a large proportion of milk producers went from a high concentrate feeding system to a low concentrate feeding system, but that slack has now been taken up, so a reduction of 9, 9·5 or 10 per cent. in milk quotas will inevitably result in a rush of about that proportion— *[Interruption.]* Perhaps I may have the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State. The debate, of which less than an hour remained for the Back Benchers, is about the future of our dairy industry and our beef industry. Perhaps that is not too long a time to hold their attention.

The reduction will affect not only milk producers and their investment, which they were encouraged to make under successive Governments, but beef production, which is only marginally profitable, it at all. Collapse the market with the sort of proposals suggested by the EEC, and there will be devastation. Of course, it will not be limited to beef production. What will people do with their grassland? They will go into sheep, and we shall have the collapse of the sheepmeat economy. We cannot collapse those two sections of the foodmarket—that is what it is — without a knock-on effect on pigs and poultry, because they are the alternative meats to beef. Poultry is certainly the alternative today.

How is it possible for my right hon. Friend the Minister to address the House on these measures without taking the House into his confidence and explaining his thinking about how he will deal with the consequences of such a policy? The EEC could end up paying far more money for the support of beef, sheep and pigs because it starts with a foolish policy — foolish not in the total quantities necessarily, but in the time span over which they are implemented. Producers say, "Give us time to adjust." It is precisely that which the Community's proposals are so obviously denying.

The Community must have an overall agricultural policy. So must we. If we squeeze just one commodity at a time, the effect will be to destroy the whole balance and the rest of the agricultural economy. That, in a nutshell, is the problem to which my right hon. Friend has not addressed himself in the House, but to which he must address himself in Brussels.

It seems that my right hon. Friend cannot or will not bring home those truths to the Commission, including the foolish Mr. Pooley, the second in command of the Commission's bureaucrats, who was shooting his mouth off in Devon last week. He referred to 25,000 dairy farmers getting employment in the electronics industries. None of us happen to have noticed electronics industries in the rural areas waiting to take 25,000 farmers. It is that sort of dangerous nonsense upon which my right hon. Friend is relying for executing the EEC's policy and, indeed, for drawing it up.

While Britain is in the Chair, until the end of this month, my right hon. Friend's prime ambition must be not to make short-term savings at the cost of long-term devastation, but to bring home to the bureaucrats, as well as to the Council of Ministers, the inter-reactions within the totality of agriculture. That must be his task. A debate of 55 minutes for Back Benchers is not long enough for my right hon. Friend to persuade the House, which he has not yet started to do, that he is even aware of it, let alone that he will make it his business to instruct the Community in these basic facts of life.

I do not believe that many of my hon. Friends will be able to contribute to what must be said in this debate. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) is making remarks from a sedentary position. Had he been in the House a little longer, he would have some slight understanding of its procedures, but that he still lacks. He would know that if there is a vital question —which this is—and that if many hon. Members want to contribute to the debate and the time for it is ludicrously short, it lies within the power of the Chair to refuse to put the Question when the hour for the closure of the debate comes.

Although I have had the good fortune to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that there are many other hon. Members who still have a duty to contribute to the debate. It must continue on another day this week, in prime time. It must not be allowed just to meander into the ground at 11.30 tonight.

11.3 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I came here this evening to ask the Minister a few simple questions. How can he conceivably justify to the small farmers in my constituency, many of whom on the Cheshire plain were brought close to bankruptcy last year by the imposition of completely unacceptable quotas, the suggestion that he will now apply an even more unacceptable blow to their already straitened finances? I must also ask him a question which to me is politically much more important.

I listened with amazement to other hon. Members who argued that we ought to subscribe to an agricultural policy that was a manifest "con" when we joined the Common Market, and that has not improved since then. I leave aside the irony that the Milk Marketing Board was created in the 1920s, when a Conservative Government had contributed to the destruction of British agriculture—something which we see being repeated this evening.

I shall ask the Minister some simple questions. First, if the Commission and the Council of Ministers do not accept the reservations that he has expressed this evening about the suggested imposition of extra quotas—these quotas are entirely unacceptable and deeply unfair—what will he do to protect the interests of our agriculture? As he no longer has the veto, will he return to the House and tell us that, having taken account of the views of the other member states, he is sad to say that, like the good democrat that he is, he has had to give way to other pressures and to those who outvoted him? If not, what alternative national rule does he intend to apply? What alternative opposition scheme does he have to put to the Commission that will provide sufficient money for the farmers who want to join an outgoers scheme and begin to deal with the real problems in our creameries?

Just outside my constituency 100 men and women are losing their jobs. That is happening now. The reason is not that they were inefficient or that the creamery was doing a bad job. In fact, the creamery had been returning an increasing profit over the past 12 months. They are losing their jobs because of the mad, Alice-in-Wonderland, incomprehensible rubbish that is called the common agricultural policy.

Let the Minister answer one question. If the Minister's reservations, which he has so modestly put before the House this evening, are not accepted by those in Brussels, what will he do for British farmers, farm workers and creamery workers? Are we to take it that this is a cynical demonstration of how to win votes in the rural areas, on the assumption that the dairy farmers will not even notice that their next step is the bankruptcy court?

11.7 pm

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): It is the duty of hon. Members who represent rural constituencies to try to participate in this brief debate on an extremely important subject. I shall begin by establishing the common ground, which is that the Community is over-producing dairy and agricultural products generally to the tune of 9·5 per cent. I shall try to cut a swathe through the plethora of figures which have confused us this evening and to spell out in clear terms what the proposals will mean for the dairyland and grassland areas on the western side of Britain.

We are all aware that something must be done to curb production throughout Europe, but Britain is not contributing to the surplus in dairy products. Unfortunately, that cannot be said of many of our European neighbours. We are being branded with them when we should not be, which is entirely unjust. To attempt to cut production in Britain by 10·5 or 11 per cent. is disproportionate and unjust. To do so would be unfair to the United Kingdom, and we should not be contemplating doing so this evening or later.

We are not yet self-sufficient in liquid milk annually, and the House should remember that we consume 44 per cent. of our milk production in liquid milk sales. West Germany and France consume only 11 per cent. and 9 per cent., respectively.

Mr. Jackson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Winterton: No, I will not.

The House will know that 29 per cent. of our milk production goes into butter making, compared with 46 per cent. in West Germany and 49 per cent. in France. We are a net importer of butter, as all hon. Members will be aware. Last year, we imported 139,000 tonnes of butter, of which 78,000 tonnes came from New Zealand under our quota agreement with that country. In fact, if that butter had not come into the country, we would not have contributed to the butter mountain. No butter from this country would have gone into intervention.

If the present proposals are agreed, we will force our own farmers to cut back. We will force them out of business to enable the likes of the south of Ireland, France, West Germany and others to make assaults upon our own market, which is the only major one in deficit. Whatever cuts are agreed within Europe, they must not put our producers at a further comparative disadvantage. To revive a modicum of confidence in the industry, the cuts must be seen to be fair and equitable. Some hon. Members reminded the House that, as a direct result of the imposition of quotas, about 7,000 dairy industry jobs have been lost since 1984. Several thousand jobs have also been lost in ancillary industries, and about 1,500 dairy farmers went out of business.

What could we expect if this package were passed unamended? It is likely that the western areas of the country will be decimated. They will suffer greatly as the rural economy, which is based on agriculture, declines even further. The Milk Marketing Board estimates that 5,000 more milk producers may go out of business. There will be further job losses in creameries. In that respect I agree with the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). In my constituency, 112 jobs were lost in the closure of a whey factory at Haslington.

As our manufacturing capacity falls to approximately 40 per cent., many jobs in creameries will be lost. Who would dare at this stage to estimate the knock-on effects on allied industries when we consider that, for every job in agriculture, there are at least three jobs at stake in the allied trades. Having faced up to this sad and tragic but realistic picture, what can be done to help to solve the problems and cover the cost of storing more than just sufficient, strategic food reserves?

For example, the present butter mountain could be reduced by approximately one third by reprocessing some of the older stocks, which are becoming unfit for human consumption, and using them in other ways. Certain developing countries would be prepared to relieve us of a further one third of butter stocks, and that would save storage costs.

[Mrs. Winterton]

Difficult but necessary decisions must be made, as in any other business, to clear away the old stocks, while preventing their build-up and balancing their supply and demand in future. Agricultural policy must take the long-term view not just react sharply to the present crisis, thereby causing as many new problems as those that it attempts to solve. For example, the cow cull—my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) mentioned this matter—resulted from the imposition of quotas and distorted the beef market. The fewer the livestock, the fewer cereals that are consumed. The knock-on effects continue throughout the agriculture industry.

The Minister must be seen to fight for the best interests of our industry, not just settle for the sake of a settlement within the Council of Ministers. I welcome his commitment to the flexibility of balancing quotas between producers under formula B. We all know that without this balance we shall be further disadvantaged. We must soon face the fact that if we have to choose between the survival of New Zealand farmers and our own, we must support our own; we must supply our own market and not suck in any more imports.

11.14 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): We have noted the incredible phenomenon that there has been no speech from the Government Back Benches supporting the Government's line. We shall see the equally incredible phenomenon that no Conservative Back Bencher will have the courage of his convictions when it comes to the Division. I support the alliance amendment because my prime concern is the knock-on effect on agriculture.

I am appalled that there has not been a single Welsh Office Minister or Welsh Office civil servant anywhere near this debate. Once again we are seeing the failure of the Welsh Office and its agricultural department. The Welsh Office has taken no role in the formulation of agricultural policy. The Secretary of State for Wales has never represented Wales in Brussels. Clearly, the Welsh Office has abdicated its responsibility for the future of Welsh agriculture. The Welsh Office attendance contrasts with the presence of at least one representative from the Scottish Office earlier in the debate.

We have already suffered, especially in Dyfed, from the social effects of the quota system. We have seen redundancies in milk production, with self-employed farmers going out of business. The incredible report by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, which was half-published last week, shows that as many as 25 per cent. of farms in Dyfed are thought by ADAS and the banks to be financially insecure. It is a deepening crisis for those involved in the industry.

The knock-on effects have included redundancies. I was appalled to hear the Minister, in replying to a question about redundancies, just cite redundancy schemes. He does not seem to understand the social effects of the loss of jobs and of production, and all that they imply for the manufacturing base, which is already thin enough, in rural areas.

I emphasise the social effects of the quota system, including redundancies, and the Government's failure to tackle the issues and ensure that they have an input in Community policy which takes account of the real needs of people in the west of Britain. I endorse all that has been said by Conservative Members, and I appeal to them to support the amendment.

11.16 pm

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): It was hypocritical of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), when going on about the plight of the dairy farmers and the small farmers, to forget completely that the Liberals on Gloucestershire county council have passed a resolution to rate agricultural land and buildings. The hon. Gentleman's argument would have been more convincing if he had said something about that.

Although this is only a short debate, it is obviously one on which the eyes of dairy farmers will be focused, because there is no doubt that it may set future trends. There is not a dairy farmer in Europe who does not recognise the problem of overproduction that our Ministers are facing. This is highlighted by some figures and facts that we have already heard in this debate.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Who wrote that?

Mr. Marland: I did. However, this is a recent problem, and recognition must still be given to the fact that until 1983 farmers were being urged by politicians to continue producing as much as they could. Although the initial impact of quotas has now been more or less digested by farmers, it takes time to change direction and develop new enterprises. It is with the need for new enterprises in mind that I cannot agree with the Commission's proposals that there should be no new transfers between direct sales and wholesale quotas. We must do all that we can to help farmers find new outlets and leave open all possible opportunities. In the same vein, I cannot agree with the scrapping of the formula B quota system. Mother nature and mother cow are very temperamental animals and, with the best will in the world, it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to hit a 100 per cent. target when budgeting.

While urging more flexibility in fulfilling quotas, I accept that the Milk Marketing Board must demonstrate the same quality of flexibility. Last weekend, in Gloucestershire, we heard that 60 per cent. of the Milk Marketing Board's butter produced last year had been put into intervention, yet at the same time it had apparently won a contract for supplying cheese and was unable to get the milk to manufacture that cheese. Why was the Milk Marketing Board not flexible enough to switch the milk from one form of production to another?

I approve of the drive to achieve quota reduction by voluntary means and welcome the Commission's suggestion that more money should be made available to extend the outgoers scheme. I believe that that, along with some topping up by my right hon. Friend the Minister, will produce many more volunteer outgoers than any of us might imagine. In my constituency I have seen it working in other industries, and it has been surprising to those running the industries how many volunteers have come forward when they have been necessary. Voluntary reductions are in everybody's best interest.

Mr. Best: Is my hon. Friend aware that not a single person in Wales has applied for the outgoers scheme because it is so farcical at the moment because it is not being topped up as it is in other countries?

Mr. Marland: That is a helpful intervention. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is true."] It adds fuel to what I am saying. Voluntary reductions are obviously in everybody's best interests.

I have scorned the co-responsibility levy in the past as a method of trying to reduce output. It seems to be a ridiculous way to go about it. As other hon. Members have said tonight, we are discussing the balance of the whole market, and it is the whole market which will be in the balance in the future. I ask my right hon. Friend to approach any further quota reductions in the light of what has gone on before in the United Kingdom, in order to achieve fairness for the United Kingdom in the future.

Whatever may be said, it is the impression of British farmers that they got off to a bad start in the setting of dairy quotas when 1981 was taken as the base year. We are led to believe, at least I am, that the United Kingdom dairy industry's annual output that year was 3·5 per cent. below the previous five-year average. However, 1981 was a good year for French and German dairy farmers. Therefore, the United Kingdom farmers started off, as they see it, with a proportionately bigger cut than others. The same vagaries of weather and difficulties of production can be seen with cereal production this year in the United Kingdom. British farmers have done so much better than those in southern France and Spain.

If that low start is looked at in the context of supply to home markets, which was discussed earlier in the debate, we see that Holland over-produced to its home market by 307 per cent., and Eire over-produced to its home market by 223 per cent. However, we under-produced to our home market by supplying only 88 per cent. of the home market needs. To put it mildly, that makes the Gloucestershire farmers stamping mad. I believe that a reduction in export support mechanism may well help us to fulfil our home market.

Of course, marketing still needs to be improved and more opportunities for selling milk need to be created. On the subject of finding new outlets, it is interesting to note that, in the rapidly growing fast food business, McDonald's Hamburgers Ltd. last year sold 2·5 million gallons of flavoured milk. In addition, it processed 115,000 beef cattle and made them into beef patties. That seems an enormous number of beef patties, but that is what we are told.

It is widely accepted that production cuts have to be made, but the British farmer wants to see fairness; fairness in the fact that we got off to a low start and that we are under-supplying our own market. There will be a crisis in the countryside, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) has already said, unless we can get it right.

On his return from Brussels, I urge my right hon. Friend the Minister to keep up his long-lasting fight on behalf of British farmers, for which in the past, in many respects, he has not had the credit due to him. He should not allow it always to be the French, German or Irish Ministers who stick their toes in. We have a good case this time, and I ask my right hon. Friend to go to it with a vengeance.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) put a proposition to the House earlier. Bearing in mind the interest in the subject, he asked whether you would allow the debate to be resumed on another day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): The hon. Gentleman is taking up valuable time. I shall decide at 11.30.

11.24 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I shall first tell the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) that I believe that the question of deficit is made much more difficult by the fact that last year we put 92,000 tonnes of butter into intervention. That means that we were not even able to sell that butter, no matter what the deficit figures make out. The deficit figures show that quite clearly. Today I visited a Tesco store and I discovered that we were still selling our butter more cheaply than Anchor, Lurpak and Wheelbarrow. However, the housewife does, on occasion, choose to buy someone else's butter. Unless we are prepared to state that she shall not have that choice, we must accept that 92,000 tonnes of butter—30 per cent. of our present production—is going to intervention. In those circumstances, I must say that the argument for self-sufficiency is difficult to sustain.

I clearly accept the point that we have to fight extremely hard for Britain's interests. Several of our interests would not be served by the proposals set before us today. They are presented in draft form and we are having the debate properly, before the negotiations have begun. It is right that we should take full notice of the points that have been raised and that is why the Government have allowed the opportunity for this debate.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks), who made it clear that he is not prepared to accept that the formula B should be removed. That point was also made clear by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. However, I do not think that it is possible to go on to say that there is some simple way of getting rid of existing stocks unless those stocks are not refilled. It is not sufficient to claim that the stocks can simply be removed. As the Opposition conceded, there is no simple way of emptying the warehouses and expecting them to stay empty unless there is a method of bringing the supply of dairy products more into line with demand.

That is why I thought that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) deserved the question that was asked of him. It is all very well to list the difficulties and refer to the problems, but how will the hon. Gentleman solve those problems?

Mr. Penhaligon: My hon. Friend told the Minister how he would do that.

Mr. Gummer: I listened carefully to the speech by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor and I was lucky enough to read his comments in his speech to the Farmers Union of Wales, when he explained what he would do. He said that there would be a standard quantity of production which, if applied, would mean a sharper cut in the real quota than anything proposed by the Commission today. The House should be aware that that is the Liberal party policy in so far as that is comprehensible from the speech made by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor. The hon. Gentleman went on to complain that 2,145 dairy

[Mr. Gummer]

farmers had gone out of production during the past two years. He did not mention the fact that the average for each of the two preceding years was 3,593. The hon. Gentleman has fudged the figures yet again. I notice that the party that was just as enthusiastic about our membership of the European Community, is now ratting on all the results of the movements that it supported.

I have much more respect for the position adopted by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), who at least attempted to put forward an alternative series of propositions which the House must take seriously. Of course we cannot deal with the problem unless we deal with the time-span within which it can be resolved. That is why my right hon. Friend made very clear his strong reservations about the proposition that the package should be adopted without reference to a time-span and stressed the need for arrangements to help farmers as individuals and not to treat them as figures on a balance sheet.

I also agree with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton about the whole policy for agriculture. That is why this presidency has insisted that the debate in Europe during next weeks' discussions will be about beef, milk and about structures following together, one after the other. It is impossible to discuss these matters without covering them all.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) was long on complaints but short on answers. That was a typical speech from the hon. Lady. My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) must consider what will happen to the stock if the amount going back into intervention is increased. The Government would not be prepared to forget what the New Zealanders have done for us in two world wars and we are not prepared to cut off this market.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Two propositions are clearly true: first, that many hon. Members still wish to contribute to the debate and, secondly, that the subject is not one of passing importance but is one which goes to the heart of the survival of one of Britain's industries. I put it to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, on the precedents, you would be amply justified in declining to put the Question so that the debate can be continued — *[Interruption.]* Some Members may not wish the debate to continue, but many others do. I believe that the greatest service to the House would be to allow the debate to be resumed on another day.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The debate has been limited in time. Not one hon. Member has spoken who does not represent an agricultural area. Surely the interests of all the parties involved, including the taxpayer, should be voiced. Could we not have one further short debate so that we may hear at least one Conservative Member support Government policy?

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I support my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), who has made a most enlightened contribution to the debate. Many of us represent constituencies of which vast parts depend entirely on the dairy industry. It does the House no good if those with such an important contribution to make are not able to speak on an important matter such as this.

Mr. Best: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I endorse what my hon. Friends have said in urging you to allow time for further debate as a considerable number of hon. Members have not had a chance to take part. As many hon. Members have said, this is a matter of critical importance to the small farmer and to rural existence.

I am also in some confusion because my right hon. Friend the Minister of State has told us that the proposals are not satisfactory——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not go into the issues.

Mr. Latham: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If you were to postpone the end of the debate for a few minutes it might allow the two Social Democratic party Members whose names appear on the amendment to come to the Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) has raised an important issue which I have considered very carefully indeed. As he knows, however, Standing Order No. 14 is very clear. I have to decide whether the debate should be adjourned or whether to put the Question. I intend to put the Question.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 18, Noes 103.

Division No. 13] **[11.32 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Freud, Clement
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howells, Geraint
Kennedy, Charles
Patchett, Terry
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Wallace, James

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Richard Livsey and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

NOES

Arnold, Tom
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Carttiss, Michael
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cope, John
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hirst, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David

Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pollock, Alexander
Powley, John
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Portillo and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put:—
The House divided: Ayes 96, Noes 25.

Division No. 14] **[11.43 pm**

AYES

Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Carttiss, Michael
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cope, John
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hirst, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Gerald Malone.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Beith, A. J.
Best, Keith
Bruce, Malcolm
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Freud, Clement
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Livsey, Richard
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Patchett, Terry
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Wallace, James
Winterton, Mrs Ann

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop
and Mr. Nicholas Winterton.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9161/86 concerning emergency measures in the dairy sector, the Commission proposals described in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum of 18th November on the same subject and the Government's intention to seek agreement on arrangements to bring production in the milk sector into closer balance with consumption.

A525 (Redesignation)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now Adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

11.53 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The A525 is a road that forms an east-west primary route link between Madeley and Newcastle under Lyme and Stoke on Trent in the east, and Burleydam, Whitchurch and Wrexham in the west. It passes through the village of Audlem in my constituency.

I wish tonight to tell the House about what can only be called a series of accidents. I raise the matter precisely because I am considerably concerned that there might be an accident in the middle of the village. For some time the people of this ancient village have been concerned about a narrow footpath on one side of the church. It is difficult enough at the best of times, and, because the A525 can carry heavy traffic, there is a real danger that the mothers and children who frequently use the path—it is the only way to go from one part of the village to the local shops — will inevitably be faced with the hazard of an articulated lorry mounting the pavement. That happens, not occasionally but with increasing frequency.

In bringing the subject before the House tonight I am fulfilling one of the basic purposes of Members of Parliament. This route, which is part of the Department of Transport's primary route network, is covered by three county councils — Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire. Tonight I am concerned with the length of road covered by Cheshire. The road links to the M6 and has been known to carry a considerable volume of heavy traffic for its weight and certainly for its size. One of the traffic counts in November 1985 in Shropshire street—the narrow part of the village—showed 2,050 vehicles in a 12-hour period. We must set aside the fact that it is an old village. The main categories of vehicles were heavy lorries.

My predecessor in the constituency and members of the parish council in Audlem were so concerned that they asked the county council to deal with the problem. I am sorry that for various reasons the villagers did not accept the route which would have provided them with a bypass. As often happens on these occasions, once such an opportunity is missed, the matter goes to the bottom of the pile. When I took over responsibility for the constituency, it became clear to me on my monthly visits to the village to hold my surgery that the narrow footpath posed a real danger to mothers and children who used it. It is about 1·6m wide and even narrower at some points. Indeed, some houses on Stafford street, which are occupied by retired constituents, are so close to the articulated lorries that they are being damaged and their occupants have the constant noise of lorries thundering past only a short distance from their windows.

I asked Cheshire county council to find some way of dealing with this immediate difficulty. Originally, a northern extension had been considered. It would have provided a bypass, would have linked Shropshire street and the A529 Cheshire street and required a certain amount of demolition. That was rejected. We considered a southern outer bypass scheme, which might have been a responsible answer, but it was very expensive — an estimated £1·5 million. Over the years the constant talks between the parish council and the county council made it clear that either Audlem would be pushed to the bottom of the list for so long that it would have to wait up to 30 years or it would have to go for some other more immediate, but perhaps less adequate, answer.

One suggestion was that we should ask for the route to be changed and its designation to be entered in a different fashion. Therefore, after talking to the parish councillors, I approached the Minister and explained the difficulty of dealing with three county councils when, almost automatically, if one county council agreed the other two found the solution unacceptable. I asked the Minister whether he would be prepared to come and look at the road himself or to call together all the county councillors, but preferably to do both. Were the Minister to see this hazard he would understand why it is a matter that goes will beyond straightening out a particular road traffic problem in a small village.

However, the Minister felt that would not be possible. He sent me a letter, in which he said:

"I am aware of the problems created by heavy traffic . . . the fact remains that the A525 through Audlem is the responsibility of Cheshire Council Council . . . and it is for them to initiate measures to relieve the community of traffic nuisance."

He went on to say:

"Cheshire have suggested that the A525 should be removed from the Primary Route Network but I do not think that that action would provide an answer."

He said that the A525 would remain a direct route and that everyone would still use it. If people were no longer signposted that way, only those who knew that route existed or who read maps before they commenced their journey—they are a small proportion of the electorate—would automatically go that way.

However, the Minister said:

"I have already written to Cheshire County Council . . . and have offered them the services of the Department's North West Regional Office . . . if they wish to explore further the possibility of a bypass."

The Minister knows that the money for that has to be forthcoming from somewhere and he also knows that Cheshire has already committed all its money to those schemes which it thinks are far more serious and urgent. That does not solve the problem for people in Audlem, and it certainly does not solve the problem for the mums and the children.

The parish council sent me a copy of the letter that it sent to the Minister which said that it was

"most concerned that you"—

the Secretary of State—

"are not prepared to remove the length of the A525 from Woore, Shropshire to Burleydam, Cheshire, from the Primary Route Network. As a result of your decision, a serious and potentially dangerous problem still exists in Audlem with heavy vehicles passing through the centre of the village and mounting footpaths. The Parish Council would ask you to reconsider the matter, and, if de-priming cannot take place, would ask that urgent consideration should be given to an outer village by-pass."

It, too, would like to see the Minister in the village looking at the difficulties.

The expansion of the roads programme over the past two or three years under this Government has gone, almost without exception, into the motorway system. A great deal of money has been spent on the road pattern. Indeed, the imbalance between the amounts of money spent on motorways and comparable forms of transport —for example, the railways—is most marked.

One reason why democracy, particularly British democracy, has existed for so long is that the problems of

small groups of people are considered sufficiently important when raised in the House to be looked at seriously and with care. If that means bringing together representatives of three county councils and seeking an agreement to have this route classification changed, I would hope that the Minister would find time in his busy life to do that very thing.

The Minister knows that Cheshire county does not have at its disposal the money to create an alternative bypass and that we know this to be a real problem. I remind him that as an elected representative I do not want to be responsible for the death of one child if there is anything that I can do to stop the traffic problems in this village which constantly concern all those who have children and who use that footpath.

The Minister is a kind and considerate man and I ask him seriously tonight, if he will not come himself, to make sure that at least one of his representatives pays close attention to the matter. He should not come to the Dispatch Box and say, "This is a matter not for me but for other elected representatives." When the House of Commons ceases to be prepared, at midnight, to discuss important measures which affect the families and children of Audlem, the House will have lost one of its most important, potent and dearly protected rights — the simple right to care about the villagers and their traffic problems.

12.5 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I welcome the debate, because it allows me to spell out one of the differences between our present parliamentary system and the system which the absent Members of the Liberal party and the SDP would wish to foist on Britain of multi-Member large constituencies, where no single Member would represent a village, street or estate. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) does her constituents a service by raising their problems here. Our electoral system is not perfect, but it is highly desirable to have one Member to one constituency.

One sensible point made by the hon. Lady was that the villagers of Audlem did not take the relief when it was available. It is critical—I hope that this message goes out to every one of the 650 constituencies—to have through roads for through traffic, so that there can be a partial exclusion of traffic and an emphasis on residence in other areas. There was a time when it appeared to be fashionable in some areas to say that we did not need road building. The plain truth, as the hon. Lady said, is that we do. We do not wish to cover the country with concrete, but in an historic village, town or even part of a city where people are exposed to danger because of through traffic, that through traffic should be put on a safe through road, whether single or dual carriageway. Whatever the standard, people and traffic do not mix. The hon. Lady mentioned the problems with the narrow pavement by the church. Everyone in the House will have recognised the sincerity with which she made her points.

Towards the end of her speech the hon. Lady said that she would not want the responsibility for continuing danger. I hope that no one would. I have said before that, in the days of capital punishment, the Home Secretary had to make fewer decisions over life and death than the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport must make week after week and month after month. We know that the way in which money is spent on road improvements affects people's chances of injury or death. Each year we could fill the Royal Albert Hall with the more than 5,000 people who die on our roads, and we could fill Wembley three times over with those who are injured. It is important to get the hierarchy of roads right and ensure that money is spent to the best advantage for employment prospects, for casualty reduction and for protecting the environment. Protecting the environment does not just mean providing badger runways under new motorways; it means bringing relief to people such as the villagers of Audlem.

As I was born on the A41 in Newport and I used to sell daffodils on the stones of Market Drayton, I know that part of the world fairly well. I hope the hon. Lady will accept that when I do not immediately accept every invitation to visit every town and village in the country, that is purely because of shortage of time. I spend about four days a week out of London, as well as trying to be present in the House to answer important debates such as this one, and if every one of the 650 constituencies wanted me to see one of its road problems each year, I would have to try to fit in two constituencies a day, including Saturdays and Sundays. No Under-Secretary of State for Transport could do that. If there is an opportunity in the future, I shall accept the hon. Lady's invitation, which was repeated by the county secretary in a letter which I received recently.

As for the problems, if the issue is that there should be a bypass, the hon. Lady has said that this is a matter for the county council. Nobody claims that the county council's job is easy, but there is a hierarchy of responsibilities. I dispute the suggestion that all the money that has been allocated for roads has been spent on motorways. Many bypasses have been added to the national programme, and the transport supplementary grant system has enabled a large number of county highway authorities to add bypasses and relief roads to their programmes.

If I am unable to go myself, I shall encourage Department of Transport officials to have discussions with the county about what might be done for the village. I am not promising an instant solution, but national and local government should work together to try to solve an admitted problem.

To take the village off the primary route network is not necessarily the answer, but I do not think that many letters have been received from neighbouring county councils to the south or from the town to the north, which I suspect is also in the hon. Lady's constituency, saying, "Please send the heavy traffic away from the A525 on to other roads." Lorry and car traffic, especially if it is local in its destination or origin, and also bicyclists and pedestrians take a straight line, wherever they can, and the A525 is a straight line.

The hon. Lady spelt out the fact that relief, where it can be achieved, is the cornerstone of our roads policy. I think that that view is shared by the three county councils in England and the county council in Wales which share the responsibility for the road on its 50 km journey from Wrexham to Newcastle-under-Lyme. The road is of more than local importance, because it is part of the primary route network, and it might help the House if I said a word about it.

The non-motorway roads—both trunk roads, which are looked after by the national Government and principal

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

roads, which are looked after by the county highway authorities — offer the best route for longer distance journeys between places of traffic importance where motorways are not available. They are recognised by people on the roads by the green-backed signs. The primary route network was first defined 20 years ago and is made up of 18,000 km of route, divided between the trunk roads and the local authority roads, like the A525. Therefore, the network is jointly owned, but it is defined by the Secretary of State in consultation with the local highway authorities. A major review was completed recently. Any casual glance at the map would confirm that no motorway is available for east-west journeys from Stoke towards Whitchurch and Wrexham. There are places of traffic importance on this access. Therefore, there is case for a primary route link. The A525 is the shortest route for journeys between many centres of population.

Audlem, a village of about 2,000 people, sits astride the A525 in an east-west direction and the A529 in a north-south direction. These two roads cross in the village and run together for a short distance. The A525 is poorly aligned and passes through the very narrow and tortuous main street. Any vehicles create severe problems for pedestrians and also environmental intrusion. There is a 30 mph speed limit in the village.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Which is completely ignored, for no good reason.

Mr. Bottomley: Overall, traffic numbers on this part of the A525 are not high—about 2,000 vehicles a day, but there is a high proportion — about 15 per cent. — of heavy vehicles, which convert to about 300 heavy goods vehicles a day. Our national records show that there were seven injury accidents between 1981 and 1985 at Audlem on the A525. Two involved serious injuries but, thankfully, no fatalities. I know that it is always dangerous to say that because we never know what will happen next week. I see the hon. Lady touching wood on the seat beside her.

Before dealing with the removal of the A525 from the primary route network I should remind the House of what the hon. Lady said about Cheshire county council trying over many years to find a solution to the problem. The county had thought about a relief road to bypass the centre of the village, but there were objections from local people because that would have entailed the demolition of properties and created environmental problems. In other words, there is not a cost-free solution.

The main suggestion this evening is the removal of the A525 from the primary route network. That suggestion was carefully considered during the recent review and was strongly opposed by the neighbouring county councils of Staffordshire and Shropshire and by the Crewe and Nantwich borough council and Nantwich town council.

Why was there opposition to the removal of Audlem from the primary route network, or the removal from it of the A525? Traffic would otherwise be supposed to follow one of two alternative routes. That would be north of the A525, using the A51/52 into Nantwich and then the A530 towards the A525 and Whitchurch, or the A534 towards Wrexham; or, alternatively, south of the A525, using the A53 to Market Drayton and the A41 towards Whitchurch.

Each of these alternatives passes through other towns and villages and the transfer of additional traffic from the A525 would exacerbate problems in those areas. In simple terms, Audlem's gain would be someone else's loss. The practical result would be the disappearance of the green signs, which would be replaced by local white-backed signs. I do not want to overstate the efficacy of signing because drivers will follow signed routes only if it is not evident that there is another shorter or faster route for their journey. Regular travellers, including heavy goods vehicle drivers, who, with their employers, are interested in time saving if not fuel saving, soon establish the optimum route. Many journeys that are now made on the A525 would be considerably lengthened if traffic diverted to the northern or southern options. I am not talking of "considerable" in terms of an additional 10 or 20 miles, but "considerable" in terms of what drivers would do. That suggests that the traffic reduction in Audlem might prove to be marginal.

On present information, we believe that on balance the A525 should stay on the primary route network, but the position will be kept under review. I do not need to give the reasons for this, because the hon. Lady has given them clearly. The reason for the recent general review was a recognition that more than 20 years of motorway building and improvements to all-purpose roads, plus traffic increases and population changes, made it necessary to bring the primary route network up to date. Changes in coming years may require and justify further revision. as for the A525, we shall need to be satisfied that the benefits for Audlem outweigh the disadvantages that have been identified by opponents.

I am not saying that we want to see a situation that would bring no disadvantages to anyone else. We want merely to see the balance of the advantages and disadvantages changed. It may be that the county council feels that it has exhausted all possible options for a relief road or bypass, or other forms of improvement, without finding an acceptable answer, and it is possible that a fresh look might produce dividends. I offer the assistance of the Department, especially the north-west regional office, if the county council feels that this would be useful. It is important that I do not give the impression that the Government are trying to take over the responsibility for the road, but I think that I can offer the hand of open help if the county council would like that?

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is there any money?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Lady asks whether there is any money, and I cannot give her a categorical answer. The TSG system provides central Government support, which is currently 50 per cent. of estimated expenditure, to local authorities for spending on roads which serve more than a purely local function. This includes schemes on the primary route network. It includes bypasses, which relieve communities or shopping centres from the effects of heavy through traffic. It is also guided towards other important roads carrying heavy long-distance or through traffic. A bypass of Audlem should stand up well against those criteria. I cannot tell the county council in what order it should put its priorities. The most productive meeting is likely to be the one between the county council and departmental officials. I strongly advocate that approach.

We recognise the problem. There are substantial doubts about whether removal from the primary route network would be of much help. The answer may lie in

improvements. The hon. Lady anticipated my final words, which are to re-emphasise that this is a matter for Cheshire. I hope that our debate will help. I assure the hon. Lady that, looking at the country as a whole, I am determined to go on trying to bring the kind of relief that Audlem seeks, without nationalising the whole road network. There are often times when roads under local county highway authority control are improved more rapidly than they would be if they were under my control. I am grateful to the hon. Lady for raising the subject.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 2 December 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Unemployed Persons

1. **Mrs. Golding** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to open up educational opportunities to the unemployed.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): The development of educational opportunities for unemployed adults in England and Wales is being encouraged by my Department and the Welsh Office through the Replan programme, which began in 1984.

Mrs. Golding: Will the Minister say how many of the 3 million unemployed over 18 years old are receiving any form of education?

Mrs. Rumbold: That is rather a difficult question, but I can certainly undertake to let the hon. Lady have a written reply.

Mr. Squire: Does my hon. Friend agree that many unemployed people are gaining useful knowledge in our adult education colleges, and will she continue to bear them in mind, because the level of funding that they enjoy is but a tiny fraction of the overall education budget?

Mrs. Rumbold: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Although the funding has not been substantial, it has been effective, and the programme undertaken by the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education and the Further Education Unit for Unemployed Adults in colleges of further education has been most successful. It has been providing good opportunities for people to learn about leisure and to receive pre-vocational education to equip them for the future.

Mr. Sheerman: That is a dismal response by the Minster. The potential for educating and training unemployed people is enormous. Could the Minister not talk to the Secretary of State for Employment, Lord Young of Graffham, because it seems that it is possible to have a Government programme that allows training for unemployed people if they come off the dole queue, but very little or no training or education without people's benefits being taken away. We want people to be allowed to have education and training while retaining their benefits. Why can we not have genuine education for unemployed people?

Mrs. Rumbold: There is genuine education under the Replan scheme. The Restart scheme about which the hon. Gentleman spoke is being carried out with some help from us, but the main opportunities that we provide are taken up under the Replan scheme, which is funded not only through NIACE and the Further Education Unit but through the education support grants which local authorities are helping to fund. They are doing excellent work in providing training and vocational training for the unemployed and are giving them opportunities to use their time in leisure and recreation pursuits while they seek new employment.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: In the context of the unemployed, does not the Open University play a good role? Will my hon. Friend pay tribute to the extra funding that has been given to that most excellent avenue of opportunity?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend is right. The Open University has undertaken to provide a special project for the unemployed.

Higher Education

2. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the levels of pay of non-academic and ancillary staff in higher education.

14. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the levels of pay of non-academic and ancillary staff in higher education.

18. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the levels of pay of non-academic and ancillary staff in higher education.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government are not involved in pay negotiations for this group of staff and it is for employers to reach agreement on pay levels which they can afford, having regard to recruitment, retention and motivation.

Mr. Thorne: That answer tends to suggest that the Government consider that they have no responsibility in this field. That surprises me, and I should like the Minister to tell us what she proposes to do to overcome the problem that universities in particular presently face.

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman will know that a quantum of money goes to the universities. The pay bill that applies to both academic and non-academic staff must be regarded as one item within the overall resources that are agreed by the Government, and it is for the universities to decide how it is spent.

Mr. Patchett: Will the Minister accept that over 90 per cent. of manual and clerical workers in universitites are on almost poverty level wages for a full week's work? Is she prepared to reconsider her recent answer on this question and to do something about it?

Mrs. Rumbold: I have no doubt that a very important contribution is being made by that group of people, but I must reiterate that it is for the universities, within their overall resources, to decide their priorities and to allocate money accordingly.

Mr. Eadie: Is the Minister trying to tell the House that her Department and the Government escape responsibility for people on very low pay, which is the question that we are discussing? Does the Minister agree that 90 per cent. of those upon whom we are focusing our minds are receiving under £100 a week, and that two-thirds of the clerical staff receive no payment whatsoever for overtime? We are talking about very low pay and the Minister, on behalf of her Government, must accept some responsibility.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is quite obvious that the Opposition do not understand. The universities obtain a grant from the Government. It is then for the universities to negotiate within the proper forum the kind of pay agreement that they want. Within the totality of the money that is given, it is for the universities to decide their own priorities.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: As many of the ancillary and non-academic staff in universities are particularly concerned about matters involving the organisation of universities and the organisation of meetings at universities, many of my constituents who do these jobs are very worried about something that is happening today at the University of East Anglia. The Labour club there is being addressed by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), at a time when the University of East Anglia has asked for the postponement of a meeting that is to be addressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor). Does that not suggest double standards and is this not—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I should have thought that that question was miles wide of pay.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) has written a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) and that he will be receiving an answer to the point that he has just raised.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Minister confirm that the Government announced that additional resources were to be made available for the universities? Will she also confirm that there is considerable confusion in the universities because they do not know how much each of them will receive, or how much the Government insist should be earmarked for academic and for non-academic salaries? It would be helpful if the Government would tell the universities the figure for academic salaries, so that the universities can decide whether any money will be available for the very low-paid groups of people who are in non-academic posts in universities. Will the Minister accept that the Opposition are appalled by the very low wages that are paid to some of the non-academic staff in universities?

Mrs. Rumbold: I register what the hon. Gentleman said about non-academic pay. The answer to his first question is that that matter will be decided at the beginning of next year. It is quite clear that the hon. Gentleman does not understand that the money is allocated to the universities and that it is for the universities to decide their priorities.

Mr. Bennett: But how much? The hon. Lady has not told the universities how much is available.

Mrs. Rumbold: They will learn how much money is to be made available for academic pay early next year. It is entirely up to individual universities to decide, with the proper unions, how the money is to be allocated for the restructuring of academic and non-academic staff.

School Buildings

3. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in the past three months on the state of repair of school buildings.

5. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in the past three months on the state of repair of school buildings.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): My right hon. Friend has received no major representations on this subject. The repair and maintenance of school buildings is raised from time to time in correspondence from hon. Members and from members of the public.

Mr. Park: Is the Minister aware that an Audit Commission study in 1985 showed that Coventry education department was underspending, because of financial constraints, by £1 million a year, which is about 100 per cent., and that as a result the schools in Coventry are in urgent need of repair and renewal? What does the Minister propose to do about that?

Mr. James Lamond: It is nothing to do with the Government.

Mr. Dunn: Responsibility for the organisation — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dunn: I congratulate Labour Members on their interest in this matter. As they know, the condition of school stock has been arrived at over 20 years of benign, and sometimes malign, neglect. Labour Members have to take their share of the responsibility. I remind the House that the Labour party was in power for 11 out of the past 22 years. When it admits its share of the blame, we shall start to listen to its points.

Mr. Pike: Will the Minister nevertheless accept that the Conservative party is now in office, and that there is a problem? The Secretary of State recently visited Lancashire and is aware of the problems there, and of the fact that much money is needed to put the schools in good order. What will the Government's response be? Will they help or will they continue to sit aside and let the situation deteriorate?

Mr. Dunn: On the hon. Gentleman's first question, the Conservative party is in power, and we shall be for the next 20 years at least. Secondly, local education authorities are constantly telling us that one of their priorities is to spend more on the repair and maintenance of education buildings. The planned increase of 18·8 per cent. in cash in 1987-88 over 1986-87 plans provides for them to meet this and other priorities.

Mr. Lawler: Does the Audit Commission report not show that the problem is not one of cash leaving the

Government, but rather where it is going, and that £700 million is being wasted by local authorities on maintaining surplus places? Will my hon. Friend assure us that strong steps will be taken to force local authorities to take speedy action so that areas such as my constituency, where there is a fairly unusual problem of rising rolls, can have money allocated to them so that they can repair buildings?

Mr. Dunn: An awful lot can result from the good management of our schools, as my hon. Friend said. I cannot comment on allocations that have yet to be announced.

Mr. Lord: Does my hon. Friend agree that in the problem of the costs of repairing school buildings, as in many other problems, a trouble shared is a trouble halved? Is he aware that in my constituency, in the village of Mendlesham, we have just built a brand new school, funded jointly by the community and the local education authority, which is to be used for both educational and community purposes? Does he not warmly welcome this exciting new project?

Mr. Dunn: I welcome that partnership, which is such a tremendous, dynamic and go-ahead partnership by the people in this constituency. It shows what sensible, good-natured and responsive people they are.

Mr. Madden: I was staggered to hear the Minister say that he had not received any major representations about the condition of schools. Does he not recollect being in Bradford recently, when he expressed concern about crumbling schools in that city? Does he not recognise that the ratepayers of Bradford are becoming heartily sick of Education Ministers coming to the city, drinking ratepayers' tea and giving very little in return except expressions of concern?

Mr. Skinner: Tea and sympathy.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dunn: If the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) had a brain, he would be dangerous. If local education authorities spent less money on anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist and anti-police activities they could probably do a lot better in terms of repair and maintenance.

Mr. Sayeed: As the Audit Commission has clearly shown that local authorities are often inefficient in applying funds to schools, will the Minister issue guidelines to local authorities enouraging an extension of the Cambridgeshire scheme, which permits heads to exercise control over money spent on their schools?

Mr. Dunn: I am totally enamoured of the Cambridgeshire experiment. It is our intention to ensure that it becomes widespread in the fullness of time.

Mr. Radice: The Minister must be well aware that the Audit Commission and HMI have warned the Secretary of State about the "crummy" state of our schools. *[Interruption.]* I was quoting from the former Secretary of State's verdict on our schools. Will the Minister now tell parents what the Government will do about it?

Mr. Dunn: We have announced a massive increase in expenditure, a figure of 18·8 per cent. Local authorities have it within their gift to embark upon the privatisation of non-teaching services. Therefore, they can save money for expenditure on education where it is needed and where it is desired.

Teachers (Pay)

4. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the latest position regarding the teachers' pay and conditions of service negotiations; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): Over the weekend a National Union of Teachers special conference voted narrowly to accept the proposals in the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service document signed by the local authorities and some teacher unions. The NUT is now balloting its members. Local authorities meet today to discuss the proposals. I remain willing to hold further discussions with the local authorities and any of the teacher unions.

Mr. Hicks: I support my right hon. Friend's objectives in encouraging responsibility and rewarding the good classroom teacher. However, will he accept that there is a genuine predicament in the case of the good classroom teacher teaching in our excellent smaller schools in villages and market towns? Having achieved the maximum after nine years, they could well find themselves locked in and their chances of subsequent promotion very limited.

Mr. Baker: One of the major flaws of the ACAS proposals is exactly that. I am sure that it would affect adversely the small primary school. Under the ACAS proposals there would be no promoted posts in about three quarters of primary schools. Therefore, there would be no incentive for teachers to do well unless they sought to become a head or a deputy. However, deputies in the small schools would get only £5 a week more than the main professional grade teachers under the ACAS proposals.

Mr. Fatchett: Since his statement last week, and in his reply to the earlier question, the Secretary of State has made it clear that he is prepared to meet the employers and the unions, and that he is prepared to be flexible about his own suggested imposed settlement. Will the right hon. Gentleman give some indication of the areas of his settlement that he is prepared to be flexible about?

Mr. Baker: In the meetings that I have had with Councillor Pearman and the unions so far — another union has asked to see me next week — I have made clear the conditions behind the Government's position, which is that any offer should come within the cost envelope of some £600 million for this year and next year, and must have a sufficient number of incentive posts in it to ensure a good career structure for the young, able and energetic person who wants to become a teacher.

Mr. Pawsey: Will my right hon. Friend accept that the majority of parents and, I suspect, teachers, will welcome the introduction of legislation that will bring some form of order into the chaos that currently surrounds negotiations on teachers' pay? Will my right hon. Friend further accept that once the legislation is on the statute book it will be warmly welcomed as a means of preventing further disruption in our schools to the disadvantage of our children?

Mr. Baker: When the definition of the teacher's job — contained in appendix 1 of the ACAS document — is in force, it will be clear what teachers should and should no do. It will be out of order and a breach of contract if

they indulge in the sort of disruptive action that has so damaged schools, the education of our children, and the reputation of the teaching profession.

Mr. Freud: Does the Secretary of State accept that one cannot impose a solution on teachers? Will he reassure the teachers who want to see him that not only his door but his mind will remain open?

Mr. Baker: I have made that absolutely clear, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman is a spokesman for the Liberal party. Since I have held this post, I have listened to what he has said. I have yet to distinguish any issue concerning education on which the Liberal party's views differ from those of the Labour party. I hope the hon. Gentleman will recognise that, in the career structure of the profession, there must be proper incentive posts and proper rewards. I should have thought that that was one of the elements of Liberal thinking such as we know it.

Mr. Haselhurst: Does my right hon. Friend sense that he is very close to an agreement which will satisfy the majority of teachers, and certainly the majority of the public? Does he agree that, in the end, the prize will be more glittering if he can achieve a settlement by agreement?

Mr. Baker: Certainly. That is why I said that my door remains open. What Mr. McAvoy said has made the situation more difficult. Following the NUT conference, Mr. McAvoy, the deputy general secretary, said:

"There is no likelihood of our agreement being changed as far as the NUT is concerned."

He added:

"It was 'sad' other unions felt there was an alternative."

He then said:

"There is an alternative—and that is a return to action and disruption".

I utterly deplore that statement made by a major figure of the NUT.

Mr. Barnett: Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that, as Secretary of State, perhaps his most important priority is to get the confidence of the teaching profession as a whole? Does he agree that he will do that only if he is prepared to negotiate, listen to what the teachers say and recognise that their view about the way in which salary scales should be organised must be taken seriously if he is to gain their confidence?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that, in this matter, there is no collective view of the profession. Two unions did not approve the draft document. Since then, other unions have made it clear to me that they do not agree with an element of the structure. There is no agreed professional view of the position. That problem has been inherent in the trouble for the past two years. There has been very muddled progress over that period, as the unions and the local authority employers have not been able to agree. Alas, that is still the position. That is why we have to introduce a Bill. That is why I have to make the Government's position clear.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that it is said that some 1 million people are incapable of correctly filling in their applications for British Gas shares? Does this not show that their education was somewhat inadequate? Does it not point to a clear need for a total restructuring of the salaries of professional teachers and of their conditions of service so that this does not occur in future?

Mr. Baker: There must be other objectives to the education system than a facility to fill in prospectuses. None the less, I agree with my hon. Friend. There is considerable disquiet about the quality of education at all levels in our schools. The dispute is an important opportunity to improve the quality of the teaching profession. We must not forgo that opportunity.

Mr. Flannery: The Secretary of State, in his first answer, avoided the issue. He did not make it clear what was the issue at the recalled conference of the NUT at which I was present. The issue was not his offer. The teachers are united in their disagreement with it. The issue was the employers' offer, which, with the union's agreement, still has to be submitted to the right hon. Gentleman. One hundred thousand or so people did not agree with that offer — which is far better than the Secretary of State's offer—and 125,000 did agree with it. The important word in the main question is "negotiations". If the Secretary of State tries to impose his will on all the unions without negotiations, he will unify them, and he will disrupt schools once again.

Mr. Baker: One must appreciate that the NUT has made it clear that it is not prepared to move at all. It has not moved since Coventry. That is what the deputy general secretary of the NUT said. The hon. Gentleman is a member of the NUT. Does he agree with the sentiment:

"There is an alternaive—and that is a return to action and disruption"?

Mr. John Townend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in the past decade there has been a considerable improvement in the teacher-pupil ratio, without an equivalent improvement in the quality of education? If so, will he resist the demands for more teachers and more free periods and concentrate the available resources on rewarding good teachers who are conscientious and accept responsibility?

Mr. Baker: I agree with my hon. Friend that there has been an improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio from 18·9:1 to 17·6:1 while we have been in office. I also agree that that has not necessarily been accompanied in all our schools by an improvement in the quality of education. I think that all hon. Members are concerned about that. The whole thrust of the Government's and my proposals is to improve the quality of the teaching profession by having proper incentives and rewards for at least half the profession, whereas the ACAS proposals cover only a third of the profession.

Mr. Skinner: Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that on 23 September this year he said to a meeting of educationists, "I worry about the present extension of central control. I want more decisions to be taken at the rim of the wheel and fewer at the hub"? If so, why is the right hon. Gentleman poking his nose into the teachers' negotiations?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman must realise that only 10 minutes ago my hon. Friend the Minister of State was being pressed to interfere in the wage negotiations in our universities. I stand by exactly what I said. The hon. Gentleman will see, if he studies the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, the very wide, extensive reforms that we are introducing to increase the power of head teachers and governors. That is what I want to do, but the Labour party is opposed to it.

Mr. Favell: Does my right hon. Friend feel that the time has come to remove the local authorities from the pay equation? After all, the teachers want to negotiate national conditions and the people want national curricula and national standards in our schools.

Mr. Baker: There is little doubt that there is a move, which I support and will encourage, towards national curricula. As regards the future of determining teachers' pay and conditions, the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill, which will have its Second Reading next Monday, will set out our proposals for an interim advisory committee. I am sure that many people will welcome the fact that the Burnham negotiating machinery is coming to its end.

Mr. Radice: Is the Secretary of State prepared to accept any modification at all to his proposals, or is he merely delaying until he has got his legislation through Parliament so that he can impose a settlement on the teachers and the employers? We are entitled to know the answer.

Mr. Baker: The answer is that on 30 October I set out the Government's conditions and provided a further £600 million. Since then there has been no move towards the Government's position. Some of the unions are saying to me that they would like to reconsider their position. I am willing to listen.

Education Act 1981

6. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the working of the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend will shortly be undertaking a review of the provisions of the Education Act 1981 and its associated guidance to local education authorities, health authorities and social services departments in the light of recent research findings. Any possible amendments will be the subject of consultation with interested bodies in the usual way.

Mr. Dormand: Although the recently published survey, which the Minister has not mentioned, shows that there are many problems associated with the integration of handicapped children into ordinary schools, does he agree that the main difficulty arises from the insufficient provision made by the Government? Is he aware that there is deep and growing concern among parents — I am pleased to have the Minister's assent — at the slow progress in meeting the aims of the 1981 Act? Will he therefore consider constituting a special unit in his Department to monitor and develop progress towards the aims of the Act? Unless something is done about that, the hon. Gentleman will soon be accused of not caring about the provisions of this important legislation.

Mr. Dunn: I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's concern. As he knows, a short while ago the Department of Education and Science funded a three and a half year project at the University of London institute of education to study the developments within local authorities following the introduction of the 1981 Act. We are now studying the implications of that project and we shall return to it at some time in future.

Mr. Haselhurst: Does my hon. Friend accept that, although there have been some early and obvious benefits from the implementation of the Act for handicapped youngsters and their classmates, there are still problems —for example, in small village schools of ancient construction which have difficulties in handling wheelchair cases?

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend is right about that difficulty. We would all like to spend more money on special education, but much good work is being done within existing resources. As he knows, all local education authorities now operate the procedures introduced by the 1981 Act.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that the implementation of the Act has been severely handicapped because no extra resources have been available to adapt buildings, to provide the extra educational psychologists who are needed to make the statements, to train teachers in the mainstream schools, to provide special provision or to provide speech therapists or physiotherapists from the district health authorities? When will the Government provide the money to make the legislation work?

Mr. Dunn: From the moment that the Act was initiated we always said that financial provision was the responsibility of the local education authorities. I remind the House that the number of children who were the subject of a statement of special educational needs and who were in ordinary schools at January last was 26,423.

Schools (Reorganisation)

7. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he intends to bring forward any proposals to aid the speedier reorganisation of schools by local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend intends shortly to issue a circular to local education authorities giving guidance on the action needed to reorganise schools in response to falling rolls.

Mr. Stern: Does my hon. Friend agree that the principal cause of complaints that are heard from time to time about low capitation and poor quality of repairs in schools is the failure of authorities, such as Avon, to reorganise schools, thereby wasting the money that could otherwise be provided to improve standards in schools? Will he allow and encourage authorities to speed up much-needed reorganisation? Will he also take into account the fact that when authorities are contemplating reorganisation, they are often considering a period of three years?

Mr. Dunn: The point of the circular will be to answer just the points made by my hon. Friend. How, when and why local education authorities reorganise their provision is entirely for them, but they must take account of the children and the needs of the community if they do so.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Will the Minister consider carefully the way in which the Education Act 1981 — the Warnock Act — could be better implemented, with reorganisation, to enable more facilities to be made available?

Mr. Dunn: I undertake to do just that.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Will my hon. Friend look at the administration of our schools, as many teachers who serve on local education authorities appear to act in a negative way, especially in relation to Leicestershire county council

schools? Will he also encourage further single-sex schools to be established, as they are the only real way to allow pupils to develop?

Mr. Dunn: Our role in the receiving sense is simply to take account of the provision as it stands and how it might be shaped for the future. The maintenance of schools of proven worth and of single-sex schools figures highly among our concerns.

Mr. Eastham: Does the Minister realise that the Department of Education and Science is pressing for the economic use of schools? It is recognised that in future some of those places will be required as the numbers increase. Therefore, some authorities are applying under section 13 for closures of one form per school to allow a thinning-out to get over the problem temporarily. However, on occasion, the Department is overruling the recommendations, especially in Tory areas, and that is causing an imbalance in other parts of the city.

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman seems to be somewhat confused about the provisions of the 1980 Act. Local education authorities can reduce their planned admission levels by up to 19·99 per cent. without recourse to the Department. If they wish to go beyond that, they must have recourse to the Secretary of State. How local authorities respond is entirely a matter for them.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Has my hon. Friend studied the recent figures which show that the part of the United Kingdom with the highest success rate in A and O-levels is Northern Ireland, where 25 per cent. of all children go to grammar schools? Consequently, will he resist, or look very carefully at, any proposals from county councils that seek to wind up, abolish or undermine grammar school education in places such as Southend, as it is extremely successful and popular?

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend, as ever, has his constituency interests at heart. However, we take careful account of all the arguments before approving any proposals for closure or amalgamation.

Student Grants

8. **Mr. Straw** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in the past three months on the level of student financial support.

9. **Dr. M. S. Miller** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in the past three months on the level of student financial support.

11. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in the past three months on the level of student financial support.

19. **Mr. Stott** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in the past three months on the level of student financial support.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. George Walden): Since the beginning of September my right hon. Friend has received about 40 representations on the level of financial support for students. In addition, a number of letters have been received on issues which fall within the scope of the review of student support, including submissions made in response to invitations to submit evidence to the review.

Mr. Straw: Does the Minister realise that, because of the cuts in the real value of student grants, many students face hardship of a kind that has never been experienced before? If a student loan system was introduced, it would remove access to higher education for many students who come from lower income families. As evidence from other countries clearly suggests that to be the case, why do the Government not abandon that idea altogether?

Mr. Walden: The hon. Gentleman is wrong to suggest that the grant has been cut by the extent often claimed by the NUS, which is 20 per cent. The real figure is closer to 12 per cent. The hon. Gentleman has selectively used evidence about the effect of loans in other countries. However, I will look at that carefully and fairly, because I do not want anything in my review to damage the chances of access to higher education by those from lower income backgrounds. A loan system need not do that.

Mr. Nellist: Why have the Government introduced new student grant regulations requiring mature students to have earned £12,000 in the three years prior to going to college? Will that not block access to education by women who have been bringing up families, by the unemployed and by the low-paid? Surely that will block access to the majority of those seeking mature student grants.

Mr. Walden: Not uncharacteristically, the hon. Gentleman has completely misunderstood the point. The number of mature students has increased by 15 per cent. since 1979, and we are proud of that record. Moreover, the change was introduced partly at the suggestion of the NUS and the local authority associations in order to spread the benefit. The hon. Gentleman clearly misunderstands the whole purpose of the benefit. It is not intended for all students who have reached a certain age, but to compensate those entering higher education for any financial obligations that they have built up.

Mr. George Gardiner: Will my hon. Friend give due weight to the growing feeling among students in favour of a mixed grant-loan system? They believe that it offers emancipation from the present system of parental contributions.

Mr. Walden: A fact often overlooked by commentators on this question is that the only people who do not contribute directly to the cost of student support are the main beneficiaries, the students theselves.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend seek to reallocate the available finance for student support so that all students are put on an equal footing, irrespective of whether the parents cough up the full parental contribution.?

Mr. Walden: In the course of the review on student support we shall take all proposals into account, including those of my hon. Friend.

Mr. Freud: Accepting the increase in the number of students in higher education, is the Minister genuinely satisfied that, bearing in mind the needs of the nation and the availability of talent, he is doing enough to get students into higher education?

Mr. Walden: We are doing more than many other previous Governments. The real problem is not student

grants, but the quality of education provided in primary schools and upwards. No Government have done more than this one to improve that quality.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 December 1986.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Michael Brown: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to consider setting up an official inquiry to consider what precedents there are, if any, for the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition to intervene in a court case involving Her Majesty's Government by privately contacting the counsel acting against Her Majesty's Government?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has made his point very effectively. If there are any such precedents for this astonishing action, perhaps the deputy leader of the Opposition will let us know.

Mr. Hattersley: In her consideration of these matters, especially what is known as public interest, will the Prime Minister tell us how she distinguished between a book written by Mr. Peter Wright and a book based on information supplied by Mr. Peter Wright? Why did the Prime Minister choose to prosecute or attempt to suppress publication in one case, yet allow, indeed encourage, publication in the other?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is aware that I cannot comment—*[Interruption.]*—on matters which may arise in the proceedings concerning the Peter Wright case in Australia while those proceedings continue. I also intend to follow the precedent set by previous Prime Ministers and not comment on security matters.

Mr. Hattersley: I am asking the Prime Minister to answer for past errors. Was it not the Government's decision not to take action against Mr. Chapman Pincher in 1981 that has produced their present humiliation? Is that not the result of the authority of the Attorney-General being usurped by the Prime Minister in order to manipulate the law for party political reasons?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is attempting to be mischievous. I shall not answer his questions, however hard he tries.

Mr. Hattersley: Nobody is taken in by the Prime Minister's prevarication on these matters. The House and the country know that the Prime Minister has begun to treat the law as if it were her own property. Hence the Prime Minister's willingness to allow Mr. Wright to sell his secrets to Chapman Pincher, but not to allow him to sell his secrets under his own name.

The Prime Minister: I repeat, it would be inappropriate for me—*[Interruption.]*—to comment on matters which may arise in the proceedings concerning the Peter Wright case in Australia while those proceedings continue. I also intend to follow the precedent set by previous Prime Ministers of not commenting on security matters—a precedent to which the right hon. Gentleman adhered when he was in junior office in the Labour Government.

Mr. Heseltine: Before my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister goes back to her timetable, will she ask the chiefs of staff whether they could let us have an assessment of the Labour party's latest alternative to a nuclear deterrent, and whether it could be published? I understand that its alternative is to build a ditch from the Baltic to the Adriatic and to fill it with explosive slurry to deter Soviet tanks.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend makes it abundantly clear that we do not need an assessment from the chiefs of staff. The Labour Party's suggestion is crackers.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Is the Prime Minister aware that, in the light of the present difficulties of the British and American Governments, many people are contrasting the British Government's shady, hole-in-the-corner, sweep-it-under-the-carpet tactics with America, where everything will come out in the wash? When are the people of the United Kingdom to be entrusted with open government?

The Prime Minister: Speaking as a housewife, I think that the right hon. Gentleman became rather confused about his subject. We are fine. How is the right hon. Gentleman?

Q2. **Mr. Hargreaves** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hargreaves: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the more people learn about the defence policies of the Opposition parties the more they support the Government's policy of maintaining full membership of NATO and retaining our own nuclear deterrent? Will my right hon. Friend take note that last Thursday, 24 hours after a party political broadcast on behalf of the SDP, in which it outlined its defence policy, it not only lost a seat on Hyndburn council to the Conservative party, but came bottom of the poll? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the two events are not unconnected?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate my hon. Friend's constituents and hope that we will have many other similar successes. I am sure that his constituents were entirely right in rejecting the Liberal-SDP defence policy, which is for a deterrent which does not deter.

Mr. Eastham: Rolls-Royce was nationalised by a previous Conservative Government. If the Prime Minister achieves her own way and the company is privatised, and it fails again, will she renationalise it to save the thousands of jobs that will be lost?

The Prime Minister: Rolls-Royce is doing very well and winning excellent orders, and many people both inside and outside the company are looking forward to the privatisation and the wider share ownership that will then ensue, which is anathema to the hon. Gentleman.

Q3. **Mr. John Townend** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Townend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the spread of AIDS could be greatly reduced if there were a change in public attitudes, especially if indulging in homosexual activities and drug taking could once again become morally and socially unacceptable?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that attitudes are changing in the light of information about AIDS. I am sure also that the most important thing is to ensure that people have full information about how this terrible disease is spread among men and women. I think that then much of the behaviour that has been going on will be entirely unacceptable for many and varied reasons.

Dr. Owen: While we may disagree on how best to make a contribution to NATO's nuclear deterrence, is that as nothing in comparison with the advocacy of a non-nuclear defence strategy for NATO? Does the Prime Minister agree that the Australian precedent, whereby Australia has agreed with the United States that New Zealand, in pursuing a non-nuclear defence strategy, can no longer remain a member of the ANZUS treaty organisation, is exactly the attitude that our European partners will take to the idea that any one NATO country can opt out of NATO's nuclear defence strategy?

The Prime Minister: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. A nuclear deterrent strategy is a fundamental part of NATO's strategy, and those who do not accept it are very likely to break up the organisation and be unable to remain members.

Q4. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hickmet: May I assure my right hon. Friend that the questions which have come from the Conservative Benches today have not been planted by Mr. Turnbull? — *[Interruption.]* What damage does my right hon. Friend think that the abandonment of the bi-partisan approach to security matters has done to British security interests, and what effect does she think that will have in the future on our security interests?

The Prime Minister: The abandonment of the bi-partisan approach to security matters is totally and utterly fundamental to Britain's security. The Leader of the Opposition has abandoned a fundamental defence policy pursued by his predecessors. He has now abandoned a fundamental security policy pursued by all previous Prime Ministers.

Mr. Janner: In view of the anxiety which the Prime Minister must have suffered during the past few weeks over the contradictory application and non-application of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, and in view of her refusal to comment upon that to the House, is she considering amending the Act?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. and learned Gentleman is aware, we tried to amend the Act in 1980 and brought before the House a Bill for that purpose. It was at that time rejected. We have no present proposals to amend it.

Q5. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marlow: Would it be possible for my right hon. Friend to arrange today for a special flight for the Leader of the Opposition so that he can come back to the House tomorrow to answer the real allegations that he has been conniving with defence lawyers in Australia in a case against the Crown on the subject of security?

The Prime Minister: It is not for me to answer for the Leader of the Opposition and I am jolly glad that I do not have to. It is for him to do that.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Prime Minister find time today to explain to the House why the London fire brigade is having to pay out about £100,000 in order to change the insignia on the buttons, the fire engines and the fire stations because the College of Arms will not let it use the GLC coat of arms? Is that part of the savings from the abolition of the GLC that the Prime Minister promised us?

The Prime Minister: The savings from the abolition of the GLC, as some our constituents have occasion to know, are enormous, and they are grateful that the GLC has been abolished.

Mr. Onslow: As the Leader of the Opposition has let himself be set up to ask in the House questions which were to be asked in an Australian court the following day, is my right hon. Friend aware that she will have the full support of Conservative Members if she refuses to have any more truck on matters of national security with someone who has reduced himself to the status of Mr. Turnbull's mouthpiece?

The Prime Minister: Yes; I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend.

Q6. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Prime Minister make arrangements to study the board of inquiry report which will be produced on the military aircraft crash which took place in the Borders in Scotland on Thursday night? Is she aware that such crashes are now occurring on average once every two months? Will she give the House an undertaking that she will make sure that low-flying manoeuvres are restricted to the absolute minimum and that they are carried out with procedures which quarantee the maximum safety for civilian life?

The Prime Minister: I understand that a pilot lost his life in that crash, and I should like to extend sympathy to the relatives of that pilot. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the cause of the accident, in which an RAF Jaguar crashed, is still under investigation. Safety regulations for military flying over all designated range areas, and more generally, are matters to which the Government attach great importance. They are kept under close and continual review. I will bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. William Shelton: If my right hon. Friend wished to acquaint herself with the course of the trial in Australia directly and speak on the telephone, would she speak to counsel acting for Her Majesty's Government, or would she speak only to counsel acting for Mr. Wright?

The Prime Minister: I think my hon. Friend can rest assured that I would do neither.

Q7. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Atkinson: Does the Prime Minister recall that she has often expressed pride in the fact that she was once governor of Imperial college, and that she is a science graduate in chemistry and an associate and friend of Sir George Porter? Has she seen the remarks that Sir George made yesterday, confirming that the continuing brain drain from Britain in science and engineering is the result of the Government's abandonment of science and engineering? What has she now to say about the deplorable state of our laboratories, the deplorable state of engineering in the absence of some of our key engineers and the deplorable future that faces this country without those scientists and engineers?

The Prime Minister: I read the comments of Sir George Porter. I must state that total net Government expenditure on research and development is at record levels and that the United Kingdom Government-funded civilian research and development, as a proportion of national output, exceeds the level in Japan and the United States, and that is also true for all United Kingdom expenditure on research and development compared with Germany.

With regard to the hon. Gentleman's point about a possible brain drain, I refer him to the fact that tax on top people, including top scientists, is very much lower in the United States than it is here, and it is going down in the United States. The position to which he referred would be infinitely worse had we not reduced the top level of tax to 60 per cent.

Rover Group

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on developments within certain Rover Group businesses.

On 24 July I informed the House that agreement in principle had been reached on the sale of Leyland Bus and of a majority holding in Unipart and I can report in both cases that detailed negotiations are proceeding satisfactorily. In reply to questions on 5 November, I also announced the disposal of majority interests in Jaguar-Rover-Australia and in Istel. The situation on Land Rover remains as I stated last April, that Land Rover will be retained in Rover Group for a possible flotation or trade sale at a later date.

The chairman of Rover Group has also been reviewing the options for Leyland trucks. This review has been taking place against the backdrop of continuing depressed demand, particularly in overseas markets, and severe over-capacity in Europe. Our objective is to achieve a secure future for the production of Leyland trucks, but it must be recognised that any option for the company — whether related to collaboration, merger, sale or, indeed, continuation under present ownership — will involve restructuring.

Talks are progressing with two companies. The first is DAF. Hon. Members will be aware that in October a limited but important collaboration on the marketing of Roadrunner trucks and Sherpa vans was announced. DAF and Rover Group are now in talks about the benefits that could arise from much more fundamental collaboration in the truck and van businesses. The second is Paccar, the parent company of Foden, which is considering the basis on which it might wish to make a bid for Leyland trucks.

Both sets of talks are at an early stage and, for the reasons I have already outlined, Mr. Day has my full support in pursuing them. I thought it right to inform the House at this early stage and, obviously, I shall keep the House in touch with developments. I am sure hon. Members will understand and accept that it would be prejudicial to the interests of those employed in these operations and in their suppliers for me to make any further detailed comment on the discussions at this stage.

Mr. Day's review of the plans for all Rover Group operating companies, including Austin Rover, will form the basis of the 1987 corporate plan which is now under preparation. After I have received it and given it careful consideration, I shall announce the Government's response. In respect of Austin Rover, I should, however, like to take this opportunity to emphasise that I expect Mr. Day's plan to set out a positive course for the continuation of the company as a major producer and leading exporter of cars made in Britain. I stress that the Government's aim is to secure the best possible future for Austin Rover, its suppliers and the motor industry generally in this country.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): In essence, the Secretary of State has announced two sets of talks. My first question is: are they alternatives? The first proposition, namely with DAF, appears from the statement to be an extension of existing collaboration which appears to be proceeding satisfactorily and which offers market opportunities for the Rover group. Clearly, that is desirable, if it is a true collaboration between equal, independent companies. The second is a takeover attempt by another foreign-owned company for Leyland trucks. Given that General Motors appears to be persisting in its decision to end truck making in the United Kingdom, if this goes ahead it would mean that the only volume producing truck maker left in Britain would cease to be British-owned. Why is the Secretary of State encouraging those talks, which will inevitably lead to extensive rationalisation, job losses and the loss of British ownership and control of a crucial part of our engineering economy?

Since we now have some advance notice of discussions like this, unlike the activities of one of the predecessors of the Secretary of State, now the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who sought to sell British Leyland and Austin Rover without informing anyone, will the Secretary of State take the opportunity of having full consultations with the relevant trade unions, to which this statement will be news? *[Laughter.]* I do not know why the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster should laugh about the notion of consulting the trade unions. It is all too indicative of his attitude to British industry and the people who work in it. Would it not make sense for the Secretary of State to seek at this stage to give the fullest possible information and to allow the fullest possible consultation with the trade unions?

Finally, while I note the Government's apparent conversion to maintaining Austin Rover as a major car producer, will the Secretary of State appeal to the Prime Minister to stop knocking Austin Rover as she did in a recent interview in the *Financial Times?* When will the Government see Austin Rover as a great opportunity for Britain, not as a problem, as the Prime Minister unfortunately described it?

Mr. Channon: I entirely repudiate what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said about the interview of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in the *Financial Times*. He will know that the *Financial Times* issued a correction. Indeed, as £2·2 billion of public money has been put into Rover group, it ill becomes him to criticise the Government for not supporting the company.

Obviously, there will be consultation with the trade unions in the normal way through the normal machinery on the future plans of the company. I note what the right hon. and learned Gentleman says about the question of Paccar as opposed to DAF. It is far too soon at this stage to say how the talks will progress or what the final outcome will be, but I note what he says.

Regarding the truck industry in Britain, I must again remind the House that there is 40 per cent. over-capacity in the truck industry in Europe. It is not possible to imagine that this position can continue without change and any hon. Member who advances that seriously is doing no service to those who work in the industry.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as the taxpayer owns 98 per cent. of Rover Group, it is in our interests to recognise that the truck division of that group produces some very good products? We should welcome any new collaboration that will strengthen that group, recognise the over-capacity and even, if necessary, visualise a change of ownership. That could well be in the best interests of all the people who work in that part of Rover Group.

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. They are excellent products, and, as I said in my statement, our aim is to try to ensure a secure future for the production of Leyland trucks. As my hon. Friend says, there is now international collaboration in the production of trucks. We have seen that in Iveco and in Enasa. Indeed, we see such collaboration all over the world. I am sure that that will continue to happen and it is unlikely that we will be able to stand aside. I am determined to have the best possible future for the production of Leyland trucks.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): We accept that international collaboration is one of the options to be pursued. Does the Minister accept that, of the two options before us, the DAF option is preferable? I recognise that the Minister cannot comment on which of the two is preferable, but does he recognise that DAF, with its established network of retailers and a history of collaboration, is preferable? Many people might regard the Paccar deal as a buy-out to kill off some of the competition. Will the Minister give us two assurances? First, will he ensure that Paccar will not buy up in order to kill off competition and secondly, that the work force in Leyland trucks will be appropriately consulted across the board about the options that lie ahead?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman asked about the work force. I answered a question about that a moment ago. Consultation will take place through the normal machinery. He asked about the merits of the DAF and Paccar bids, but he will not expect me to comment on that at this time, although I take note of what he says. In considering what recommendation to make to me, the Rover Group board will have to consider all the business plans for the two operations in any proposals put forward. I shall have to consider any recommendation and the total business plans will be a factor.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that on two counts his statement will be especially welcome in my constituency? First, it will be welcomed because of the continuing good news about the progress of negotiations about Unipart, which I hope will be brought to a speedy conclusion. Secondly, the statement will be especially welcome in view of the irresponsible speculation about the future of Austin Rover, speculation fuelled almost entirely by the Opposition. That has been wholly harmful to the future and present prospects of the company. The Minister's words are a great reassurance to my constituents and to all those people involved in the future of Austin Rover.

Mr. Channon: I am exceedingly grateful to my hon. Friend for his question. I support what he says and I am grateful to him for saying it.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Is the Minister aware that, although collaboration with DAF is welcome because it will increase the sales opportunities for Roadrunner Trucks and Sherpa vans in Europe, any further collaboration, particularly in manufacturing, will be carefully examined in the west midlands to ensure that any arrangement made will not lead to fewer jobs, especially at the Common lane factory which is one of the few growth points in manufacturing industry in the west midlands.

Mr. Channon: I note what the hon. Gentleman says and, of course, any proposed solution will have to be carefully examined. It would be wrong for me to mislead the House. Whatever solution comes forward will involve restructuring in this industry, because there is 40 per cent. over-capacity in truck manufacture in Europe and there is also over-capacity in the United Kingdom. The House must take that seriously and it would be misleading for me to try to disguise it.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the foremost aim of my constituents and those of my hon. Friends the Members for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) and for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) is to secure the long-term future of Leyland trucks, which is centred in my constituency? [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] Many people at all levels of the company, including trade union representatives, have pressed me to work for greater collaboration especially in Europe. Does he agree that the work force—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."]—whom the Opposition spend their time mocking instead of showing concern about this—have done all that has been asked of them in terms of the product, its marketing and its support. That has resulted in the product taking the largest share of the United Kingdom market.

Finally, is my right hon. Friend aware that two of the biggest problems for Leyland trucks are the need for more outlets in Europe and the United States of America and the need for substantial reinvestment in the new truck range, and that if the discussions provide an answer to those problems they will be welcomed by my constituents at all levels?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree with what he said about the work force and about the work that they have done in recent years at Leyland trucks. I pay tribute to him for his robust defence of their interests on all occasions in this House. Of course more outlets are needed. Investment is also needed, but a profitable company is required to provide that investment. I suspect that greater collaboration is required, whether it takes the form of a merger or something else. A merger is almost certainly or, at the least, very likely to be the answer. I very much agree with my hon. Friend that we should aim at achieving a secure future for the production of Leyland trucks.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith) : Is not the problem under-consumption rather than over-production, which in turn is a reflection of the crisis in the capitalist system worldwide? That crisis is made much worse by the fact that the bankers and financiers in the City of London are screwing down many countries in the Third world that would willingly buy British goods, particularly trucks. Is not that the crux of the problem? Surely it has to be admitted that Graham Day, the slick lawyer from Canada, the undertaker of British Shipbuilders, was brought in to destroy the industry rather than to build it up. That is the real issue that is at stake. Let us admit that Mr. Day is a hatchetman for the Conservative Government.

Mr. Channon: That is a rather astonishing accusation. Mr. Day was first employed by the Labour party when it was in government some years ago. I have with me a sheaf of quotations containing glowing tributes to him from all kinds of distinguished people. In particular, the shadow Home Secretary praised Mr. Day at all stages. If the House wants me to do so, I can read out those tributes. The idea that Mr. Day is a hatchetman imported by the Tory

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Government, is preposterous nonsense. As to the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that all the troubles in the Third world have been caused by insufficient lending from the City of London to Third world countries, it is not quite like that. There is over-capacity in the European truck industry, and that is a very serious matter. We have to restructure and to do what we can to provide a secure future for the production of Leyland trucks.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): In the continuing discussions between Leyland trucks, Paccar Foden, which is situated in my constituency, and DAF, will my right hon. Friend ensure that full consideration is given to the retention of the maximum number of jobs in this country, not only in the company itself but, just as important, in the components industry?

Mr. Channon: Yes. I entirely understand my hon. Friend's concern, and in particular her constituency interest. When recommendations are made to me, I shall want to consider very carefully the effects on employment. I shall also want to examine the effects on employment of no change in the present position. My hon. Friend is quite right to make that point, and I shall consider it very carefully.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The Secretary of State said that it would be prejudicial to suppliers and to employees to make any further comment at this stage. Is not the real prejudice to those employees and suppliers who run the risk of losing their jobs through privatisation? That has happened in virtually all Leyland privatisation cases, such as Coventry Climax. Is it not incumbent upon the Secretary of State to give those who work for the Leyland subsidiaries every scrap of information that he can about the negotiations or the machinations that are taking place behind their backs?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman and I have debated privatisation on a number of occasions, and I rather doubt that we shall reach an agreement. He has quoted Coventry Climax to me, and I quote Jaguar to him. That is a record that the House knows very well. As to the work force, I have already said that the work force will be consulted through the normal machinery. I accept that this will have a major effect on people who are very interested in the future of their company. That is understandable. However, I am in a dilemma. Do I tell the House at an early stage what is going on, or do I try to keep the information from the House? It seemed to me right that I should tell the House at the earliest opportunity, even if that means that I cannot give the details that I know that the House would like to have.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): In view of the over-capacity in the truck market, and recalling earlier this year the merger or combination between Ford Trucks and Iveco, I welcome the news that talks are taking place. As last time, the panic reaction of Opposition parties helped to collapse the talks, I urge my right hon. Friend this time to see the talks through to a conclusion, because the longer he leaves it, the more difficult and painful will be the solution. Cannot a great deal of the delay be laid firmly at the door of the Opposition?

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. He will appreciate that at this stage the talks are between Rover Group and the companies concerned, and are not talks in which the Government are involved. Rover Group will come to us with a recommendation, which may be that it does not like the proposal, but we cannot prejudge that at this stage. I shall then have to recommend its proposal to the House, or not. I shall have to take that decision. I agree that there is no point in ducking these decisions. They become not easier, but more difficult.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the Secretary of State take into account the fact that there is a difference between collaboration and takeover? The right hon. Gentleman keeps repeating that there is a 40 per cent. over-capacity in trucks, but what about vans? Is this not a different situation, with Sherpa expanding and employing more people, and being highly profitable? Will the result of these talks with DAF and Paccar be that the admirable workers in Leyland and elsewhere will be thrown out of their jobs?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I agree that there is a difference between collaboration and takeover. I am not ruling out either course this afternoon — both will have to be considered. There may be a proposal for takeover; that is something that the House will in due course have to consider. I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman on the need to try to preserve jobs, but in an industry where there is 40 per cent. over-capacity—this is the truck industry, and I accept that the van industry is different—difficult decisions will have to be taken. I shall try to provide the best solution to this difficult situation.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): I welcome the Government's willingness to look at the separate parts of an unnatural aggregation differently, and perhaps find different solutions for them. I note that my right hon. Friend holds in prospect for Land Rover in my constituency a trade sale or flotation. Will he accept that the people of Solihull would greatly prefer an option that left the shares of Land Rover in the hands of British subscribers?

Mr. Channon: I know my hon. Friend's views, as he has expressed them on many occasions with considerable force and effect. There is no change in the position of Land Rover from the statement that I made last April. I shall bear my hon. Friend's view in mind. There is no immediate prospect of any change in the situation. I referred to Land Rover in my statement because I thought that it would reassure my hon. Friend. I think that he will find that all is well so far, and I hope that he will keep in touch with me.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Will the Secretary of State confirm that the collaboration that most hon. Members seem to be welcoming extends to the volume car business, and that the proposals that he will introduce in due course will still contain the element of collaboration with Honda that Rover Group has had so far? Will he say a word about the Unipart changes? Do the new arrangements safeguard the after-sales that affect British Leyland's interests?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Member will remember that I made a statement to the House about Unipart a few months ago. That sale is now proceeding. Detailed negotiations are now going on. I do not wish to go into the full details at this stage, but the situation has not changed since my statement. I think that the hon.

Gentleman's concerns are covered, but if not I shall write to him. I am making no statement about collaboration in cars, but dealing merely with collaboration in the truck industry. I do not wish to mislead the House. The answer may well be a merger, and the House must understand that I am saying that there may be mergers or takeovers in the truck industry. We should not rule out that option. I have nothing to say about Rover Group, Honda or anything like that this afternoon. My statement relates to the truck industry.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to bear in mind the subsequent business on the Order Paper. It is an Opposition day. I ask hon. Members to put their questions succinctly. I shall allow them to go on for a further five minutes.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): May I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his greater awareness of a need to consult the work forces than that shown by his predecessor? May I ask him to disregard the chuckles of his right hon. and ghastly colleague the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and ensure that those consultations are genuine and meaningful?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman spoils his case by his epithets. As I have made clear to the House, the employees who may be affected will have the opportunity to express their views on future plans for the company through the normal machinery at the appropriate time.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many of us are grateful that he has come to the House at an early stage in the many negotiations that are going on? Does he also accept that we are pleased that he confirms his faith in the Austin Rover car group and the Rover Sterling Car, which is doing such good trade? Does he agree that, while Ford Motors is expanding its spares business, it would be unwise for us entirely to sell off Unipart, which is so important to Austin Rover's future? Will he try to ensure that at least 25 per cent. of Unipart stays in Austin Rover hands so that it cannot be blackmailed by other people?

Mr. Channon: I note what my hon. Friend says. I share his view about the merits of the products of Austin Rover. I am looking forward to hearing Mr. Day's plans to set out a positive course for the continuation of the company, which, as I have said to the House, is a major producer and leading exporter of cars made in Britain. As to the sale of Unipart, my hon. Friend will recall that I announced that some months ago. I think that the points about which my hon. Friend is concerned in relation to the Leyland group are fully covered. However, I shall bear in mind what he said.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Whenever the Secretary of State comes to the House to make a statement on Leyland, why does he seek to cast the company's prospects in the worst possible light? Does he accept that the 40 per cent. overcapacity in Europe arises principally from the non-tariff barriers which the French and Germans place in the way of exports from this country, and that Leyland trucks division in this country has been top of the sales league? Why did he not mention that? When he speaks of the fact that changes will involve restructuring, will he say how many jobs in Lancashire are likely to be lost by such restructuring?

Mr. Channon: With respect, that is an unfair way of putting it. In fact, it is practically counter-productive. I am not trying to set this in its worst light. I am trying to find the course that is most likely to provide a secure future for the production of Leyland trucks in the circumstances of over-capacity in Europe of 40 per cent. I am trying to be realistic and not mislead the House. I am trying to make the House, if I may, face up to what is a very difficult position and to tell the truth.

As to job losses, I have already explained that, whatever happens, there is bound to be some element of restructuring. I cannot tell the House today what job losses will take place, because negotiations are still going on. I make no comment about that. I have already said that there is 40 per cent. over-capacity and there is bound to be restructuring. It is impossible for anyone to stand at the Dispatch Box and pretend that there is no danger of job losses. Opposition Members would not do that if they were in my position.

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the fact that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) recently visited the Austin Rover body pressing plant at Swindon, without mentioning the fact to either of the two hon. Members who represent that area, and that, while he was there, he joined the local trade union representatives in spreading scare stories which have scared to death my constituents and the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison)? Will my right hon. Friend make it clear to the House that the Government have no plans to sell Austin Rover to Honda and no plans for major job losses and closures of plants?

Mr. Channon: I am sure that my hon. Friend's constituents are sufficiently robust to stand up to the blandishments of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and that they will show their continued good sense by supporting my hon. Friend. As I said at the end of my statement, I expect Mr. Day's plan to set out a positive course for the continuation of the Austin Rover companies, a major producer and leading exporter of British cars. I do not think that I can go any further than that. Frankly anyone who says that we are doing something different is talking nonsense.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The Secretary of State stood at the Dispatch Box and said that he could see no difference between collaboration and merger.

Mr. Channon *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Corbett: Does he understand that there is all the difference in the world between collaboration and capitulation? Can he name another industrialised country whose Government would contemplate flogging off what is left of Britain's industrial base to foreign ownership?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman is exaggerating the position. At an early stage, I came to the House of Commons to tell the House about talks that are going on with a number of companies about possible collaboration or merger. The hon. Gentleman's language is greatly exaggerated. I have never tried to disguise the fact that there is a considerable difference between collaboration and merger—of course there is—nor have I sought to disguise that, in the end, there may be a merger, and we

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will have to consider whether it is a good idea. I am not trying to mislead the House. That is certainly an option in front of us.

I was asked a question about Unipart a moment ago. I remind the House that we are selling a majority shareholding in Unipart, but a minority position will be retained.

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the activities of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and his friends earlier this year effectively sabotaged the United Kingdom truck industry? Is my right hon. Friend aware that Conservative Members have the highest confidence in him during these and future negotiations to ensure long-term jobs in the industry?

Mr. Channon: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend. The attitude of members of the Labour party during all these negotiations has been one of making mischief, stirring up trouble, trying to cause maximum alarm and despondency and trying to create the very situation about which they complain.

Mr. Norman Atkinson (Tottenham): When the Secretary of State talks about collaboration or merger, does he not use code language for takeover? That is what the Secretary of State is talking about. Is he aware that Leyland truck products are engineered to a far higher standard than those of either DAF or Paccar? Why do DAF and Paccar take the dominant initiatives in this matter and talk about the takeover of Leyland rather than Leyland being in business to talk about the takeover of the other two?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman must understand that Leyland trucks is unfortunately a major loss-making business, not a profit making business. The House should be seriously concerned about that. I do not know why the hon. Gentleman said that I did not mention takeover. I used the words in connection with Paccar, which

"might wish to make a bid for Leyland Trucks."

I used those very words. There may be collaboration, merger or takeover. I do not disguise those facts. We shall have to judge whether that is a good thing. The aim is to try to provide the best secure future that I can for the production of Leyland trucks.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I am sure that all Government Members will support any sensible and necessary collaboration. Is it not true that the jobs of many, if not most, Bedford workers have now been lost or will be lost beyond recall? Is it not true that this is almost entirely the direct result of the ill-informed, petty and jingoistic opposition earlier this year to the Bedford merger, emanating from the Opposition spokesman, who is not above trying to squeeze out any little piece of party political advantage, despite the effects on workers in this country?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend has spoken with his usual eloquence and good sense.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend encourage management to take all sensible steps to reduce the substantial losses in the truck industry? Will he please avoid public negotiation of the details of these arrangements? The public can never know the true negotiating position of the parties.

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It would be intolerable to be made to negotiate in public on these details, and I have not the slightest intention of doing so. Fortunately, I am in a position to say that, because I shall not conduct the negotiations. They will be between Rover Group and the parties concerned. They will make some recommendations to the Government, and the Government will then have to decide. I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's first point: everything should be done to try to reduce, and get rid of completely if possible, losses in the truck industry in this country.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): My right hon. Friend mentioned Istel, a company in my constituency. He will be aware that it is a high technology company, relying on the skills of its existing work force. When considering any proposals for the future of Istel, will the Secretary of State bear that fact in mind? Will he also bear in mind the undesirability of foreign ownership of a company in such a leading edge of technology, with so many skilled people, who must be kept in the company in my constituency?

Mr. Channon: I note what my hon. Friend has said. He will know that Rover Group is taking forward the disposal of a majority interest in Istel. I await its assessment of the various possibilities, but I have not yet received them.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Does my right hon. Friend recall that his Department's first thought as to what to do with Westland turned out to be right? Were not his Department's first thoughts as to what to do with Austin Rover also right? Is it not a fact that Austin Rover is still in the most appalling mess? It has an abysmal share of the home market. It has virtually no overseas dealer network. Will my right hon. Friend pick up the telephone and talk to the chairman of Ford UK to see whether he is still interested in bidding?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks about my Department. We certainly would not agree with what he said in the second part of his question. We shall be aiming to secure the continuation of Austin Rover as a major producer and leading exporter of cars made in Britain. I am sure that my hon. Friend desires that as much as anyone does.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, whatever party is in power, trucks tend to wear out after the same length of time? Thousands of my constituents who work at British Leyland trucks at Leyland will welcome the collaboration and the extension of wider European markets that my right hon. Friend proposes. Will he reassure those workers that one of the most important things in the Government's mind is to improve their jobs and ensure there will be work for them in that part of Lancashire in the foreseeable future?

Mr. Channon: When we consider these suggestions that the situation should remain unchanged, of course unemployment will be a factor in everybody's mind. I know that my hon. Friend will realise that in a situation of serious over-capacity in the truck industry, neither he nor I would like to mislead anyone employed in that industry into believing that it is not a very difficult situation. In this difficult situation, we are trying to

achieve the most secure future for the production of Leyland trucks. This will not be easy. I understand and sympathise with what my hon. Friend said.

Private Members' Motions

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise to the House and to you, Sir, for saying that I wish to change the topic of which I gave notice immediately after the ballot was drawn on 26 November. With permission, I should like to inform the House that on Friday, 12 December I shall call attention to defence products and exports and move a resolution.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of his point of order. I have satisfied myself that this change is within the intention of a change of practice first made in December 1967. I can therefore accept the notice of change of subject which the hon. Member has given.

Business of the House

4.9 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I wish to raise a point of order, Mr. Speaker, and I regret that I have not been able to give you notice. It relates to the two motions on Scottish affairs which would refer the subject of agriculture and fishing to the Scottish Grand Committee, sitting in Edinburgh. I was unable to give you notice, because there have been no communications whatsoever about the fact that the Scottish Grand Committee was likely to meet within five days or indeed that it would meet in Edinburgh. The subject that has been chosen—fishing and agriculture – is most important. For that reason, I take no objection to the first motion, nor do I intend to use my right to oppose it when it is called in a few moments.

As I understand it, next Monday has been chosen as the day for the Committee meeting in Edinburgh. It is customary for the parties to be given notice of any change from the normal pattern of business but, in this instance, no such notification has been received by my party from the Government or the Opposition.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that, with your usual courtesy, you will consider upholding the rights of minorities in the House and make sure that the debate—as I have said, I have no objection to it in principle—takes place on a date for which more than five days notice has been given. If it is not within your powers to take such action, I hope that the Leader of the House will consider withdrawing notice of the later motion, which I understand is to be called later this evening.

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on the same subject?

Mr. Fletcher: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Can you think of any reason why Opposition Members who are anxious to transfer Scottish business from the House to Edinburgh are reluctant to transfer themselves to debate that business?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot do anything about that. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) has an option when I put the question on the motion. The best way to deal with this matter would be through the usual channels rather than through the Chair.

Parliamentary Papers (Printing)

4.10 pm

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that difficulties have been experienced in obtaining today's Order Paper and Vote, but what were those difficulties? There is some concern among Conservative Members that those difficulties may have arisen because of the very large number of early-day motions tabled in my name criticising the Leader of the Opposition for his collusion with Mr. Turnbull in the Australian case. Will you investigate to ascertain whether those beliefs are unfounded?

Mr. Speaker: I did not have notice of the hon. Member's point of order, but I anticipated that a question might be asked about this matter. I assure the hon. Member that the difficulties at HMSO are nothing to do with his large number of early-day motions. I regret that the Vote bundle was not available in the Vote Office at the usual time today. I understand that this was caused by an industrial dispute at HMSO. The emergency printing service has been brought into operation and I am informed that the papers started to become available at 9.30 this morning.

Mr. Hickmet: I am grateful, Sir.

Court Hearing (Ireland)

4.12 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may know that today at 5 minutes past 12 the news bulletins announced that the Government had taken a sound thrashing in the Irish courts on their application for an injunction to prevent the publication of the book "One Girl's War" by Joan Miller——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not know what happened——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is absolutely genuine.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Allow me to say that I do not know what goes on at 5 minutes past 12 because notice of intention to raise these matters must be given to me before 12 o'clock.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is precisely on that matter that I rise to my feet, Mr. Speaker. If the news had been known before 12 o'clock, I should have been able to apply to you to give due notice of my intention to make a Standing Order No. 20 application.

In the light of the decision by the Irish courts, my application would have been made with a view to seeking a statement from the Government on why, having lost in those courts, they should carry on with the proceedings in Australia. In view of the fact that the announcement was made after 12 o'clock, I should like to know whether you accept that I have a right to make that Standing Order No. 20 application tomorrow so that we can hear of the matter then.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member knows the rules even better than I do.

BILL PRESENTED

NORTHERN IRELAND (EMERGENCY PROVISIONS)

Mr. Secretary King, supported by Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Younger, and Mr. Nicholas Scott, presented a Bill to amend the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978; to confer certain rights on persons detained in police custody in Northern Ireland under or by virtue of Part IV of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984; to regulate the provision of security services there; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed [Bill 11.]

SCOTTISH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That the matter of Agriculture and Fishing in Scotland being a matter relating exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the questions on the six motions relating to draft statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Asian Development Bank (Fourth Replenishment of the Asian Development Fund) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendment No. 2) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Education (Students' Dependants Allowances) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1325) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Education (Mandatory Awards) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1397) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1306) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Teachers (Colleges of Education) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1353) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Orders of the Day

OPPOSITION DAY

[2ND ALLOTTED DAY]

Insider Dealing

Mr. Speaker: Before I call on the Opposition Front Bench, I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.14 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

That this House notes that the low levels of investment in manufacturing industry achieved under Her Majesty's Government have been accompanied by increased speculation in the City over company ownership and excessive rewards for their dealers; records its concern at the evidence of insider dealing in the financial markets and the low clear-up rate in those cases referred to the Department of Trade and Industry; rejects Her Majesty's Government's policy of leaving law and order in the City to self-regulation by the City; and deplores the failure of Her Majesty's Government to secure proper supervision of the City in time for its de-regulation.

It may reassure the House if, at the opening of the debate, I say that the Opposition, in tabling a motion on fraud in the City, were not trading on any inside information that on Monday the Government were about to start a fraud investigation into one of the largest companies in Britain. As a Scottish Member, I am bound to say that for a long time it has appeared to me that Guinness's bid for Distillers was an extremely seedy transaction. As an Edinburgh resident, I am familiar with Guinness's undertaking that it would move the headquarters of the merged company to Edinburgh. The kindest thing that can be said about it is that as yet it has not done so.

I am aware also of the other undertaking by Guinness that, if its bid went through, it would appoint the governor of the Bank of Scotland as the chairman of the merged company. It did not do so. Having reviewed all the options and alternatives available to him, the chief executive of Guinness came to the impartial conclusion that the best man to be chairman of the company was himself.

It is possible, in the light of yesterday's developments, that we shall see a further reason why it was felt that the governor of the Bank of Scotland was an inappropriate person to be chairman of the merged company. I shall wish to return to the subject of the Guinness bid, but it is appropriate to kick off the debate with it. The takeover of Distillers was the largest takeover in the City's history.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): Bar one.

Mr. Cook: I am happy to agree that it was one of the two largest takeovers. I shall concede that point immediately in a spirit of seeking common agreement and I look forward to seeing the hon. Gentleman with us in the Division Lobby.

The takeover was the high mark of the City's passion for takeover bids this year. Last year, £6 billion in takeover bids was staked in the City. That in itself was a record, beating all previous years, bar none. In the first 10 months of this year, £30 billion has been staked in takeover bids in the City—five times last year's entire amount.

We come to the paradox at the root of the problems of the British economy. The City of London is one of the three major financial markets in the world. That major financial market is set in an economy in which output is stagnant, visible trade has achieved a deficit of heroic proportions and investment in manufacturing industry is declining from its earlier miserable level. One of the wonders of the economy is that the City none the less finds it possible to raise astronomic funds with which to gamble with the ownership of the British industry, in which it shows so little interest in investing.

I note that the Government amendment states that the City has raised £6 billion for investment in British industry in the past year. I willingly accept that as a matter of fact. I hope that the Minister will accept that it is also a matter of fact that last year in the City there were transactions in shares to the value of £396 billion. Against that enormous turnover, it is asking the House rather much to expect it to be grateful that £6 billion of that £396 billion went into creating new investment, new plant and new machinery. The fact is that the City, in contrast to the industry around it, appears to be going through what can only be described as its champagne period, reflected in champagne salaries for those who deal in shares in the City.

Last year's accounts for Morgan Grenfell make interesting reading. We discover from them that no fewer than 47 directors of that merchant bank were paid more than £100,000 a year. One hundred thousand pounds a year is a generous reward. It is equivalent to the entire income of five head teachers or four surgeons.

If the directors of Morgan Grenfell want to claim that their output has the value of five head teachers or four surgeons they would expect those teachers and doctors to say in return that the very least that they could accept for not seeking to emulate the rewards of the Morgan Grenfell directors is a high standard of probity on the part of those receiving them. Alas, Morgan Grenfell hired Mr. Geoffrey Collier and paid him a salary of £300,000. That did not appear to prevent him from seeking to have his bit on the side, which, if successful, would have netted him, in an overnight transaction, as much as the Secretary of State for Education and Science is prepared to pay an unpromoted teacher for a full year's work.

I shall not mince words. Insider dealing is theft. I hope that hon. Members in all quarters of the House will accept that. It is appropriate to put that on the record as last week Sir Martin Jacomb, the chairman of Barclays de Zoete Wedd, made a rather curious observation. He observed that insider dealing was "a victimless crime". Of course there are victims of insider dealing. If there were no victims, the insider would not make his killing. Try telling Scrimgeour Vickers and Company, the company on which Mr. Collier practised his sting, that it was not a victim.

It is worth recalling that the money circulating in the City and the wealth in which the City trades every day does not belong to it. The source of the power and the wealth of the City are the pension fund contributions of millions of workers and the insurance premiums of those same millions of ordinary men and women. Ultimately, they are the victims if the bases on which the deals are struck in the City are not honest and above board. I have no doubt that most of those who trade in the City are honest dealers. I accept that most people in the City are even more infuriated than any hon. Member at the revelations of the past three or four weeks.

However, it is difficult in the face of the evidence to accept that Mr. Collier was an exception. He was an exception solely in that he was brought to book. There is the evidence of share price movements. *Acquisitions Monthly* conducted an interesting and compelling study of the movement in share prices preceding the announcement of a takeover bid. During the first six months of this year the magazine discovered that in 78 takeover bids the average rise in share price in the three months beforehand —in the three months before anyone else had heard of the takeover bid—was 25 per cent. In some cases the share price rise comfortably outperformed the average. Bush Radio registered an increase of 80 per cent. in its share price three months before a takeover bid for the company was announced. Spencer Clark Metals registered an increase of 60 per cent. There is also the more recent example of the BTR bid for Pilkington Brothers plc. In the six weeks preceding the announcement of the bid for Pilkington Brothers plc the share price rose by 73p. The revealing aspect of the increase is that during that period when BTR announced its bid, rather frostily it also stated that it had suspended buying shares in Pilkington six weeks beforehand. Plainly the increase was not the result of its bid for Pilkington but the result of someone else, somewhere in the City, continuing to buy after BTR had ceased to apply for shares.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that Pilkington Brothers plc is the world's leader in the glass industry and that many thousands of my constituents in St. Helens rely for their livelihoods and their well-being on its continued prosperity? is he aware that the allegations of insider dealing and of people in the City of London making fast bucks out of the work which has been put in by those men and women for generations are causing much anger and hostility in my constituency? Will my hon. Friend make it clear to the Minister that this is a classic case that should be investigated by the Government to establish whether there has been any insider dealing in those shares?

Mr. Cook: I heartily echo my hon. Friend's conclusion that it is plainly a matter which merits further investigation and we hope that it will be pursued vigorously.

Of course we accept that, given the salaries that are paid in the City, companies in the City expect to command the best brains in the country. Nevertheless, it would require remarkable purity of soul to believe that the share price increase which I mentioned, and which the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) has confirmed, and the other average rises to which I referred earlier, were simply the product of dispassionate analyses of the financial pages. That would require remarkable innocence on our part. Plainly, much of it turned on well-placed information.

There is also another source of evidence of insider dealing. I am sure that the Minister will recall that I put down a written question on 24 November asking how many cases of insider dealing had been referred to him by the Stock Exchange Council. The reply was "about 100". There is a disappointing degree of imprecision there. We shall not catch the financial jugglers in the City unless we can count up to 100. I am indebted to the *Financial Times* for revealing yesterday that the full figure is 110. I accept that 110, with a reasonable degree of of extension, is about 100. However, the figure that I find much more arresting —if I can be forgiven the term—is the other figure, that out of the 110 only nine were prosecuted. No wonder the *Financial Times* yesterday referred to the Department of Trade and Industry as the Inspector Clouseau of insider dealing. If we allow the Department of Trade and Industry to count in its statistics not simply prosecutions for insider dealing but all forms of fraud in the City, we are still left grubbing around in single figures.

Last year there were only five prosecutions for all forms of fraud in the City. Indeed, JMB, the largest scandal to have hit the banking world in the City for a long time, has resulted as yet in not a single prosecution within the City. Yet the Government have hauled 138,918 social security claimants before the courts and prosecuted them for fraud. There was no imprecision there. The total figure has been carefully logged and recorded. Each of those people were prosecuted for a figure that would barely pay for a lunch in the City.

It is difficult to consider that figure of five and that figure of 138,000 without seeing double standards leaping out from the pages. The Government are not pursuing fraud in the City with the same resources, the same commitment and the same energy as they dedicate to fraud in the social security system. The real City scandal is not that some people in the City grab their chances when they see them but that too many of them during the past six years have been allowed to get away with that.

It is necessary only to look at the pages of *Time* and *Newsweek International* during the past month to see how much more ruthlessly and successfully the sin of insider dealing is being prosecuted on Wall street. The basis of comparison is not unfair. Mr. Boesky, who gave rise to the headlines about Wall street in *Time* and *Newsweek International*, was also active in the City of London. He deliberately limited his involvement in the City of London because, as he said in a diverting comment he found the City of London too leaky. Nevertheless, he was active.

He was especially active in the Guinness bid for Distillers. He built up a large holding in Distillers, which is rumoured to have reached $100 million. He assembled that figure well in advance of the announcement of the bid. At a critical stage in the takeover battle he dumped on the London market—not on Wall street—a large block of shares in Argyll. That had the effect of depressing Argyll shares and therefore depressing the value of its share offer for Distillers. That was especially relevant since the cash offer of Argyll was always better than the cash offer of Guinness.

Surprisingly, at the same time, Schenley, the United States distributors for Guinness, bought Guinness shares in large quantities on Wall street, thus driving up the price of Guinness, and improving its share offer. Even more surprisingly three months after Guinness was successful in acquiring Distillers, Schenley, no doubt by pure coincidence, was awarded the contract for the distribution of Gordon's Gin which Guinness had acquired from Distillers.

I do not ask anything quite so crude of the Minister as to reveal to the House the nature of the allegations which led to the current inquiry, but I ask him for an assurance that that investigation will look fully into the circumstances of the bid for Distillers. He must accept that if we now uncover improprieties in the bid by Guinness for Distillers, it will take us back to questioning the prudence of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in giving the green light to the second bid from Guinness.

[Mr. Cook]

Before leaving the topic of Guinness, I must ask the Minister to recognise that, if he proposes to leave the markets in their present state of ignorance as to the nature of the allegations, it is intolerable to allow trading to continue in Guinness's shares. Given the ignorance of outsiders about the scope, severity and cost of the allegations, it is impossible to give any meaningful value to the shares. Unless the Minister can tell the House the nature of those allegations, I must urge him to press the Stock Exchange Council to suspend trading in Guinnesses shares.

Viscount Cranborne: The hon. Gentleman said that the investigation instituted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State into the Guinness bid concerned fraud. Does he have any evidence for saying that, or does the investigation have a more general remit?

Mr. Cook: The appointment of inspectors has been made under a catch-all provision in the Companies Act, as I think the hon. Gentleman knows. In the light of the strong suggestions made in the financial pages and in the American press, I should be extremely surprised if the appointment was not related to developments during the past months in America. I should also be very surprised if the hon. Gentleman was willing to wager with me that there is not an investigation into fraud at the bottom of it all. We await the Minister's reply, but the hon. Gentleman may wish to press the Minister on that point, as the wider world would appreciate some elucidation of the facts.

It would be unreasonable to expect the Minister to confirm whether investigations into Boesky prompted the current investigation. However, the key to the success of the Boesky investigation into Wall street was the ability of the United States Securities and Exchange commission to press the Swiss bank to divulge the owner of a numbered account. It was the threat of prosecution of the New York branch of the Swiss bank Leu that persuaded it to reveal that the account was held by Dennis Levine, which in turn led to the door of Boesky.

If the Department is serious about stopping fraud and halting insider dealing, why do we not try to negotiate the same arrangement with Swiss banks as the United States SEC achieved? A fortnight ago, that very question was, according to *The London Evening Standard*, put to a spokesman from the Department of Trade and Industry, who replied:

"Maybe we will one day".

That does not smack of ugency or immediacy. If the Government are serious about cracking down on fraud, we are entitled to expect them to begin by blocking off the ways in which fraudsters maintain their anonymity.

There is another lesson to be learnt from investigations in the United States. There is the clear evidence of the SEC's success under its new management, in contrast to the SIB, which the Minister proposes, and which will have the status in the City of a private company, limited by guarantee. Law and order in the City will, as it were, be privatised to that company, and sub-contracted to the City. After the events of the past month, the proposal that the regulation of the City can be left to self-regulation by the City appears to be even more inadequate than when the Minister mooted it last spring. That is particularly so, since the structure that will give effect to self-regulation will not be set up until halfway through next year.

Let us put a brave face on it, and accept that, as the structure is not now in being, we at least have a chance to abort the whole unsatisfactory project and to replace that structure with something worth while, which will enable the City to have exactly the same sort of statutory Government policing as is now so successful in relation to Wall street.

I anticipate that the debate, like our motion, will go beyond the narrow question of fraud in the City. It will inevitably and should, just as our motion does, touch on the relationship between the City and industry. That relationship has become more difficult as the pace of takeovers has quickened, obliging dealers in shares to shorten still further the time scale on which they base their decisions. Decisions to buy or to sell, which are taken on the momentary flicker of the SEAQ screen, stand in stark contrast to industry's need for investment decisions that will remain stable for up to a decade.

We have the observation of Ernest Harrison of Racal. Last month, he was quoted as saying that he had an infinite number of research and development projects on which he could spend money, but that the effect on his profit and loss account in the short run would be so severe that the investment managers would suspect that the company had hit a particularly sticky patch and perhaps even sell the company out from under him.

It is a bitter comment on the priorities of the City that a decision to invest for the future could become the basis for a decision to sell in the present. Mr. Collier and his conduct stand as an emblem of the City's conduct in that regard. The object of Mr. Collier's speculation was AE, an advanced engineering firm specialising in advanced engineering components, with a record of high investment in new technology, which was beating off a hostile bid for its ownership.

Mr. Collier's contribution to the company's dilemma was to gamble with its ownership via speculation that was launched through a tax haven. It is a sorry tale of greed, sort-sightedness and lack of patriotism. It must be set in the context of the Government's monumental failure to halt such actions or even to set up a structure in the City that could detect or catch that form of fraud. Most of all, it must be set in the context of the Conservative party's connivance with the City's priorities in gambling with the ownership of British industry rather than investing in its future. For that reason, we shall vote for the motion tonight.

4.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'congratulates the financial services sector on its contribution to invisible earnings, to growth in employment and on the efficient and effective way it raised £6 billion for industry and commerce in 1985; congratulates Her Majesty's Government and the financial services sector on their prompt and effective action against insider dealing; and reaffirms its support for self-regulation within the statutory framework of the Financial Services Act as the most effective system of regulating the City.'.

I am grateful to the Opposition for initiating this debate. It gives me, on behalf of the Government, an

excellent opportunity to make very clear in words what we have already demonstrated by our actions. No one can be in any doubt that we regard insider dealing as a thoroughly pernicious practice which is damaging to markets and unfair to individuals, and which we are determined to do all in our power to root out. I remind the House that it was a Conservative Government who first introduced legislation to make insider dealing a criminal offence—in the Companies Bill of 1973. That fell with the general election of 1974. It is fair to say that the previous Labour Government also tried and failed. But some indications of the priority which they attached to this issue when in Government can be derived from the fact that, having been elected in 1974, they waited until 1978 before making their attempt. That attempt also failed with a general election. But despite those somewhat inauspicious electoral precedents this Government did not wait long before trying again, and insider dealing became a criminal offence under part V of the Companies Act 1980 on 23 June 1980.

This criminal offence has not been easy to prove. This is not due to any lack of effort on the part of my Department or any lack of willingness to prosecute where the evidence was available. The basic problem was the difficulty of establishing the evidence needed to meet the high standard of proof required to secure a conviction for a criminal offence. To prove insider dealing it is necessary for the prosecution to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the accused dealt while he was in possession of information which he knew was both unpublished and price sensitive. The difficulty of proving these matters has by no means been limited to this country. These difficulties have been widely recognised in other countries too.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) referred in glowing terms to the actions of the SEC in the United States. It is no part of my function to criticise the SEC, but some right hon. and hon. Members may have seen in this morning's edition of *The Times* an interview with Senator William Proxmire, the new chairman of the Senate Banking Committee. In it, he referred to the SEC's recent record, and said:

"The SEC, in 1982, fined nobody for violating inside information. The same thing in 1983 and 1984 and 1985. It wasn't until 1986 that they came along with Boesky whom they hit between the eyes."

Those are not my words; they are Senator Proxmire's. Is it on that basis that the hon. Member for Livingston is urging us to move away from our system towards that of the SEC?

It is noteworthy that on 6 March 1986, when the then Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould)—since promoted in the councils of the Opposition—was discussing the Financial Services Act 1986 in Standing Committee, he said that in looking at the models for a regulatory system he had

"never thought in terms of the Securities and Exchange Commission".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 6 March 1986; c. 520.]

Perhaps the hon. Member for Livingston should have a word with his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham, before he jumps to conclusions about the model we should follow.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Given the record of a body which is stronger, more effective and more firmly based than the body that has been established in this country to deal with similar situations, how effective does the hon. and learned Gentleman expect our body to be?

Mr. Howard: The truth is that the SEC is none of those things in relation to the system that we have put into place. During our deliberations in Committee on the Financial Services Bill, the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) was accustomed to refer, in glowing terms, to the tutorials, as he put it, to which his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham, then Opposition spokesman, subjected the Committee on these matters. Perhaps the hon. Member for Great Grimsby could suggest to his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham that the hon. Member for Livingston, the present Opposition spokesman, could have similar tutorials.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): The Minister should take this seriously.

Mr. Howard: I am taking it seriously.

Mr. Evans: I understand the point of the need to acquire positive proof before one prosecutes for insider dealing. Is the hon. and learned Gentleman aware of the widespread allegations concerning insider dealing in relation to the BTR bid for Pilkingtons? Will he consider examining this bid and, if necessary, set up an inquiry?

Mr. Howard: All dealings of that kind which give rise to suspicion are looked at by the stock exchange. If the stock exchange confirms those suspicions it refers the matter to the Department of Trade and Industry. The Department will, in every proper case, not hesitate to make use of the new powers which are available to it and about which I shall tell the House.

The Financial Services Act contains new powers to investigate insider dealing. These powers can, without exaggeration, be described as draconian. The Secretary of State may appoint inspectors if it appears to him that there are circumstances suggesting that there may have been an insider dealing offence. In other words, the Secretary of State has a wide discretion and he does not have to have a high level of proof before he can act.

Inspectors may ask any person whom they think may have information relating to an offence to produce any documents in his possession, or to attend before them or otherwise to give them all the assistance which he is reasonably able to give. Inspectors may examine on oath any person who may be able to give them information about an insider dealing offence. If the person does not tell the truth, he commits the offence of perjury. A statement made by a person in response to such examination can be used in evidence against him. Taken in conjunction with the inspector's power to compel persons to assist them, which I will describe shortly, this means that the right to silence, a cardinal principle of our criminal law, has been substantially eliminated for this offence.

If a person refuses to co-operate, the inspectors may certify that fact to the court, which, after inquiring into the case and satisfying itself that the person did not have a reasonable excuse, may punish him as if he had committed contempt of court. The penalty for contempt is at the discretion of the court and is unlimited. If the person concerned is an authorised investment business and the court so directs, the Secretary of State may also serve a notice cancelling or restricting his authorisation and prohibiting him from entering into certain types of

[Mr. Howard]

business. Alternatively, the Secretary of State may prohibit other authorised businesses from transacting business on that person's behalf. This will effectively bar that person from our financial markets. Furthermore, it is not a reasonable excuse for a business to say that it did not know the identity of the beneficial owners of shares or that it was subject to banking secrecy laws if, under those laws, it could have obtained the consent of the beneficial owner to be identified. I think few people would disagree that these powers well deserve the description that I applied a few moments ago—they are draconian. Indeed that was the word applied to them by the Opposition spokesman in another place. It is notable that no additional powers were suggested by the Opposition in relation to insider dealing when the Financial Services Bill was before the House. The hon. Member for Livingston——

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): I congratulate my hon. and learned Friend the Minister on the new powers that have been taken to improve investor protection in the United Kingdom and especially the new exchange of information between the regulatory bodies in other countries such as the SEC and his Department. In response to yesterday's decision to appoint inspectors to study the Guinness group, will he assure us that the inspectors will undertake their task on a full-time basis and not simply as just another brief—something which some barristers tend to do — as it is important that they complete their business within months, rather than years. Can my hon. and learned Friend tell the House when he expects to receive their report?

Mr. Howard: I cannot respond to the last request made by my hon. Friend, but I can certainly tell him that the inspectors into Guinness, to which he referred, are in no doubt whatever about the urgency with which it is desired that they approach this task.

Mr. Robin Cook: Although I appreciate that the Minister may find it difficult to say when he expects to receive the report, it may help the House if he uses his imagination and gives us some clue to exactly what it is the inspectors are supposed to be investigating. In view of his withering contempt of the activities of the SEC, can he assure us that the current investigation into Guinness was not prompted by information received from the United States?

Mr. Howard: I have not expressed any contempt for the SEC; I have merely quoted, for the benefit of the House, the words of Senator Proxmire as reported in *The Times* today. I am surprised that the hon. Member for Livingston expects me to add anything to what was said in yesterday's statement about the investigation into Guinness. Of course I cannot add anything to what was said in that statement and it would be quite wrong and improper for me to do so. On reflection the hon. Gentleman will recognise that it would be quite wrong for him to press me on these matters.

Mr. Robin Cook: If the Minister intends to rest on yesterday's Delphic statement, which tells us nothing, would he accept the point that I put to him earlier that if he leaves the shareholders and other dealers in ignorance about this financial inquiry it is unrealistic and irresponsible to allow shares in Guinness to continue to be traded?

Mr. Howard: That is entirely a matter for the Stock Exchange, which has statutory responsibility for those matters.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): First, I apologise for not having been present at the start of the debate. I welcome the greater powers and I share my hon. and learned Friend's description of them as draconian. Would he agree that nevertheless, the acid test is whether prosecutions and, ultimately, convictions follow? It is one thing to have powers but another to bring offenders to book. The best deterrent to insider trading will be a few prison sentences.

Mr. Howard: I appreciate my hon. Friend's interest in this matter. He was responsible for the amendment which contributed, in large measure, to some of the powers which we have taken. I do not think I can respond to the rest of his observations. I am anxious that the powers which are available are used. I shall have a word about that in due course.

In different broadcasts today, the hon. Member for Livingston has separately alleged that the Government responded less than adequately during the passage of the Financial Services Bill, as it then was, to concerns expressed about offshore dealing. On the "Today" programme this morning the hon. Gentleman said that the Government had resisted such measures. On the 1 o'clock BBC television news, he said that the Government response was a watered-down version of the Opposition's proposals. This allegation is entirely untrue.

First, the original amendment on this issue was put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South and not by the Opposition. Secondly, the Government's response was given an unqualified welcome by the then Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Dagenham. He said:

> "This is one of those welcome occasions when it is appropriate to congratulate the Minister on his response to an expression of opinion in Committee . . . We have here a determined and fair response to the Committee's concern." —[*Official Report*, 12 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. 525.]

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will stop making this entirely unfounded allegation. If he will not take the truth from me, I hope that he will take it from his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham.

It is true, as my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South said, that any statutory power is only as effective as the use that is made of it. We have already brought into effect the new investigation powers, which were in the Financial Services Bill when we introduced it into the House. This was in order to make them available to investigate a suspected insider dealing case. The Stock Exchange referred to my Department certain information on the evening of Thursday 13 November. The order implementing the investigating powers was laid on 14 November to come into effect the next day, Saturday 15 November. Inspectors were appointed on the same day.

I shall refer to some recent events in the City which no doubt prompted Opposition Members to initiate the debate. These events have given rise to considerable interest and much comment. The House will not expect me to comment on cases that are under investigation; it would be improper and irresponsible of me to do so. The timing of the report by the inspectors appointed under the Financial Services Act is a matter for them, but I have made it clear to all the inspectors who have recently been appointed that I expect them to address their task with the

greatest possible urgency. Earlier this afternoon I made an announcement that criminal proceedings have been commenced against Mr. Geoffrey Collier in respect of certain alleged insider dealing offences.

The case of an employee of British and Commonwealth, which was reported in the press, is under considera'on by the Stock Exchange, which has just completed a preliminary investigation. The results were received yesterday and are being discussed between my Department and the Stock Exchange.

Nor do I propose to comment on what information may or may not have been exchanged under the memorandum of understanding between the SEC and my Department on the activities of Mr. Boesky or anyone else. The memorandum of understanding which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry signed with the SEC on 23 September requires the Department and the SEC to keep confidential any information provided under it, except for use in the investigation or prosecution for which it was obtained, and also to keep confidential any request for information made under the memorandum. The Stock Exchange has already taken steps to prohibit members from entering into any association, either direct or indirect, with Mr. Boesky and to require members to report any transactions that they carry out for Mr. Boesky or any of his companies.

I give the House the assurance that, in line with the Government's commitment to vigorous enforcement of the law against insider dealing, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is always ready to appoint inspectors where there is good reason to do so.

The Opposition have shown a fundamental misapprehension about regulation in the City. The hon. Member for Livingston argued in a recent article, and again today, if I followed him correctly, that he would scrap the present plans for leaving law and order in the City to self-regulation, and that he would appoint a public agency with powers of prosecution along the lines of the SEC. That is the way that he puts it. I remind the House, and especially the hon. Gentleman, that insider dealing is a criminal offence for which the prosecuting authorities are the Secretary of State and the Director of Public Prosecutions. The Secretary of State is responsible for appointing inspectors to exercise the investigation powers that I have described. Penalties for non-co-operation are imposed by the courts. This is hardly

"leaving law and order to self-regulation by the City"

to quote the words of the motion.

The motion tackles a number of other issues and it is as wide of the mark on these as it is on insider dealing.

Viscount Cranborne: My hon. and learned Friend has been most eloquent, and satisfactorily so, about the rigour with which the Government will pursue fraud, insider dealing and other transgressions under the auspices of the Stock Exchange. Will he give an undertaking that the Government will be as rigorous in their approach to criminal offences in the Lloyd's insurance market?

Mr. Howard: I can certainly give that assurance. The difficulty that has arisen in such cases has been explained fully on more than one occasion by my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General. It arises from some of the difficulties in obtaining evidence from abroad, that will be largely removed when the provisions of the Criminal Justice Bill are enacted. Before that stage is arrived at, these matters are being pursued as thoroughly as possible within the present limitations of the law of evidence.

Finally, I shall deal with some of the other issues that are raised in the motion. It has been suggested that there was some connection between the events to which the hon. Member for Livingston referred and what he has described as the shortfall in investment in industry. That investment rose by 15 per cent. in 1984 to an all-time high, and by a further 7 per cent. in 1985. I do not understand how anyone can argue that shortage of finance for industry is hampering economic growth, and nor would the business community. The latest CBI industrial trends survey found that only 5 per cent. of respondents saw availability of external finance as a limiting factor in their investment plans. Nor do I accept that the Government have downgraded manufacturing industry. Manufacturing is, and will remain, a major contributor to output, wealth and employment. We shall continue to foster a climate in which all wealth creation, including manufacturing, is free to develop and flourish but we do not believe in plundering the nation's pension funds to satisfy the whims of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) in some of the more fanciful of his plans.

Mr. Robin Cook: As the Minister does not appear to have brought with him the figures for investment in manufacturing industry, will he confirm that only a fortnight ago his Department revealed that in the last quarter for which figures are available investment in manufacturing industry was 6 per cent. down on the previous quarter of last year?

Mr. Howard: It is sometimes possible to prove anything with quarter-by-quarter figures. The figures which I have given provide a much more reliable test in comparing what is happening now with what was happening a year ago.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): The Minister complains that my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) used the figures for the last quarter in his intervention. It seems that the Minister feels that that is inadequate because the period is too short. Let us take the opposite extreme, which is the full life of the Government. Will the Minister confirm that the figures remain 17 per cent. below the level that they had reached when the Government came to office?

Mr. Howard: I did not complain. I merely observed that it was possible to do almost anything by taking quarter-by-quarter figures. I shall not confirm the figures which the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) has presented to me. He knows as well as I that the economy has taken a little time to recover from the damage which was inflicted upon it by the previous Labour Government. He knows also that it was unrealistic to expect an improvement to be seen immediately after the 1979 general election.

Having considered the issues raised by the hon. Member for Livingston, I am left in a state of some puzzlement about the Opposition's purpose in holding the debate. Everyone agrees that insider dealing is a pernicious offence. Everyone agrees also that because of the difficulty of proving it, additional powers have been needed to investigate circumstances suggesting that it has occurred. These powers have been provided and are being used.

No further powers have been identified as being needed which have not been provided. What then is the reason

[Mr. Howard]

behind the Opposition's motion? Is it a serious concern? Is it a serious attempt to make a constructive solution to the problem? Or is it simply another instance of City-bashing? Is it another example of the Opposition's predilections for attacking at every possible opportunity a sector of our economy which employs over 1 million people, produces 6 per cent. of the total output of the nation and earned £7·6 billion for the balance of payments in 1985? The evidence of the speech of the hon. Member for Livingston suggests strongly that it is the latter, and we shall be scrutinising the remainder of the speeches of Opposition Members in the debate to ascertain whether they enable any other conclusion to be drawn.

5 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I begin on an entirely modest and uncontentious note. Everyone will agree that one of the best pieces written about the big bang in the City is the booklet by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and myself, entitled "The City: Big Bang 2000". I recommend it to all hon. Members.

Unfortunately, the name on everybody's lips at the moment is not that of my hon. Friend or myself, but that of Mr. Ivan Boesky. I am bound to say that he is a man of class who should be admired. He wrote a book in which he asks for the plaudits of the crowd because, he proclaims, he is a wizard financial psychologist, a probability theorist, an economic forecaster, and a person with the sublimest intuitive judgment. However, all the time he was a crook and fraudster who was betting on certainties because he had inside information. I could name one or two firms of brokers and merchant banks in Britain who might have been pleased to employ Mr. Boesky.

Fortunately, the SEC caught Mr. Boesky. If I had to decide, over the whole sphere of fraud, between the machinery that the Government have set up and the operation of the SEC, I would come down marginally on the side of the SEC. More and more people in the City are saying that the self-regulatory process—whether right or not for insider dealing—will not work. They are deeply suspicious of it. The fact that practitioners are suspicious of it should make politicians suspicious of it, too.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Is not the reverse of that statement true? If the practitioners were wholly happy with the new arrangements, there would be some cause for concern.

Mr. Sedgemore: I accept the hon. Gentleman's gentle debating point. Those issues must be dealt with seriously if we hope to reach a conclusion that will help investors, the public, and perhaps even the good name of the City if it is to earn invisible exports.

I was a little disappointed by the Minister's speech. I accept that he does not know anything about macro-economics, and I shall not pursue that. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) picked him up on one or two points. The Minister appeared blind to the issue of law enforcement and what actually happens between his Department and the Director of Public Prosecutions. I jotted down some of the words that he used. He referred to "vigorous enforcement" and used the word "determination". He implied that there was a resolute political will to resolve those points. Perhaps he should say that to Peter Cameron-Webb or to Peter Dixon, who are in sunnier climes than Britain at present and who are laughing at the attempts of the law enforcement officers to bring them to justice here.

The Minister should also consider the wider aspects. In a parliamentary reply the Attorney-General told me that Lloyd's had submitted the names of 35 people to the DPP on its standard of proof "beyond reasonable doubt", which is the same standard as is used in a criminal court. In fact, only one person has been convicted, and there have been only a couple of prosecutions. In other words, 34 people, having been proven guilty "beyond reasonable doubt" by Lloyd's, have got off. Most of them have not even been charged or arrested, let alone prosecuted or brought to trial. That does not seem to be resolute political will or "vigorous enforcement", nor does it justify the Minister's use of the word "determination".

If the Minister wishes to consider insider dealing, he should explain the figures which my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston gave to the House about the 110 reported cases, from which there have been nine prosecutions and, I believe, only one or two convictions. I am advised that, in fact, there were six.

It is only a few months since Sir Nicholas Goodison, the chairman of the stock exchange, was critical of the DPP about other issues. However, he was also critical of the Department of Trade and Industry's prosecution policy on those cases. I recently discussed that with one of my friends who defended some people charged with City frauds. They were acquitted. I was surprised about that, because the evidence seemed overwhelming. I asked him how he managed it—I should point out that he also prosecutes City fraudsters—and he replied that it was because of the quality of the prosecution, which treated it as a sort of shoplifting case. I have observed some of the people who prosecute on behalf of the Department of Trade and Industry. I suggest to the Minister that his Department should use its best people. If they are not good enough, it should employ better people and pay them higher salaries to carry out what I agree are difficult prosecutions. It is difficult to pin down people because of the nature of the evidence with which one has to deal.

The change in the regulations for financial institutions—the willingness of the City now to allow mergers between banks, merchant banks, brokers, jobbers and moneymakers—makes insider dealing in the City much more likely and certain, as do the amounts of money involved in takeover bids which now run not into hundreds of millions of pounds, but billions of pounds. I understand that in 25 per cent. of recent takeovers, the price of the shares increased on the day before the takeover was announced, and in 60 per cent. of cases the price increased in the previous six months. That suggests—it is not conclusive proof—that more insider dealing has occurred than has come to light, and certainly more than is being prosecuted.

All hon. Members know that the so-called Chinese walls, which are supposed to protect people under the new structure that has emerged in the City, create major problems. For example, if a customer of Barclays bank wants securities work undertaken, it is likely that he will go to the brokers de Zoete and Bevan and to the jobbers Webb Durlacher Mordaunt and Company. If a bank manager at Barclays has dinner with a company director who wants to borrow money, and if the bank manager gets

price sensitive information from the company director, who does the bank manager tell? In theory, he should tell only those who are interested in the money. In a respectable institution such as Barclays perhaps that will happen. However, the problem is that a number of other people at Barclays—for example, the salesman, the fund manager, the corporate financier and the market maker—could have a financial interest in discovering the price sensitive information from the bank manager. It is almost impossible to hold the line between the bank manager and the other four who have a financial interest.

Even if that line is held in a firm such as Barclays through the compliance director or compliance officer, how can that sort of price sensitive information be held if a company is in financial difficulties or is facing bankruptcy? If that is to be a bigger feature of the big bang in the City—I suspect that it will be—it will be almost impossible to hold those invisible walls in the City.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston that most people in the City are not involved in financial scandal or fraud. However, because of the ethos and the rewards, which are now so large, too many people who were hitherto thought respectable are involved. We knew that when the British Telecom applications came out, many people were involved in illegal activities, but none of the big fish was prosecuted and only a few of the minnows were picked out.

I discovered that the Societé Generale Merchant Bank, a French company, put in forged share certificates. A lawyer from the main nationalised bank, Societé Generale, telephoned the merchant bank and told it, whereupon an elaborate cover-up operation was arranged and people were forced to sell off those shares at a loss. The fact that that can happen with a reputable foreign bank in Britain was deeply disturbing.

The Westland affair has been bled dry, but the last point yet to come out about that relates to the purchase of shares, the double prices that were in operation and why some people were purchasing shares behind the scenes but not using them when it came to the critical vote. I and a number of my friends in the City would like to know the precise nature of the activities of Scrimgeour Vickers which has come into prominence recently over the Westland affair. I shall not make any allegations, but the Minister may be able to help us on that.

I served on the Committee which considered the Financial Services Bill. The Minister commented, a trifle unkindly, that none of us put forward amendments to that Bill. However, he knows that I have made two suggestions, which I believe are responsible and sensible, to deal with the problem of insider dealing. I have put them forward by way of parliamentary questions. His answers have been fairly hesitant. If that means that he is prepared to think about them, we shall all be grateful. Those two proposals must be taken in tandem because, although they will not solve the problem of insider dealing, they will go some way to help with what is happening.

My first suggestion to the Minister is that we should prohibit own-account dealing by those who work for firms of stockbrokers, merchant bankers and major financial institutions. Such people would be able to deal on behalf of their clients, but not at the same time deal on behalf of themselves. In one go that would remove an enormous conflict of interest.

In his reply the Minister told me, quite rightly, that some firms operate such restrictions and prohibit own-account dealing. But why do we not ensure that the SIB makes sure that that happens with all firms? I have spoken about this to Conservative Members who work in the City and some have said that they have put that proposal forward in their own firms, but the basic response is, "You have made your money out of own-account dealing. We want to make our money out of own-account dealing." But surely the salaries that people earn in the firms of stockbrokers and merchant banks are sufficient to enable them to live reasonably without going into own-account dealing.

If that proposal were instituted in conjunction with my second proposal, which is that we should register the beneficial ownership of all shares, that would help enormously. We know that people get round insider dealing by using nominee shareholders and trusts, so we do not know the ultimate beneficial owner, and sometimes by using their families. Some people would still cheat, but much insider dealing would be prevented if the beneficial owner of all shares had to be registered, whether the beneficial owner was in Britain or abroad, or was a foreign registered company in Lichtenstein or somewhere like that.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I have a good deal of sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman is saying, and he knows that we debated this in Committee on the Financial Services Bill. But one still has to ask: how shall we get foreign banks and nominee companies to disclose the beneficial ownership?

Mr. Sedgemore: It would be illegal for anyone to buy or sell stocks or shares in Britain unless they first declared the beneficial owner. That may stop some people buying and selling stocks and shares, but one could make that a precondition of the purchase or sale. I accept that, in the terms in which the hon. Gentleman phrases his question, more international co-operation is needed than exists in the financial world today. One of the lessons on the wider sphere is that there will have to be greater co-operation, even among capitalist Governments, let alone Socialist Governments, if we are to get to grips with many of those problems.

I hope that the Minister will say why he is not prepared to enforce by law, or to encourage the SIB to enforce, the prohibition of own-account dealing and the registration of the beneficial ownership of shares.

Those are the only two points that I want to make. They would be helpful and they would go some way to solving the problem. If the Minister were prepared to accept such proposals, perhaps we would believe that he was determined to enforce the law, that he really was vigilant and that he did have the resolute political will to do something about it. We shall await his reply.

5.14 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) has made two constructive proposals at which we should look. It is not unreasonable to consider excluding own-account dealing for people who work in the City. If I understand him rightly, he is saying that if they have savings which they wish to invest, they must do it through trustees—through an arm's-length arrangement. The present

[Mr. Tim Smith]

arrangement is that most employees are required to do their own-account dealing through the firms for which they work. That was certainly the case with Mr. Collier and Morgan Grenfell Securities, and that why he was dismissed. I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. We should consider it seriously.

I agree with much of the theory of the hon. Gentleman's proposals about nominee shareholdings. We need to know the beneficial ownership of shares. It is already possible for companies to demand information from their shareholders on beneficial ownership and in some circumstances it is possible for them to ensure that the rights are removed from the shares—the voting rights, dividend rights, and so on. Therefore, to some extent it is up to companies to take a firmer line. It is wrong that people should be able to hide behind nominee shareholders and avoid prosecution for insider trading.

It is a matter for considerable regret that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has replaced the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) who spoke on these matters previously. He had few constructive proposals to put forward and, indeed, seemed to be in some ignorance about the Financial Services Act which has only recently passed through the House.

Insider trading is an evil that needs to be stamped out. There are those who would argue that insider trading is somehow no more than a facet of the operation of the perfect market and that it is entirely appropriate that the price of a stock should respond at the earliest opportunity to the latest information available.

That argument is wholly misconceived. Of course it is right that the price of a stock should reflect the latest information, but that information should be made available simultaneously to all actual and potential stockholders. It is wrong that one stockholder should be able to make a disproportionate profit out of information exclusively available to him.

There are those too who say that insider trading is somehow unimportant because it is a victimless crime. The hon. Gentleman referred to that. There is something in that. A number of small investors in McDonald Wheeler lost substantial sums of money. It is difficult to argue that small investors lose money as a result of insider trading, but they are denied the opportunity to profit in the way that the insider does. By the time they become aware of a potential bid opportunity, the price will already have moved up substantially. In that sense, they are victims. Indeed, we are all victims. Everyone other than the insider is a victim of his abuse.

Mr. Robin Cook: The hon. Gentleman may be aware that Scrimgeour Vickers, in its deal with Mr. Collier, sold short, and subsequently found that it had to register a clear cash loss on the deal. To that extent it regards itself as a victim.

Mr. Smith: It certainly did and it was especially aggrieved as a result of that. I accept that it was a victim. Perhaps the only point that Sir Martin Jacomb was trying to make was that the private investor was not directly damaged. However, I do not accept the description of this as a victimless crime. We are all victims of the crime.

Insider trading has been recognised as an abuse for some time. The stock exchange, to its credit, demanded legislation to make it a criminal offence 15 years ago. In late 1973 the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), introduced a Companies Bill which sought to do precisely that. It was given a Second Reading on 17 January 1974, but, as we have already heard, it was lost with the advent of a general election the following month.

What did the incoming Labour Government do about that? They did absolutely nothing. Their sole contribution to the reform of company law in more than five years was the Companies Act 1976, a puny piece of legislation. For all their protestations of scandal and abuse in the City, they took no action to counter insider trading. How has the Labour party the nerve to criticise today, when all the legislation has been introduced by successive Governments?

It was not until the Companies Act 1980, the insider trading provisions of which are now incorporated in the Company Securities (Insider Dealing) Act 1985, that this matter was dealt with in legislation. We all know that the record of prosecutions since then has not been good. I believe that there are two reasons for that.

First, I am not satisfied that the Department of Trade and Industry has adequate resources for investigating the cases that are passed to it by the stock exchange. Perhaps my hon. Friend would prescribe the resources that are available to him. Does he have either the quantity or the quality of people to undertake these complex investigations?

Secondly, until very recently the Department had insufficient powers of investigation. That has been remedied by section 117 of the Financial Services Act 1986 which enables the Secretary of State to appoint inspectors and then goes on to empower the inspectors to require the production of documents and the attendance of persons and to examine on oath. It is true that during the Committee stage of the Financial Services Act 1986, the only proposals to reinforce those provisions came from my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) who was concerned about the deals that are organised offshore and overseas. Those were the only provisions put forward; no proposals were presented by the Opposition to strengthen the powers. The fact is that the powers are draconian by any standards, and if they are used, they should be very effective.

More recently, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State moved with considerable speed to deal with the first case of alleged insider trading to come to light following the enactment of the Financial Services Bill. Mr. Collier was fired by Morgan Grenfell Securities on 10 November. By 17 November, section 117 of the Financial Services Act 1986 had been implemented and inspectors had been appointed.

An example must now be made, although not necessarily of Mr. Collier and certainly not of the minnow employed by British and Commonwealth who aspired to make £800 from his insider trading. The exemplary sentence should be meted out to as big a fish as possible and that sentence should be a prison sentence—a fine will not do. A clear message must be sent to those in the City who would abuse their privileged positions, that society will not tolerate their behaviour. A statutory commission is not the answer. The question of a body to deal with these matters is really almost irrelevant. It is not the body but the available powers which is the important point.

The existence of the Securities and Exchange Commission has not prevented Mr. Boesky and possibly others from insider trading that makes Mr. Collier's alleged offence look like pilfering from the petty cash box. Indeed, it may be that our present arrangements are already too formal and inflexible and involve too high a burden of proof. For that reason, we may need to consider the introduction of civil penalties with a lower burden of proof. As a further deterrent, we should consider an extension of the disgorgement provisions, such that all the assets of a convicted insider trader are assumed to be the proceeds of his trading, unless he can prove otherwise.

I hope that the Government will resist demands for a statutory commission and instead review the resources and powers available to combat insider trading. It is in the City's interest as much as anyone else's that that evil should be stamped out.

5.23 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): There is an amazing difference in the view taken by the Minister and the view generally taken by the Government in relation to criminal offences. It appears that, as usual, the Government have one law for the rich and another for the poor.

We should not mince words in this matter: we are talking about immaculately dressed spivs who are engaging in criminal activities. The Minister referred to the vigorous action that is being taken, although he did not deny the truth of the figures that were put to him. I hope that we shall receive some explanation as to how, since 1980, there have been 300 cases of insider dealing of which 110 were referred to the Department of Trade and Industry, yet in only six cases have there been guilty verdicts, involving only nine people. That is the sum total. That does not appear to be very vigorous action; rather, it is lethargic.

Several explanations have been made by Tory Members as to what ought to be done—whether there should be better professional expertise or whether more help should be given. However, it is certainly true that the really big fish who are fraudulent in our society are getting away with it. It is simply not good enough to claim that suddenly bringing in legislation will deal with the problem if it is given the chance. In response to the Minister's claims about the Labour Government, I can tell him that this Conservative Government have created a casino society which makes it far easier for people to carry out these dealings.

When we begin to consider the position, we find that people in City institutions are setting up offshore companies. These are the really big fish who are getting away with it. What are the Government doing about that? It is not good enough to allow these people to set up companies in Liberia and the Caribbean. It appears as if crime does pay. These people believe that if they are going to commit a crime, they might as well commit a big one. They will not commit a small one because they believe that there will be a hand at their backs which may fall on their shoulder and they will be put away for it. I agree with Conservative Members who say that there is a real need for one of the big sharks to be caught and put away. These sharks are allowed to swim merrily in the sea and to gain from their criminal activities. The Minister is far too complacent about that.

There was a case not long ago involving an offshore company in Liberia that had never dealt on the stock exchange before. However, in its first dealing, it bought £60,000 of shares that were part of a takeover bid. That is the magnitude of what *is* happening. They have no fear that they will not get away with it. They operate the set-up and know that they will not be prosecuted. The figures show that that is what is happening.

Of course, these companies are encouraged to do that because the Government are not prepared to take much action over mergers and takeovers. In 1985, £9 billion of deals were completed. This is another way of getting a fast buck. Some 75 per cent. of the suspected cases of insider dealing have involved the purchase of shares shortly to be subject to a takeover bid. If the statistics revealed that such crimes were committed elsewhere in society, there would be an outcry from the Conservative Benches for more action. We would then hear the Minister say that the Government would do something. However, despite the vigour which the Government are acting now, it appears that most of the people will get away with their ill-gotten gains and many more such dealings will take place.

What is happening in relation to Guinness? The Minister made an announcement yesterday about that, but he told us nothing at all. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was right to ask whether anything would have happened if the Boesky file had not been passed to the DTI from the United States Securities and Exchange Commission. We are entitled to an explanation as to whether it is because of that that the inspectors have gone into Guinness. We ought to know what is happening It is not good enough that we should be left to speculate. If we examine the Boesky connection and the connection between Collier and Morgan Grenfell, we are bound to draw conclusions.

The Minister and many others have spoken about Ivan Boesky. The *Investors Chronicle* of 21 November states that Mr. Boesky has been barred from participating in the United States securities industry. It continues:

> "This does not prevent him from investing privately or acting as a professional overseas, unless specifically barred. London Stock Exchange members have so far only been instructed to consult the Exchange before dealing on Boesky's behalf."

Can the Minister say whether that is true? Is Boesky to be barred from dealing in the United States, but allowed to get away with such activities in the United Kingdom? If so, that is not good enough.

The Government talk about people's capitalism and privatisation bids. People are making a killing and getting away with it. The British Telecom flotation certainly benefited greedy operators. I understood, as did many others, that investors were allowed only one application and a maximum of 800 shares, but close to 7,000 of the 2·3 million applicants were multiple applicants and got away with it. One or two of the minor fish were caught, but big names in the City were involved and nothing has been done about them.

The matter does not stop there. Already 6,000 cases of multiple dealing have come to light in the flotation of the Trustee Savings bank. At the end of the day such people will make a killing. Soon there will be the flotation of British Gas. Will there be more multiple applications? How many fraudulent Sids will there be? Will they again get away with it? That is happening all the time.

[Mr. Doug Hoyle]

The Minister talks about what the Government have done, but we know that they have been reluctant to act and have been shoved into action. We know that the measures that have been taken are half-baked and weak, and will not have much effect. So long as we allow a voluntary system of self-regulation, we shall not do much about the problem. That is the truth of the matter. Tory Members may say, "Even with all the powers that were given to the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States, look what has occurred there." But look what is happening here, where hardly any powers have been taken.

It is clear from the Minister's remarks that he is not prepared to do much and that the measures will not stop the avarice in the City, those who are out for a quick buck and those who are making the real profits. That is not good enough. Moreover, the salaries of those people are vast. They should be condemned. They should be above suspicion and should not engage in such dealings. They are tarnishing the name of the City of London. They may be a minority, but if nothing is done, they will be a growing minority.

The number of cases of insider trading that have been reported by the stock exchange is disappointing. The stock exchange is extremely disappointed and believes that in many cases there was sufficient evidence to bring a prosecution. But nothing much is happening. Given the Minister's attitude and complacency I suspect that even after today's debate nothing much will happen in future.

I shall give an undertaking from these Benches — I am sure that it has been given many times from the Front Bench — that, when the Labour Government come to power, the City will not get away with the rich pickings that it has been allowed to get away with under the present Government.

5.34 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): The hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), who often speaks on these matters, may be no friend of the City, but he is consistent in his views about the iniquitous practices there, especially illegal ones such as we are discussing today. I have a good deal of sympathy with some of his sentiments, but not with all his solutions.

Insider dealing is undoubtedly rife and more lucrative than ever before. That is clear from the figures in recent years which show the considerable extent to which the price of stocks has risen in the short and medium term before bids have been formally launched. Insider dealing is more lucrative because the market, which trades at considerably higher levels than previously, involves much larger sums and the opportunities for misusing privileged information are much greater.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) that the real problem is the fragility of Chinese walls. There will undoubtedly be great difficulty in ensuring confidentiality and arm's-length operations of subsidiary companies or divisions within financial concerns. The real problem is not that such information may be misused, as it undoubtedly is now, has been in the past and will be in future. The problem is to prevent its misuse, not only by legislation, but by ensuring that people cannot use it, however they obtain it.

It is impractical to suggest that there is a reasonable hope of preventing people from obtaining information, considering the size, flexibility and freedom of the new financial markets. Many people will obtain information about the contents of a prospectus and the terms of a bid. Everybody from the corporate finance executive to the printer responsible for publishing the information will be privy to the information. What is necessary is not to outlaw such practices and make them, rightly, criminal offences, but to prevent opportunities arising for people to misuse that knowledge. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House have directed their attention to that problem today.

I should like to add some comments and suggestions to those which have already been registered in relation to possible solutions. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch made two proposals which he thought would prevent some insider dealing offences. Indeed, his view is shared both inside and outside the House. His first proposal sought to prevent in-house dealing and to ensure that those who work for financial concerns and are privy to information are prevented from misusing that information by contract, presumably with the company that employs them.

That is a good idea, and some companies already impose that stricture on their employees, but it is unworkable because it is already a criminal offence to engage in insider dealing. If an employee abuses the law by engaging in insider dealing, why should he not also abuse the contractual restriction placed on him to use that information? That will not stop the type of person who is determined to break the law.

I have sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's second proposition in principle, but less sympathy with it in practice. It is to ensure by registration that all beneficial ownership of shares will be made more public and more accurate. In an intervention, I inquired how that would be possible for dealings on international markets, where orders are placed by companies abroad. Even if there were bilateral agreements with countries and banks about the disclosure of beneficial ownership, unfortunately there will always be trading opportunities with offshore concerns and locations, to which people will direct their money and through which they will establish nominee companies and make substantial criminal profits. One substantive move could be made through international co-operation significantly to improve the prevention and detection of this crime. I shall say something about that later. The extent to which full disclosure of beneficial ownership will deter people from engaging in that is limited.

I should like to make some proposals. My first is a reiteration of what I said in Standing Committee during the course of the Financial Services Bill. There is a case for the Securities and Investment Board having the ability to investigate suspected cases of insider dealing. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), in speaking about the powers of the SIB and its status as a private sector body rather than a statutory body, seemed to be under the misapprehension that in some way, even if it were given statutory identity, it would be able to resolve this problem. He may not be aware, but I am sure other hon. Members will be, that, even if the SIB were to be made a full statutory body, it has no powers. Indeed, it is expressly prohibited from having any powers to investigate insider dealing.

In Standing Committee I moved an amendment to give the SIB powers to investigate suspected cases of insider dealing. At that time, and largely at present, cases were initially investigated by the stock exchange. When it has a suspicion, it refers it to the Department of Trade and Industry, which decides whether or not to carry out further investigations or to bring a prosecution. The SIB is ostensibly responsible for the regulation and supervision of the investment markets but it has no legal right, in effect it is expressly forbidden, to investigate and prosecute in a case of insider dealing.

If there are more cases of this kind, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will have to look at this matter again. It cannot be right to disallow the body responsible for overall regulation and supervision of the investment markets from investigating insider dealing. When I put that to my hon. and learned Friend during the course of the Bill, he said, with a large measure of justification, that the powers granted under the Companies Act 1980 and extended by this legislation have been substantially enhanced. In his words, their nature is draconian and there is no need to extend the right of investigation or prosecution to any body other than the Department of Trade and Industry.

Because these powers of investigation and the burden of proof and the other arguments to which my hon. and learned Friend addressed himself earlier are so draconian and distinct from prosecution and investigation in other criminal areas, he argues that it would be improper to extend those powers to a private sector body or, I suspect, to a public sector body if the SIB were to be made something akin to the Securities and Exchange Commission. I begged to differ with my hon. and learned Friend and that was why I pressed my amendment to a Division. It received a degree of support from all sides of the Committee. It is a legitimate matter to raise again if there is continuing dissatisfaction about the investigation and prosecution of people involved in insider dealing.

I sense that we all hope that the SIB will be responsible on a day-to-day basis for monitoring what the stock exchange council and lots of other self-regulatory organisations are doing. In turn, they will be in day-to-day touch with all the trading activities of the member firms. How can it be right to stop that supervisory body, when it gets a whiff of some criminal activity and suspects insider dealing or when its monitoring through the SROs of daily trade gives rise to suspicion, from either investigating or even drawing that matter to the attention of the Department of Trade and Industry? As a responsible body, it may well do the latter in any case, but we should look at the matter again.

Secondly, the hon. Member for Livingston said that there was a case for a bilateral agreement with the Swiss Government. He may have said the Swiss Government but he should have said the Swiss Federal Bankers Association. Such an agreement would allow disclosure of beneficial ownership or other details of account dealings. That agreement is similar to that which the Swiss have concluded with the SEC in the United States and it is a good idea. I supported that proposal during consideration of the Financial Services Bill.

Many hon. Members may know that the agreement which currently prevails between the SEC and the Swiss Federal Bankers Association provides that where investigations are being made into a suspected criminal offence in the United States, the assets of a person in a Swiss bank can be frozen and information about the orders placed by a person, where they involve trading on American stock markets, can and will be disclosed—subject to certain safeguards—by the Swiss banks.

This is an important measure, because the agreement meant that, before anyone used a Swiss bank or a financial concern for nominee or trading accounts involving American stocks and shares, he had to sign a contractual form agreeing to the disclosure of such information as a condition of opening an account. It may be difficult and long-term to conclude such an agreement with the Swiss authorities, but it should be a starting point and a model for the sort of bilateral and international agreements which ought to prevail if we are to circumvent some of the offshore media being used by people to obtain rich pickings through insider dealing.

In the end, high standards of probity in this as in other matters will be observed only by the people concerned, but one hopes that, through a combination of legislation, supervision and penalties, one will see higher standards than have been prevalent in recent times. Undoubtedly, insider dealing is an insidious criminal offence because it takes money at the expense of the majority of shareholders. As many hon. Members have said, it brings the City into further disrepute of the kind created by certain other recent activities.

It is not in the interests of any of us to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs, not only for the many people who work in that sector but for British industry at large. The alacrity with which my hon. and learned Friend moved in the wake of recent events to change the law and the measures that he ably introduced during the passage of the Bill, and his response today, have demonstrated, if it was necessary, that the Government are determined to take action where necessary and are not prepared to lie back and oversee and suffer some of the bad practices that have been evident in recent months.

5.47 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): My contribution will be brief. I support many of the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson). He seemed to strike the right sort of balance in looking at this problem. As hon. Members said earlier, it is fitting that this debate should be held today, given the recent developments in Guinness and the decision by the Department of Trade and Industry to send in inspectors.

I should be grateful to the Minister if he could tell us when he responds to the debate what further thinking, if any, has taken place at the Department on what the Guinness bid revealed about the inadequacies of undertakings given at the time of big competitive bids in the past year or two. Those undertakings were subsequently broken or dropped in the aftermath of the successful bid.

I am thinking in particular of the fairly strong talking to by the Secretary of State for Scotland to Mr. Ernest Saunders concerning his commitments to maintain an important Scottish profile as part of a restructured Guinness and to move its headquarters to Edinburgh. The Government ought to investigate promises that are so lightly broken and that leave the Government, and political opinion, with egg on their face. We shall await with great interest the outcome of the investigation. Many people will be watching closely to see what the investigation uncovers.

[Mr. Charles Kennedy]

Reference has been made to the City's image. I agree with the thrust of the argument of the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson). It is important to draw attention to the massive resources that the City commands: to the number of people who are employed there and to the finance and capital that the City makes available for investment in British industry. I do not have a pathological mistrust of the City. However, because of its importance, the House is right to debate the issue and to try to stamp out some of the recent practices that have come to the fore in both New York and London.

As for the Boesky case, it is worth letting the man and what he represents speak for themselves. When he was addressing a group of business students in 1985 he said:

"Greed is all right, by the way. I want you to know that. You can be greedy and still feel good about yourself."

That is a revealing insight into the type of mentality and into the type of morality that people of that kind have brought to international finance. Anybody like that who operates in the City of London should be weeded out in just as tough and hard a way as took place in the United States. Recently I was interested to read that the gentleman concerned, subsequent to his exposure, said:

"If my mistakes launch a process of re-examination of the rules and practices of our market place, then perhaps some good will result."

That suggests a degree of humility which his 1985 statement lacked.

Insider dealings have again put self-regulation on trial. I sympathise with the point that was made by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) about the insufficient guarantees on regulatory controls that already exist. His point was well put in an article by Andrew Phillips, a City solicitor. The article, written a year ago, was entitled:

"Wanted: A sanitary squad for the Square Mile."

Speaking about the reforms he said:

"In their place the Bank of England expects the new all-function colossi — increasingly foreign-owned — to erect invisible, or 'Chinese', walls of internal self-discipline. For a community which prides itself on hard-headed realism, such wishful thinking must be without precedent. Straight dealing is being sacrificed to competition; the national interest to capital gain."

Much of the thrust of that article has been reinforced and strengthened by recent events.

What can now be done to try to clean up some of the practices that have been uncovered? As for tightening up the definitions, in a takeover the bidder defines his own insiders. If a leak then occurs and is not traced, all the insiders are collectively liable. However, the problems connected with this kind of scheme are quite immense. How could such a definition be put into practice? How wide would the net be cast? It may lead to over-reaction; it may provide far too big a solution to what is, nevertheless, a significant problem.

The suggestion has also been made recently that ill-gotten gains should be retrieved, as happens now to the ill-gotten gains of fraudsters and of those who traffic in drugs. It is an attractive option that the Government ought to examine.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have said that insider dealing must be shown clearly to be fraud and that it should be treated as fraud. Parliament must make its contribution by making it absolutely clear that it deplores insider dealing. As for treating it as straightforward theft, I agree that spectacular prosecutions and gaol sentences would have the effect of concentrating the minds of those who are involved in such practices, or who might feel tempted to become involved in such practices.

I welcome the recent developments and the efforts of the Government and the Department of Trade and Industry to introduce more draconian powers. Nevertheless, a considerable sense of unease is beginning to surface in Great Britain about what is being regarded more and more as the casino-like morality of the City of London, and it is being compared with other injustices elsewhere in the country. The Government ought to act by making it abundantly clear tonight that they intend to act decisively. If they act decisively, they will do not only themselves but all of us a favour, not least the City of London.

5.57 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): This debate is about capitalism. It is about the very nature of the beast — greed and materialism. We cannot avoid an examination of the cause of all these problems.

I do not believe for a moment that the Minister, who is connected with Lloyd's, will manage to avoid all the pitfalls into which previous Ministers have fallen. They tried to deal with the City by introducing banking Bills and companies Acts to get rid of the City crooks who are at work in their gambling dens trying to make as much money as they possibly can. Of course, they are carrying out the Prime Minister's principles, because she has called for an entrepreneurial society.

The Prime Minister says that she wants an entrepreneurial society in which everybody stands on their own two feet. That means, literally, standing on somebody else's neck. It also means that one has to get rich quick. That is one of the reasons why the Government are involved in a massive campaign to sell off British Gas. That is part of this Government's entrepreneurial ideas. The television advertisements about Sid, which cost £20 million, are really about insider dealing. They proclaim, "Where is Sid? Tell him." The Minister is trying to eradicate insider dealing, yet nearly every public hoarding in the country carries an advertisement about insider dealing that relates to Sid and British Gas.

Mr. Hoyle: Is my hon. Friend sure, from the way that the Minister has behaved, that he is not Sid?

Mr. Skinner: He could be, although many people might qualify to be Sid, in the avaricious, materialistic sense, in front of the hon. and learned Gentleman, because he is not a Cabinet Minister.

Mr. Hoyle: He is aiming for it.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, he is.

Nine Cabinet Ministers deal in shares, according to the information, which is new since the war. It is well-known that the Prime Minister was dealing in shares during the pit strike, and made several thousand pounds profit in a company that had a coal mining subsidiary in Australia. Some insider dealing went on there. She was causing a coal strike and the subsidiary was making money by sending coal to Britain, which was short of coal. The Prime Minister was making money out of shares, and that was insider dealing on a grand scale.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The hon. Gentleman made a number of serious accusations, one of which was directed to my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State, with respect to his position on insider dealing. Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the moment the opportunity arose under the Financial Services Act —I had the good fortune to serve on the Committee on the Bill—my hon. and learned Friend immediately took action not only on the Collier case but on the most recent one, Guinness? The hon. Gentleman is known to be interested in cricket. I ask him to play fair.

Mr. Skinner: Before I come to that, I must deal with the Secretary of State for the Environment. When he was Secretary of State for Transport he had shares in Jaguar. The Government decided to privatise Jaguar. This is well known, as I have said outside, so it is not in dispute. As a Minister with shares in that company, he privatised it with the help of his Tory friends on the Back Benches, 200 of whom happen to be directors of companies and one in eight of whom is a member of Lloyd's—that gambling den in the city. He got them to walk through the Lobby to support the privatisation of Jaguar and made £4,000 profit. That is insider dealing.

In answer to the question put by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), I ask the Minister when he is going to feel the collar of the Secretary of State for the Environment and say to him, "What about that money you made? You had advance information that the Government were going to privatise Jaguar, but you got shares on the sly." That was revealed only after it was discovered that the Prime Minister had shares.

It is a scandal that a Tory Government with nine Cabinet Ministers making money out of shares should have the cheek to come along and say that they are doing a great job and are controlling insider dealing. I will never believe that, and I know that my hon. Friends will not either. Some 138,000 people have been done by the Government through the DHSS, but only five have been done in the City. There has been one famous case while the Government have been in power. Peter Cameron-Webb and Peter Dixon did the stock exchange for £39 million.

Mr. Cash: It was Lloyd's.

Mr. Skinner: It was Lloyd's. The hon. Gentleman is right. I thought I would see whether he was awake. I caught him. He would not be much good at insider dealing, because he is too slow.

Peter Cameron-Webb and Peter Dixon got £39 million, and now they are in America. They have got big palatial places, and swimming pools to go with them, but nobody comes from the fraud squad and says, "Hello there, Mr. Peter Cameron-Webb, you have just done the City of London for £39 million. There are people in Britain called the electorate who are very concerned about double standards that operate when 138,000 people have been done by the DHSS for minor offences and little old women have been done for taking a tin of salmon out of Marks and Spencers." What kind of society is this? Nobody has been across to the United States to see these men.

Why is not somebody going from the fraud squad? The Government reckon that they have invested in the police. That is one of the mighty claims that they have made during the past seven years. They say that they have given the police more power and money and there are more of them, but one cannot be found to go across to the United States to do his duty so that the British electorate know that the Government are prepared to deal with them as they deal with those who have to live below the poverty line.

The truth is that the Government have no intention of doing anything with those in the City because most of them come out of the same belly of the establishment as Conservative Members. More than 200 of them are directors in companies, many of them in insurance companies and banks. Where does one expect their allegiance to be? Of course they are in support of self-regulation. They do not want the Government to intervene and introduce laws that will make these people toe the line. They are in business to make money for those companies and to line their pockets and provide cash to the tune of £10 million or £20 million to finance the Tory party's election campaign. That is what they are in business for.

Mr. Hoyle: My hon. Friend has rightly said that many Conservative Back Benchers have directorships. Should they not declare their interests when they speak? Not one of them has done so yet.

Mr. Skinner: Last week, in the debate about Hangers, the artificial limb factory where 300 people have been sacked by a Tory company, allied to a South African company that will be trying to take over Pilkingtons—the case to which my hon. Friend referred—I heard a Tory Member of Parliament declare his interest.

Mr. Hoyle: You did not.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, I did. It is not a normal practice, although more than 200 have directorships or consultancy positions. This one declared an interest. When I asked how much he made out of it, he replied, "Only £5,000."

The right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) has not been out of government for more than four years, yet he has 10 directorships already, and 4·5 million people do not have jobs at all. The right hon. Gentleman is moonlighting on a grand scale. That should tell the story. He has those jobs to act as an insider dealer. Any textbook on politics will justify the arguments about Tory Members needing business interests by saying that it is necessary so that they can pass on information about what is going on in the House of Commons and in Parliament generally to their businesses. That is insider dealing.

Despite all that, Conservative Members are talking as though they will eliminate such practices. They might be able to make some mild amelioration on the way. The hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) more or less said that. He made a few offers, but he was not completely confident about it. Until one eliminates the beast itself —the gambling den, the stock exchange, and the rest of it—one cannot get rid of insider dealing. However, it is our job to expose it as often as we can and to show where it is possible to change it.

The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who was dropping asleep, has gone. He has probably got a headache because he has been thinking too fast. He asked, "Why will you not be fair to my right hon. and hon. Friends? They are having a debate about the issue; they have responded." Why have the Government done something about Guinness? The answer stares us in the face. It is because this debate is taking place. What is more, there is a little bit of a fracas in Australia. They want to get the headlines and eliminate the unseemly business that

[Mr. Skinner]

is taking place in the law courts with Mr. Peter Wright. In fact, Peter Wright is an insider dealer. Several years ago he gave information to Chapman Pincher to write the book. The Government are now spending lots of money, twisting Robert Armstrong's arm and buffeting the Attorney-General from pillar to post because an insider dealer is now blurting out the truth that he blurted out several years ago when he made about £30,000. The whole thing is nonsense.

I am worried about insider dealing, the casino economy and double standards in Britain. Yesterday I met another of our casualties who has been savagely treated by the law courts acting on behalf of the Government. I refer to Fred Jones. He is not an insider dealer. He is an 84-year-old pensioner. He is on the other side of the tracks. He has probably never been to the City of London. All he wanted was a free television licence, such as those held by many pensioners in Britain who live in warden accommodation, homes for the disabled, and so on. He has launched a campaign for a free television licence. What happened? Under the so-called British law that is fair to all people in this land, Fred Jones did not have sanctuary. He did not have the opportunity to get away and ask a lawyer and a chartered accountant to talk it through for him. No, he finished up in gaol. The man is sound, he is still campaigning and the Government still have a problem with him.

When the Minister talks almost contemptibly about the way in which the law is fair, he should remember the Fred Joneses of this world. There is no self-regulation for Fred Jones. He was not able to say, "I have a group of people who will listen to my case and then perhaps make a recommendation to the Government that they should not take the matter to court." Oh, no, not for him. He has not got the ring fence of the Securities and Investment Board around him. Fred Jones bumps into the law head-on because he has not paid his £58. Today the Minister tried to apologise because the Government have managed to get only five people into the net from amongst all the crooks in the City.

A man in my constituency got notice to quit because he owed five weeks' rent. The estate agents, A. E. Holders of Mansfield, took him to court. I told the estate agents I was going to mention this. Mr. Bruin does not have a penny piece. There is no self-regulation for Mr. Bruin. He goes before the court on 16 December. The estate agents will try to take possesson of his home. Even if he gets away with it and his rent and arrears are paid, the law will almost certainly say, "We will not give you notice to quit, but we will put the court costs on your rent book." That could be about £100 or more. That is self-regulation, is it not?

It is interesting that during this Parliament and the one before there was no self-regulation for trade unions. We had Bill after Bill from Ministers, including the chairman of the Tory party. They said, "We have to stop this business of self-regulation for trade unions. We have to control them and make sure that they have a ballot for everything they do." That applies except when they want to stop them striking. They are not keen on ballots then, because they want them to get back to work as quickly as possible. They said there should be ballots for strikes, executives and general secretaries. Woe betide there being one little branch of the trade union which has not complied with the law. All hell is let loose. There are questions in the House, and nine times out of ten they have to have another ballot. There is no self-regulation for trade unions.

The Government have the cheek to talk about no having double standards. Of course there are double standards. The reason why money has been made in the City in recent years to a greater extent than before is quite simple: the interest rates have been in double figures for every year that the Government have been in office. If one is in the City one cannot afford not to make money out of somebody else's money.

Why put money into a small engineering factory or into the Grantham cafe? The cafe has gone bankrupt. There are 150,000 bankruptcies in the industrial economy while the casino economy is blazing away in the City. We had an entrepreneur in Grantham who said, "I'll follow the Prime Minister. She has asked us to be entrepreneurs. I'll change the little shop where she used to live, where she used to put an extra penny on the bacon and butter when she served behind the counter." There used to be a post office inside. That was never talked about because it was part of the public sector. That was kept in the dark. That entrepreneur turned the shop into a cafe, in line with the entrepreneurial society. What happened? It is now one of the 150,000 bankruptcy casualties in Britain. I wonder whether that entrepreneur would have liked a bit of self-regulation before he went bankrupt. I wonder whether he yearned for the moment when he could have operated, as they do on the stock exchange, and gone to somebody and said, "Will you look into my case to see whether it is possible to stop it going to the Government and stop me having to file for company liquidation?" That is Thatcher's Britain. That is the society we are living in today.

Nobody should imagine that we have heard the last of the credit card and casino economy. In 1986, £27 billion is owed on credit cards. Seventy per cent. of the residual income of the average family in Britain, all of us, is owed in debts before the pay packet is opened. It was 45 per cent. in 1979. It has now gone up to 70 per cent. and over and it is still growing.

Tory Members talk about insider trading and self-regulation. There is a bigger problem around the corner. It has all come about because they have concentrated on allowing the City to make money out of the high interest rates, while the industrial economy has gone to the dogs. Have they cared as throughout the length and breadth of Britain engineering factories have closed down because of lack of investment and pits have been closed because of the Government's policies? Banks have been saved. They have saved banks, such as Johnson Matthey, which had no money and no reserves. I have to mention that because they want to hear it in the Galleries.

JMB was an uneconomic unit of production, but the Government saved it. In fact, the Chancellor of the Exchequer rang the Prime Minister on 30 September 1984 and said, "JMB has got no reserves." The Prime Minister said, "You know what to do when it has no reserves; you shut it." The Chancellor said, "It is not a pit; it's a bank." The Prime Minister then said, "Save it." Of course, it is part of the casino economy. The Chancellor said, "What shall I save it with?" The Prime Minister said, "Save it with £100 million of taxpayers' money." Just think what we could have done with that money in the shipyards on the Tyne and elsewhere, in the coalfields and in the engineering and steel industries.

It is all double standards. Here we are today talking about self-regulation. We are talking about self-regulation for Tory Members and people in the City. Imagine what would happen if a bloke in a betting shop got done for insider trading. A betting shop is much the same as the stock exchange— that posh gambling den. Just imagine somebody coming along and saying, "Well, I do not think you should prosecute old Jack. He only backed five winners after they had all come in." Insider dealing. I rest my case.

6.19 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I would not attempt to speak with the brilliance and grasp demonstrated by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), partly because I have never worked in the City and I have not had sufficient opportunity to observe what goes on there. The hon. Gentleman evidently has had that opportunity, and it has inspired his speech.

May I first declare my interests. I own no shares in any public company, I am not a director of any public company, I am not a member of Lloyds, I take no retainers, I am not a paid consultant, I am not a member of a trade union and I am not seeking office in the Government.

Many of my constituents in Kensington earn their livings in occupations which, directly or indirectly, contribute to the success of the City. The vast majority of them do not earn six-figure incomes or, many of them, even five-figure incomes. I am speaking of men as well as women, who go into the City each day to make their contributions. They are certainly not gamblers. They pay their taxes like everyone else. We need to bear in mind the fact that the City is a large institution in this country and an enormous contributor to the success of the British economy.

My voters do not welcome the suggestion that the City is a crookedly operated casino or a haven for corner cutters and irresponsible adventurers. No doubt some such people exist in the City, just as they exist in political circles —it is unavoidable. We have to bear in mind that all types of people are attracted to the work of the City, and sometimes things will go wrong.

The British economy needs the City to be successful, just as the City needs a flourishing British economy if it is to continue as one of the world's greatest financial centres. The City has not abandoned the traditions which made it a world financial centre, but shadows are over it at the present time. That is a matter of concern to all hon. Members. The City has the appearance of Versailles some 200 years ago, when it still had time to avert a disastrous clash with public opinion. It was a brilliant, powerful and glittering centre—like the City is now—a centre of ideas and influence. The leaders in Versailles did not recognise the danger they were in. If they did, they did not exert themselves to correct the drift from responsible public opinion while they still had time.

There is a danger that not enough people in the city today are prepared to speak out plainly for the old standards. I hope that the leaders of the City's institutions will recognise the urgent need to insist on the highest standards of conduct in small and large transactions. The principal responsibility for maintaining standards lies within the square mile, not in Whitehall or Westminster.

Politicians are unlikely to have the relevant experience to justify taking power to interfere in the management of markets or the control of investment policy. The same is likely to apply to their permanent officials as well. The Government should not rely only on the Financial Services Act 1986. The Financial Services Act represented a tremendous endeavour by the Department to put a new structure of conduct into place in statutory form. We all have to pay tribute to the Minister, in particular, for his hard work in bringing that Act to its successful conclusion. But there are measures now which the Government, and only the Government, can take, to produce a more responsible and more fruitful climate in the disposal and control of capital assets.

I shall briefly list a series of points and make some recommendations for the Ministers to consider. Over 100 cases of suspected insider trading have been referred to the Department, only a handful of which have resulted in prosecutions since the 1980 Act came into force. When the stock exchange was solely responsible for its own discipline, a number of cases of insider trading that were detected probably never came to light before the general public. The stock exchange had a more successful record in maintaining the highest standards than the Department has so far achieved since it was granted power to intervene.

The recent tremendous pressure towards the corporate restructuring of British industry has provided spectacular opportunities for quick capital gains. Perhaps that was inevitable. It does not mean that the reorganisation of industry, which has taken place in recent years and is still continuing, is necessarily wrong.

For some 14 years, I served in ICI. Everybody in that company — certainly when I served in it — knew the importance of the measure which took place in 1926, when a great capitalist and adventurer, Harry McGowan, had the foresight to realise that the British chemical industry had to be totally restructured if it was to survive. Had it not been for Harry McGowan's foresight in creating the merger of the major British chemical companies in 1926, we would not have an industry today with anything like the importance it has.

There is a serious need for much closer liaison and better understanding between large investors and the senior management of British industry. The CBI is perfectly right to call for it. The Government should look for measures that would encourage closer liaison and understanding between the DTI in particular, the City and the senior management of British industry. Such liaison and understanding are possible without partial disclosure of confidential information.

There is also an urgent need to lengthen the time span of investment discretion. The Government must accept some responsibility in this matter. It is not outside the Government's ability to influence the events that investors have to take into account when they make long-term decisions about the disposal and organisation of capital assets. Changes in taxation policy could be made which would encourage the revival of fixed interest and preference shares as a source of corporate finance. For too long we have been living in the age of the equity. It has brought an element of doubt, just as it has brought an element of discretion, into the way that dividend policies are likely to operate. Now that conditions for the long-term expectations of the value of the currency have been restored, we should try to revive the fixed interest and preference share sectors of the market which played an important part in the financing of British industry before the war.

[Sir Brandon Rhys Williams]

I have spoken about this matter before, but I do not seem to have made any progress with Treasury officials. They consider suggestions about reform of company taxation, and matters such as that, simply from the viewpoint of protecting the revenue. They do not realise that revenue would increase enormously if the health of the British economy could be improved. It is vital that we seek to lengthen the time span of investment discretion and create a climate in which there is less doubt about company policy in the payment of dividends from year to year. It is unhealthy speculation and pressure on boards to change their dividend policies in response to very short-term market forces which cause a great deal of the anxiety and uncertainty in boardrooms, and resultant timidity in splashing out and making big investment decisions.

I have referred before to something that I regard as the historic compromise. It is happening on its own and is beginning to take shape. This is the historic compromise under which, increasingly, shareholders will give up their right to an equity dividend and workers will give up the right to strike. This is a coming together of the two sides of industry. It is inevitable, and it is happening, whether or not the Government encourage it.

There is a need for much greater transparency and predictability in financial decision-making; this is also a matter for Treasury policy.

We shall have to move quickly towards establishing a more stable relationship between exchange rates, especially those of sterling and other Common Market currencies. As I have said before, I entirely support my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her resistance to announcing that we have joined the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. However, we should make our target—and we should be taking positive steps now to achieve it — the creation of a currency union within the Common Market. There is no reason why that should be regarded as a long-term objective. There are measures which we could take at once that would encourage the markets in the expectation that the major currencies of the Common Market will be brought closer together and will stay closely together in future years. There is nothing that would help British industry more in planning long-term investment decisions and the responsible structure of corporate finance than the feeling that this country's future in the Common Market can be placed on a long-term and predictable basis.

The Department of Trade and Industry should be less preoccupied with immediate instances of crime and fraud, however scandalous they are and however high the headlines in the daily press. The Department should consider the way in which company law operates in regard to the responsibility of the supervisory elements in our financial, industrial and business institutions. It should consider the conditions in which management is able to become slack without even being aware of its shortcomings, in which shareholders are powerless to intervene when they begin to feel anxious about management's efficiency and in which auditors are uncertain of their duties and loyalties. The tone of business may become so slack and lacking in supervisory discretion that opportunities arise for people to begin with small frauds or minor cheating decisions and go on to major frauds, many of which are not discovered.

I learned when talking informally some time ago to officers of the fraud squad that in all too many cases, when fraud is suspected or even proved, the auditors are already aware of what is happening but do not think that it is their responsibility or that it is in the interest of their firm to do anything about it. The auditing profession is not certain to whom it is responsible. Are auditors responsible to the shareholders, as was originally conceived, over the directors' heads or are they responsible to the directors, so that they are obliged to connive with the directors in policies that are dubious or even contrary to law? Auditing firms face a difficult decision. Junior officials in those firms may notice highly dubious activities which, for personal or policy reasons, they think it would be better to say nothing about; so instead they simply close the lines of investigation which would bring discipline to bear on those who are breaking the rules.

Top management should not conduct its business without accurate, up-to-date information provided on a professional basis. When I was involved in consultancy, I knew of all too many companies in which some senior people were aware of critical information about the company's future, marketing prospects, and so on but others, who should have had that information, were not. All too often, non-executive directors would go to the board to express their anxieties but would find themselves floored by the arguments of the full-time directors simply because they had not been provided with the data to enable them to press their point. A small change in the rules governing the circulation of data in companies is needed to ensure that confidential data go to those who should have it but not to those who can use it wrongly, have no need of it and may be offered temptation by it.

One cannot tell British management in the City, in industry or in business that it must be honest and that laws will be passed to force people to be honest. Human nature is such that some people will always be willing to break the rules. We cannot pass laws that tell people that they must be efficient. To do so would be futile. But I implore my right hon. and hon. Friends to realise that we can create statutory routines that make it normal practice in the vast majority of companies for all concerned to act in such a way that opportunities to commit fraud do not arise.

Of course mistakes will be made; but British company law used to be held up as an example to the world of the way in which private enterprise should be regulated. I do not think now that anyone would look to British company law, in its present state—even if he had the patience to read our vast and wordy statutes—for a model of how private enterprise should conduct itself. The original model, which I suppose was a Gladstonian one, was an exceedingly well-conceived balance between the powers of shareholders, the responsibilities of the auditors—when the audit was made statutory near the end of the 19th century — the duties of management and the rights of workers and others.

Those aspects can be put right, but the flood of company legislation in recent years has not brought into focus the necessity for simple statutory routines that strengthen the hands of the non-executive directors and especially the supervisory role of the auditors. That aim does not require a tremendous upheaval in procedure. It is simply a matter of bringing up to date procedures which were put in place in our company law 50 or 100 years ago and which are now falling into disuse or are simply neglected.

I shall cite one example which gives us an insight into the way in which the Securities and Exchange Commission works in the United States. Because there is a separate company law in every state, it is not possible for the SEC to introduce changes in the law that will result in changes in the way in which companies manage their affairs. In recent years, the practice has been for the SEC to bring pressure to bear on the stock exchanges in the United States to alter their listing agreements so that companies could not have their shares quoted unless they operated certain routines which the SEC thought necessary for the good conduct of business. The New York stock exchange in particular was, I believe, the first to introduce the rule that the shares of a company could not be quoted unless the company established an audit committee. Of course, that was a controversial development, but it was not all that difficult to introduce it in the context of American company practice. In the United States, the majority of companies are primarily run by non-executive directors, and the executive heads on the boards tend not to be in an overwhelming position, unlike their counterparts in the majority of British companies.

The liaison which that rule brings about between the auditors and the company directors has been put on a formal basis. In Britain, almost invariably, experts on company practice—and on the future of the auditing profession in particular—will say that it would be an excellent idea if the practice of appointing audit committees were adopted in this country. Some limited steps have been taken in that direction but, unless there is a statutory push to bring it about, or unless the stock exchange in London decides to make it one of its listing conditions, another 10 years will go by and the auditors will still not be in a position to exercise the appropriate degree of supervision over company management.

I have introduced a companies Bill in every Session since 1969. In recent years, I have regularly made recommendations as to the way in which we could strengthen the hands of the auditors and of the non-executive directors, improve the circulation of data, and so on. Since 1974, because of the intervention of the Department of Trade and Industry, I have not been able even to get my Bill considered by a Standing Committee. The Department's policy of blocking discussion in Parliament of my proposals can now be seen to have been a mistake. I hope that this year, when I again introduce such a Bill, the Department will not intervene to prevent the House from taking by Bill into Committee.

6.40 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): There should have been a Division when my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) finished his speech, since after that, all that was left to those of us who remained was to contribute to a state of creative anti-climax. I congratulate my hon. Friend on a speech of, if I may say so, unusual comprehensiveness. It should be the answer to anyone who doubts the elasticity of the rules of procedure of the House.

The Minister sceptically asked why we wanted this debate now. Since he does not seem to trust our motives, I shall refer to the *Financial Times*. It said:

"There have never been so many opportunities to make illegal profits in the United Kingdom stock market by using inside information about a company's financial performance or its takeover strategy.

And it has never been easier for the directors of a company, its merchant bankers, lawyers or accountants, to get away with it."

That is why we are having this debate. We are talking about crime on a massive and unprecedented scale in this country; crime on such a scale that it makes the great train robbers look like back-street pickpockets. We are dealing with greed and avarice on an unprecedented scale, far beyond the comprehension of most of us.

We are also talking about sums of money that are beyond the comprehension of most of us. Yet in a way, that gives the lie to the pretensions of so much of the Conservative party's strategy. The Conservative party said that tax cuts motivated people. We are talking about the people who have been the beneficiaries of £3 billion a year of tax cuts. The Government gave those tax cuts to people on top incomes. We are talking about a group of people who, in many cases, have seen more than a doubling of their salaries within the past 12 months. To them, everything has come. Despite all of that, they still cannot keep snouts out of troughs. That is the shabby truth of the position that we are investigating.

There is nothing glittering about that aspect of the City. I am sure, as hon. Members on both sides have said, that the City feels no pride in those activities. We are talking about the quick buck morality. Let there be no doubt that this Government have contributed to that philosophy. It is innate in their thinking, in their concept of privatisation and in their concept of pop capitalism.

On the one hand the Prime Minister stands at the Dispatch Box and berates workers for a 5 per cent. a year pay rise, and on the other hand she eulogises about the success of the launch of British Telecom with a 100 per cent. capital gain for those who happened to win a place in the lottery. That is the sort of ambiguity and ambivalence, the undermining of social and moral values, to which the basic political tenets of the Conservative party have contributed. The lesson that is getting through to many young people who cannot even find a job—the lesson of the British Gas launch, the British Telecom launch, the TSB launch—is that it is easier to work the system than to work a machine. In their motion the Government eulogise the actions of the City; a City which has exported about as much capital from Britain as the Government have received in revenue from the North sea during the entire time that they have been in office.

The Government praise the City for its work in support of industry. The Minister got into some slight difficulty earlier because of a basic conflict between the aspirations of the City and the needs of industry. The Minister shakes his head, but he must be about the only person in Britain who does not understand that conflict. The City is motivated by a quick rate of return. Industry desperately needs long-term investment in plant and machinery, and in research and development. Yet firm after firm says that it must be careful about its investment and research and development programmes, because if it puts too much into those areas and too much into the seed corn of their industries, they line themselves up for takeover by the City. The Minister got into a slight predicament over investment made in industry during his time in office, which has been a time of unprecedented boom in the City's activities. He wanted to dismiss the protestation that investment had fallen during the last quarter. The Minister said, "Oh no, you must not take just a quarter into account. You must look at progress in the City and

[Mr. Alan Williams]

industry over a much longer time scale." But when we tried to examine progress over the entire lifespan of the Government, the Minister did not want that examined either. He is a singularly difficult man to please, much as we try.

During the past few years, especially the last two years, the City's role has been predominantly predatory and parasitic. It has incited, with the support of the Government, the merger mania that has led to the enormous, illicit profitability of insider dealing. The figure of £30,000 million has been given for this year alone, which is five times higher than last year. That is why we are having this debate now. Opportunities to make killings exist on an unprecedented scale. It is clear that there is little or no industrial logic in so many of the mergers that are taking place. They are related far more to a quick financial kill than to any industrial logic or any attempt to structure our manufacturing industry more efficiently. The Government, with their friends in the City, have created a paradise for insiders. That is why it is interesting to note the statistical evidence that between 75 and 80 per cent. of all suspected insider deals have occurred in the context of takeover bids. They have all occurred during the build-up to the takeover.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) referred to *Acquisitions Monthly* and the evidence that it gave of a 25 per cent. average share rise in the three months prior to the takeover of a company. As my hon. Friend said, the figure is as high as 80 per cent. That is why the opportunity is so massive for those who have inside information. The editor of that magazine——

Mr. Tim Smith *rose*——

Mr. Williams: I shall not give way, as I am limited on time.

The editor of the monthly magazine is quoted in *The Guardian* as saying that financial deals are now worth hundreds of millions of pounds. We are not talking about small sums of money. The sums about which we have been hearing recently in one or two cases are derisory by comparion with what has really been going on.

We have heard about the virtues of self-regulation. If it is so virtuous, one is bound to wonder whey we are having any investigation so late into the activities of Guinness in relation to Bells or Distillers. The ultimate in complacency is a statement made to *The Guardian* in June last year:

> "We all work in a price-sensitive world and are well trained to keep our traps shut."

That was a quotation from a City spokesman who works in Morgan Grenfell, the company whose activities are attracting attention at present.

The Minister cannot pretend that those are occasional lapses or occasional indiscretions. The structures that exist to conceal and support those activities, such as the offshore companies, are evidence of the way in which the position has been conspired at over the years. It is only the minnows who are caught. We have heard that 110 cases have been referred by the Stock Exchange Council to the Department of Trade and Industry. Of those, nine led to prosecutions and six to convictions.

As the stock exchange said, five of them were "small fry". The big men in those deals are already well protected and covered. It is the naive and the novices who tend to be caught.

The Government have contributed to the peculiar new morality of people's capitalism by the way in which they have dealt with privatisation. As has been pointed out, thousands of multiple applications were made during the BT launch. Shortly after that launch, Kleinwort Benson warned that action for fraud would be taken against those making multiple applications. Where are those prosecutions? There are 7,000 multiple applications on record, not counting those that were not found. Where are those threatened prosecutions, and who has been prosecuted over the 6,000 such deals in relation to the Trustee Savings Bank?

The Minister said that the Government regarded insider dealing as being pernicious to markets. He then described it as a pernicious offence. No hon. Member would deny that it damages the City's standing; nor would the City deny it. But having passed a law in June 1980 for which the Minister claims credit, the Government sat back for the next six years and ignored their own law. They then feign surprise when others follow their example. Small wonder that the financial page of *The Guardian* said that the Department of Trade and Industry was

> "a bit like a black hole when it comes to dealing with insider trading cases. Dozen of cases go in, but nothing comes out."

Our indictment of the Government is that the present situation is clearly the direct consequence of years of their own indolence and indifference.

6.51 pm

Mr. Howard: The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) and several other hon. Members suggested that certain developments in the City might increase the incidence of insider dealing. That may be so, but two factors may work substantially to decrease the incidence of insider dealing.

The first is the amount of information that is becoming available, along with the new technology in the market place, which will shed even more light on suspicious movements in share prices and suspicious patterns in share dealings and make it easier for the regulatory authorities to identify and detect insider dealing.

The second is that powers have now been in effect for two weeks or so which, it was admitted during the passage of the Financial Services Bill, are draconian and sweeping. They should enable us, as never before, to detect, investigate and punish instances of that offence when and where they occur.

One remarkable feature of the debate is that neither of the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen suggested an additional power that should be added to the battery of powers available to us in order to deal with this mischief. However, Back Benchers have made suggestions, and I shall use the few remaining minutes to deal with some of them.

The first hon. Member to make any constructive suggestion was the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore). He made two suggestions. I pay tribute to him, incidentally, because he recognised the difficulties involved in pinning down, with sufficient evidence, what is needed to establish the criminal burden of proof in such matters. That is a difficulty, and that is why we have taken these additional powers.

The first suggestion of the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch was that own-account dealing should be banned by those involved in the City. The second suggestion was that further steps should be taken to try to identify the beneficial ownership of certain shares and investment companies.

The first suggestion deserves to be treated seriously. However, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) that it would not work. We do not need more rules, because we have the criminal law and the power to bring people to book. If people are prepared to break the criminal law, nothing would be achieved by introducing more rules that would not have the force of the criminal law in an attempt to bring them to book.

The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch referred to identifying the beneficial ownership of certain shares and investment companies. A good deal can be done, and we have already taken additional powers in response to the amendment moved in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo). They will go a long way towards enabling us to track down those who have the beneficial ownership of shares and are responsible for dealings.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) asked a question about resources. They should not be a constraint in the investigation of such cases. On 10 January 1986 the then Secretary of State announced a substantial increase in the amount of resources devoted by the Department to countering fraud. Indeed, 195 new posts are being created over a two-year period in those parts of the Department dealing with investigation and prosecution work. The extra staff will be available, if required, to assist with insider dealing investigations under the Financial Services Act 1986. In addition, we now have the power, recently used, to appoint external inspectors with wide-ranging powers to investigate insider dealings.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield also mooted the possibility of introducing a civil offence of insider dealing. I doubt whether that would substantially increase the efficacy of the powers available to us. I believe that the criminal nature of the offence now on the statute book and the possibility of imprisonment as a punishment for it represents the greatest possible deterrent. I do not believe that anyone would want to contemplate imprisonment without the satisfaction of the criminal burden of proof.

As I have said, we have gone a long way towards modifying the normal standards of the criminal law and substantially eliminating the right of silence in order to do all that we can to increase the prospect of effective enforcement of the criminal law.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester made two points. The first point was argued at considerable length in Committee on the Financial Services Bill. He asked for the powers to be capable of transfer to the SIB. He did not persuade me of the importance of necessity of that step during the passage of that Bill, and I fear that he has not persuaded me tonight. These draconian powers need to be exercised by an authority that is directly accountable to the House. That is why it is important that they should be retained by the Secretary of State.

However, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester about the importance of international co-operation. This is a most important matter. Although we have made a useful start, I freely recognise that more needs to be done. Information is the key to progress. That is why the sharing of information is at the heart of the memorandum of understanding that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently signed with the SEC and the Commodities Futures Trading Commission in the United States. We hope to build on that start in international co-operation.

To that end, we shall hold a conference next week in this country which will be attended by the regulators of most of the important countries in the world which have big financial centres. We shall be seeking to make substantial progress with them in extending international co-operation. Insider dealing will be high on the agenda at that conference. I am delighted to say that the Swiss have accepted an invitation to attend the conference. We shall be putting our concerns to them and seeking to obtain their co-operation in dealing with abuses and taking effective action.

As I have said, both sides of the House agree that insider dealing is harmful and unfair and ought to be stamped out. The Opposition have been careful not to claim that they could eradicate it completely. No system of regulation could prevent fraud completely, but there can be no doubt whatever that the Government have acted to take the powers which are necessary to deal effectively with this mischief. Those powers have been put into effect. It is on that basis that I ask the House to support the amendment and to reject the Opposition motion.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 177, Noes 261.

Division No. 15] **[7 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Howells, Geraint

Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Fisher and
Mr. Derek Fatchett.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Staml'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger

Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Herts'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Question on amendments) and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the financial services sector on its contribution to invisible earnings, to growth in employment and on the efficient and effective way it raised £6 billion for industry and commerce in 1985; congratulates Her Majesty's Government and the financial services sector on their prompt and effective action against insider dealing; and reaffirms its support for self-regulation within the statutory framework of the Financial Services Act as the most effective system of regulating the City.

Fuel Poverty

7.14 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to move,

That this House, noting the huge increase in deaths from hypothermia and cold related conditions that occurred last winter, and noting the extreme restrictiveness and arbitrariness of the Government's proposed cold weather payments scheme which is likely to offer only miniscule aid to only one in eight pensioners only once in five years, calls on the Government to guarantee all poor pensioners a £5 a week winter premium throughout the winter months, while at the same time protecting all households with persons at risk from fuel disconnection and instituting a major programme of home insulation which will both create jobs and conserve energy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I inform the House that the amendment standing in the names of the Prime Minister and others has been selected by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Meacher: This is the third time in three years that we have had this debate, and it is extremely regrettable that it is necessary yet again. It is necessary because the Government have it within their power at this time of year to prevent the needless deaths of many elderly people from hypothermia and cold-related conditions. Yet in the past two winters the Government have manifestly and tragically failed to exercise that power.

This debate is intended as a warning to the Government that the roll call of preventable deaths must never be allowed to happen again, and that means that the Government's latest cold weather payments scheme must be changed drastically while there is still time.

In the first three months of 1984, nearly 400 people died from hypothermia, according to the official figures. The Government introduced for the next winter exceptionally severe weather payments, which were triggered by temperature readings at a number of weather stations. The scheme was a fiasco. In the first three months of 1985, 630 died from hypothermia. The Government changed the system to allow discretion to adjudication officers locally to determine exceptionally severe weather. That, too, was a fiasco. In the first three months of 1986, 578 died of hypothermia. Three weeks into the bitterly cold spell at the start of this year, fewer than half of the 450 local DHSS offices considered that the weather was exceptionally severe.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's concern, but is he aware of the statement by Lord Marshall, the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board, that if we phase out nuclear power the price of electricity will rise between 15 and 20 per cent. and that during the very periods of which the hon. Gentleman is talking Lord Marshall could not guarantee continuity of supply? Does the hon. Gentleman favour phasing out nuclear power? If so, what does he think that that will do for hypothermia among the elderly?

Mr. Meacher: That was an unwise intervention. First, the Government have not ordered one new power station, either nuclear or coal-fired, in the past seven years. Secondly, anyone who regards Lord Marshall as an independent witness to the relative costs of electricity as between nuclear and coal-fired power stations is risking a great deal of his intellectual reputation.

The figures that I have quoted greatly understate the ravages of a bitterly cold winter. Many extra deaths occur

[Mr. Meacher]

because of cold-related respiratory conditions such as bronchial pneumonia or circulatory conditions, such as heart attacks or strokes, as well as through hypothermia. In Britain there are about 50,000 extra deaths in the autumn and winter compared with the number of deaths in the previous six months.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is aware of the winter which produced the highest number of excess deaths? That winter was 1978-79, when he was a DHSS Minister. Perhaps he will explain that.

Mr. Meacher: I do not have the figures in front of me, but every year for the past decade—I am not making a party political point, and the hon. Gentleman is unwise to enter into that—there have been between 40,000 and 60,000 excess deaths in the autumn and winter compared with the number in the spring and summer. It makes little difference which Government are in office.

There need be nothing inevitable about more deaths occurring in the autumn and winter. In Canada and Sweden the winters are longer than ours and much more severe, yet there are almost no variations in infant mortality or old-age mortality between the summer and winter months. If that can be achieved in those countries, why can it not be achieved here?

Hundreds of pensioners will die this winter because the steps that the Government are taking to prevent that happening are pathetically inadequate. Indeed, they are almost derisory. Under the Government's new scheme, severe weather payments will be made only when the temperature falls below minus 1·5 deg C over seven days from Monday to Sunday, as if the weather were neatly packaged into convenient batches that nicely coincided with DHSS office hours. If that formula had been in operation last winter, which was the coldest for 40 years, no less than half the country would have been excluded. In February, when an estimated 7,000 elderly people died from the cold, the average temperature was minus 0·9 deg C. Even that bitterly cold month would not have triggered the minus 1·5 deg C threshold. Only three out of 14 weather stations in Scotland would have triggered the benefit.

Large areas of Wales, the south-west and the north-east of England would have got nothing. Pensioners in Greater London, Glasgow, Sheffield and other major cities would have been entitled to the extra payment for only one week, even though in the shambles of last winter's scheme, the severe weather payments were declared for three weeks or more in those areas. In other words, although the payments made last winter were, by all accounts, paltry, inefficient, arbitrary and delayed, it is likely that even fewer households will be eligible to claim them this winter.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. John Major): Although the 0·9 per cent. figure quoted by the hon. Gentleman is an interesting one, I fear that he is mistaken. The figure of minus 0·9 deg C has been widely misunderstood, and it is clear that the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood it as well. *[Interruption.]* If the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) will listen, I shall correct his hon. Friend's fault. That figure is an average one and was recorded at several weather stations in central England only. It is not the average for the whole country. As the hon. Member for Oldham, West is well aware, the essence of the exceptionally severe weather payments scheme is to direct special help to special areas at times of special cold.

Mr. Meacher: Given the clarification that the Minister has provided, how many of the 64 areas that are covered by the present scheme would have triggered the benefit? Even bearing his point in mind, is it not the case that fewer than half of those areas would have triggered the benefit?

There are other major drawbacks to the Government's scheme. Severe weather will still be declared regionally and that will still give rise to anomalies and misunderstandings between districts. The categories of persons eligible have been sharply cut. Previously everyone claiming supplementary benefit, who qualified for a single payment, would have been eligible for an exceptionally severe weather payment. Under the present scheme only households with someone under two years of age, or over 65, or with a person who is chronically sick and disabled will qualify for help. Nobody with more than £500 in the bank will be eligible. Therefore, the great majority of poor pensioners on supplementary benefit will not be eligible.

Perhaps the most significant point is that the scheme is still not automatic in any way. It still puts the onus on the claimants to make the claims, and that will undoubtedly reduce even further the low take-up that the Government expect among pensioners.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the £500 limit is extremely mean-minded and undermines successive Governments' pleas for saving? What does £500 now amount to? We should bear in mind that many elderly people—perfectly understandably—save up for their funeral costs. They find pride and dignity in being able to be buried without having to ask their relatives to help them financially. Why should the Government penalise those people?

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend has made an important point. It may surprise Conservative Members to know that the limit might discourage elderly people from saving for their own funerals. I do not know whether that was intended, but it will be the effect. It is extremely mean to make the limit as low as £500, when it is possible for somebody to have £3,000 in the bank and still get supplementary benefit. The limit of £500 is only one sixth of that total.

By any standard, it is a pathetic little scheme, hedged around with so many petty constraints as to make the aid provided minuscule. Even on the Government's own assumptions, only about one in every eight pensioners is likely to be able to claim payment once every five years. If a few do manage to break through the bureaucratic thicket, their reward will be precisely £5, which is about enough to heat one room for a couple of days.

There is a foreign proverb that says "The mountains are in labour and they bring forth a mouse", and that just about sums up the scheme.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No, I shall not because I wish to make further progress.

The absurd inadequacies of the proposals result from the Government having the wrong objective at the outset. The Government never asked the relevant questions,

which are how we can vanquish hypothermia, and what level of extra heating payments, plus home insulation, is necessary to do that.

The Government started from a completely different premise. They made the crucial political decision that the payment will be limited to places of "exceptionally" severe weather. That is their word. The Government continued by making the administrative assumption that exceptionally severe weather should mean that claims are made only about once every five years. In paragraph 23 of their consultative paper, the Government say:

"The purpose is to set up a system which on the basis of historical data would imply that help over a significant part of the country overall would be expected to be given about once in five years over a longer period of years."

In other words, help will not be given according to what is needed, but only to claimants who happen to fit the mean and niggardly political and financial constraints that were laid down centrally.

Paragraph 24 makes clear that: it was in order to secure that claims can only be made once in every five years that the trigger point was fixed at minus 1·5 deg C. That was not an accident; it was done deliberately and it was designed to ensure that only a tiny number of pensioners received payment, that they did so only infrequently, and that if and when they got the payment, it would be minute.

Mr. Hickmet *rose*——

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: No, I shall not give way. I have already given way to the hon. Member for Teignbridge.

I am, of course, perfectly well aware of the Government's reply to my case. Exceptionally severe weather payments are not the primary weapon in the battle against hypothermia. The Government say that that role is played by the supplementary benefit scale rates, including a fuel element, plus the weekly heating addition. We have heard that defence many times, and it is deeply flawed on two grounds.

First, whatever claims Ministers make about the scale rates and heating additions, more people, and not fewer, died of hypothermia in the past two winters than for a decade. Therefore, the scale rates and heating additions were inadequate to keep people warm, and there is no way that the piffling little extra of exceptionally severe weather payments could be regarded as compensating for that fundamental inadequacy.

Secondly, the heating additions and other heating payments have been cut by the Government in many cases, and I hope that the Minister will have the grace to admit that. Under the available scale margin rule, pensioners, long-term disabled people and single parents have had their weekly heating addition cut by £52 per year by the Government. Moreover, in August 1985 the Government abolished central heating additions for all new claimants —a benefit worth £228 a year at current rates.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on the specific point of abolition?

Mr. Meacher: No, I should make progress because I have several points still to make.

There is still worse to come. Under the Fowler Social Security Act, when income support is introduced in 1988 additional help with heating costs will be abolished by the Government. We put down an amendment in Committee which would have introduced heating premiums for accommodation that is difficult to heat and for expensive heating systems on estates. But the Government voted it down. Therefore, it does not lie with the Government, when confronted with the derisory nature of the exceptionally severe weather scheme, to fall back on the heating addition. Their record on that, too, is pretty culpable.

Keeping warm is not only a matter of being able to pay for enough fuel; it is also about retaining heat in well insulated buildings. Again, the Government's record has been——

Mr. Hickmet: What did the hon. Gentleman's party do?

Mr. Meacher: We did not do what I am just about to describe.

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: The Government's record on that front, too, has been abysmal as well as short-sighted. Resources being invested in better insulation and in heating measures have declined by 50 per cent. since 1979. In other words, in answer to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet), what we provided for those purposes was 50 per cent. higher than it is now. Those on benefit can obtain grants, but they are for draught-proofing only.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South) Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No, I shall not give way because I want to make progress.

Now the Government are proposing to end those grants when the Fowler Social Security Act is implemented in 1986 and the social fund introduced. Any assistance will then be subject to the discretion of the local offices and the state of a cash-limited budget for the social fund.

Such parsimony over insulation and draught-proofing is surely counter-productive, and anyone should be able to see that. It is a false economy if ever there was one. Labour Members believe that increased investment in insulation —that is what we achieved in the 1970s—and energy efficiency, would not only bring greater comfort and reduce fuel poverty, it would also provide for much better management of the taxpayers' resources — something that Conservative Members are often so concerned about.

Therefore, I hope that the Government will reconsider their reprehensible decision to end single payments for draught-proofing materials and hot water tank projects, and not allow the commendable work of neighbourhood energy action, which has draught-proofed the homes of nearly 250,000 pensioners and others, and provided work for over 5,000 people on the community programme, to grind to a halt.

Only a major insulation programme can end the disgrace whereby year after year Government policy condemns elderly people to live at temperatures prohibited by law for younger and fitter workers. The Department of Health and Social Security, in one of its leaflets, which I note was later withdrawn — presumably because of embarrassment—stated that a living room temperature of 70 deg F is necessary to keep people warm in winter. Yet repeated surveys have found that nine out of 10 old people have living room temperatures at or below 68 deg and more than half were below 60·8 deg, which is the minimum temperature specified in the Offices, Shops and Railway

[Mr. Meacher]

Premises Act 1963. If that is intolerable for young people, it is scandalous that it is permitted with impunity for old people in Britain.

For all those reasons the Labour party believes that a two-part programme is now urgently needed to resolve the problem. First, we believe that the only way to ensure guaranteed help with heating is by providing extra payments on a regular automatic basis each week throughout the winter months. Therefore, we propose a £5 a week extra winter premium throughout the winter for all pensioners on supplementary benefit, plus another million who, while not on supplementary benefit, are little better off.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. The Labour party's proposed scheme of £5 per week does not take into account two main factors. One is that the further north one goes, the longer and harsher the winters are, and the second is that it costs perhaps 20 per cent. more to heat a house in Glasgow than in Bristol. Does the hon. Gentleman not think it unfair that those who live further north should be given the same as those who live in the warmer south?

Mr. Meacher: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but an extra £5 a week, payable over 12 or 13 weeks, is a considerable extra sum of money which will meet the problem, even for those in the north, let alone for those in the south. It was not designed for those in the south and to penalise those in the north. It will be adequate right across the country.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Meacher: I shall give way for the last time.

Mr. Field: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. I hope that Conservative Members heard my hon. Friend say that this is the last time that he will give way.

What my hon. Friend has just said is of crucial importance to Labour Members because we hope, after the next election, to be on the Government Benches. Is my hon. Friend's pledge of the £5 increase on a par with the increase that we have given to the rate of national insurance pensions?

Mr. Meacher: Yes. There is no question but that that is a commitment and it stands alongside the £5 and £8 by which we shall increase the pension, together with the change in the upratings to restore the link with earnings which the Government have taken away and thereby deprived single pensioners of approximately £8 a week and married pensioners of £12 a week. All of those are firm commitments. If the Government wish to know where the extra money will come from, I suggest that they could pre-empt us by using some of the extra £4·5 billion that they will somehow no doubt be able to find this year for pre-electoral tax bribes.

We also believe that payments must be combined with a major programme to improve home insulation and to increase energy efficiency. There are few instances where the social and economic benefits of job creation, energy conservation and pensioners' health and comfort are so readily fully and brought together. It would massively reduce the ill health generated by damp cold conditions and the nation's housing stock could be greatly improved. Therefore, we call upon the Government in our motion to adopt the programme for the battle against hypothermia and the scourge of preventable death in old age. If the Government will not do it, the next Labour Government will.

7.38 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. John Major): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"welcomes the considerable improvement under this Government in support with heating costs for vulnerable groups through the supplementary benefit scale rates, the weekly heating additions and the simpler and better targeted arrangements for help during periods of exceptionally cold weather; supports the comprehensive action taken to improve energy efficiency in the home; and applauds the beneficial effect of low inflation on the costs of fuel, which is of immense benefit to all consumers but most especially those on low incomes."

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has just demonstrated most graphically that fuel policy is an emotive matter. He has demonstrated equally graphically that he has not lost the knack of making expensive speeches. I shall come to the costings of his latest promises this evening in a few moments.

The hon. Gentleman has also made it clear that this is a particularly important area and that it is difficult for it to be the subject of rational debate. It is, by its nature, the sort of subject that can be misunderstood, misinterpreted and even twisted into a grotesque parody of what the Government have done. It would be easy for the debate to fall into such exchanges, but in a few moments I propose to deal at length with some of the important underlying aspects on which the hon. Gentleman touched in the course of his remarks.

First — and unusually, because this is not my favoured reading—I should like to refer to a statement issued by the hon. Member for Oldham, West on 18 September, in which he trailed his winter premium of £5 a week. He said:

"We will also establish a winter premium of £5 a week for the months between mid December and March for pensioners on low incomes to help cover winter fuel bills and" — listen to this—

"prevent any repetition of the 16,000 extra deaths from hypothermia that scarred this country last winter."

Mr. Meacher: Quite right.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman says, "Quite right." He said that there were 16,000 extra deaths from hypothermia, yet just a few minutes ago he said that there were only 400 or 500. The hon. Gentleman is inept with his figures. On 18 September he said that there were 16,000 extra deaths, but he said something quite different a few moments ago.

Mr. Meacher: I did not say anything different. Perhaps the Minister would care to listen to me . I made it perfectly clear that the deaths from cold in winter are not just those where hypothermia is primarily mentioned on the death certificate, but where broncho-pneumonia, heart attacks and strokes, precipitated by the bitterly cold conditions, also led to death. Those deaths add up to 16,000 a year.

Mr. Major: As a matter of fact, they do not. I am very curious about the statement made by the hon. Gentleman on 18 September in which he said that there were 16,000 extra deaths from hypothermia. The hon. Gentleman has

now concluded that what he said on 18 September was utterly wrong. I am grateful that he has put that clearly on the record. The 16,000 extra deaths as a result of hypothermia is nonsense, and the hon. Gentleman knows that.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Castleford and Pontefract): Stop playing about with figures.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman has asked me to stop playing about. He clearly does not like facts. That is the trouble with the Labour party. It is very fond of hyperbole, but, by golly, it does not like facts, and that shows.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West referred rather more accurately to the true figures of deaths related either primarily or as a secondary condition to hypothermia. He said that the position had become materially worse. In 1984-85 there were 638 deaths in which hypothermia was mentioned by the doctor in some form or other on the death certificate. Last year there were 634—slightly less. The average is 543. As my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) said earlier in his telling intervention, the highest figure in the past 10 years was in 1978-79 when there were 725 deaths. I am not inclined to listen to too many lectures from the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West spent some time debating not the broad measure of this extraordinarily ill-drafted motion, but the details of the exceptionally cold weather regime. I do not object to that because that is an important point. However, I would like to quote what the hon. Gentleman said on 25 February 1986. Addressing his remarks to my hon. Friend the then Minister for Social Security, he said:

"Will he . . . send out a circular to all DHSS offices to ensure that all the very elderly and the severely disabled on supplementary benefit get an immediate extra cash grant of at least £5 a week for heating while the severe cold spell lasts?" —[*Official Report*, 25 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. 799.]

That was the proposition. That is what we have done in the regulations, and now the hon. Gentleman is wriggling and changing his view.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West also spoke about the £500 single payment capital limit, and he called that unreasonable. However, the hon. Gentleman has a very selective memory. It was equally the case, when he was a Minister in the DHSS, that single payments were not paid to people with sufficient capital. In those days, of course, the capital was not £500, but £300, and before that, while the hon. Gentleman was a Minister, it was £200. I am therefore not inclined to accept lectures from the hon. Gentleman about that.

Mr. Meacher: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Major: In just a minute.

The hon. Gentleman also said that we are stopping help with heating costs. He knows, because he sat through all —or nearly all—the proceedings on the Social Security Act 1986, that the income support scheme will sweep up all that money and direct it. He knows that it is not disappearing back to the Treasury, despite all that he said earlier. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene, he may now do so.

Mr. Meacher: The Minister has made three false statements. The social fund will not sweep up all the money.

Mr. Major: I did not refer to the social fund.

Mr. Meacher: I thought that the Minister did mention the social fund. That will be cash limited.

With regard to the Labour party's record, I must make a crucial point that influences the issue about heating. Under the Labour Government, the pension increased by 20 per cent. in real terms. That is far more than all the increases in heating addition brought about by this Government.

Mr. Major: I fear that the hon. Gentleman has missed the point upon which he seems especially defensive. He also missed out the pensions fiddle of 1976 and the years in which the Labour Government did not pay the Christmas bonus. The hon. Gentleman's memory appears to be amazingly selective.

Many observers of such debates over the past year or so might well assume—and they would have assumed this, too, from what the hon. Member for Oldham, West has said—that exceptionally severe weather payments represent the most important help available to meet fuel costs. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not so, and I conceded that. An observer may feel that supplementary benefit rates had fallen so much in value as to present beneficiaries with a stark choice between food and heat. However, the hon. Member for Oldham, West also knows that that is not so.

An observer might also feel, after hearing the hon. Gentleman, that the extra help through heating additions had also been reduced. That is not so. The observer might feel that fuel prices were soaring out of control, as they did when the Labour party was in government, yet that is not so now. The truth is that help with fuel and advice on keeping warm economically is running at record levels.

This evening the hon. Member for Oldham, West resurrected from his speech on 18 September his proposals for a winter premium for pensioners. Before I consider that in depth——

Mr. Hickmet: My hon. Friend will have heard the response made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) to the question of phasing out nuclear power and what that would do to the continuity and cost of supply of electricity. Will my hon. Friend direct his attention to the position if Mr. Arthur Scargill had succeeded in his attempts in 1984 and 1985, and tell us what that would have done to electricity prices? At the same time, will my hon. Friend consider the level and the amount by which electricity prices have risen in the past 18 months or two years under this Government?

Mr. Major: I hesitate to speculate on the subject of Arthur Scargill, not least as he seems substantially to have disappeared from a position of great influence in the public eye—and long may he remain without such influence. I rather suspect that that view is shared more warmly on the Opposition Benches, for understandable reasons, than on the Conservative Benches.

My hon. Friend is correct to make the assertion that fuel prices these days are near stable, whereas they were anything but near stable during the period of the Labour Administration. I suspect that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Energy may touch on that point when he replies.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West raised a worrying issue about which I share his concern. He referred to the excess number of winter deaths that have perplexed successive Governments for years. Contained within that

[Mr. Major]

issue is the question of hypothermia. In order to define excess winter mortality over five-year periods, I must explain that the percentage increase in the number of deaths in the January to March quarter is set against the number of deaths in the July to September quarter. That figure has fallen from 68·2 per cent. in 1951 to 1955 to 29·3 per cent. over the past five years. That has been a steady decline, with the exception of a slight increase from 28·2 per cent. in 1971 to 1975 to 33·6 per cent. between 1976 to 1980. The hon. Gentleman will recall that well because he was a Minister for part of the period covered by the figures.

The real problem, then as now—I agree with the hon. Gentleman about this—is not hypothermia, but the additional deaths from all causes, particularly heart disease, strokes and chest infections, which tend to occur in winter. It is a long-standing problem that our excess winter mortality rate is higher than that in other countries with severe winters, such as the United States of America and Sweden. Governments of both parties have faced that problem for 30 years, and the position seems to be improving. We all welcome that.

Within that problem lies the vexed, but smaller, problem of hypothermia. It is now generally recognised, certainly by experts, that the number of deaths where hypothermia is recorded on the death certificate, whether as the main cause of death or otherwise—generally it is otherwise—is not in any way an accurate indication of the extent of deaths associated with winter weather. I should point out that in recent years there has been no trend either upwards or downwards in the number of deaths where hypothermia was mentioned on the death certificate. I gave the figures when I intervened a few moments ago.

There are important issues at stake, and this evening I do not intend simply to bandy statistics across the Dispatch Box. I intend to address the underlying public health problem. It is not as easy as the hon. Gentleman implied to find the root cause of the problem and how it can best be tackled. Several matters are self-evident. Obviously, it is important that elderly people should be able to heat their homes properly, and shortly I shall remind the House of the steps that the Government have taken to enable them to do so. But there is certainly a good deal more to it than that.

Some hon. Members may have observed a recent interesting article in the *British Medical Journal* by Professor Keatinge from the London hospital. He is a distinguished and acknowledged international expert on cold-related diseases. He unearthed a curious conundrum: he found that the mortality rate among a sample of elderly people living in centrally heated warden-controlled accommodation rose in winter by a percentage similar to that among the general population. That is curious and in sharp contrast to the underlying theme of the hon. Gentleman's attack on the Government.

On the basis of what we know at present, no one can be sure—neither the hon. Gentleman, me, nor even Profesor Keatinge—why excess winter mortality is more prevalent in the United Kingdom than in other countries. Nor can we be entirely sure why the position has been improving recently. It seems that a number of factors may be involved. I am absolutely clear that we need to do further work to reach a better understanding of what I acknowledge is a serious and complex issue. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is actively considering how that can best be carried forward, and we hope to be able to say someting more about that shortly.

Mr. Frank Field: The Minister compared the deaths of those in warden-controlled accommodation with those outside. In my constituency one gains access to such accommodation only if one is severely ill. In that case, would one not expect the death rate to be higher there than among the normal population? Does he agree that that may be the balancing factor rather than the fact that one person may have more heat and another less?

Mr. Major: There are a variety of explanations. It is not invariably or necessarily the circumstances that the hon. Gentleman describes that determine admission to warden-controlled accommodation. In my constituency there are premises where that would not be the case. I sought not to make a specific point, but to illustrate the perplexities sorrounding this difficult problem.

The scale of assistance to vulnerable groups, which is available through the social security system, is central to our debate. There have been significant improvements, but, before I turn to them, I must stress the most important point. The primary help for claimants with their heating costs, now and under the Labour Government, is through their regular weekly benefit and specific heating additions. Since 1978, the value of the scale rates has risen by 6 per cent.

There have also been significant improvements in the value of heating additions. We have consolidated and extended automatic entitlement to heating additions to the most vulnerable groups. Families on supplementary benefit with children under five are guaranteed a heating addition of £2·20 a week. Pensioner householders aged 65 or over are now guaranteed the same addition, as are all sick and disabled householders on the long-term supplementary benefit rate. Pensioners over 85 get a higher rate of £5·55 a week, and that higher rate is also paid automatically to those receiving attendance allowance and mobility allowance.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West will know that the number of recipients of those disability benefits has increased significantly under this Government. As that general rise has occurred, so, as a direct consequence, has support for heating for those on low incomes. None of those improvements rated a proper mention in the hon. Gentleman's catalogue of misery, although every one is important and germane. One is bound to ask whether the hon. Gentleman was misinformed or was seeking to misinform.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Minister give a guarantee to the House that all those receiving heating addition from the supplementary benefit system will not lose out when supplementary benefit is replaced by the new system of income support?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman knows the pledges that we have given on transitional protection, that we have not yet determined the rate for the income support scheme and that we will not do so until next year's uprating. Therefore, he deliberately asked a question which he knows cannot be answered now. The hon. Gentleman cannot ignore the fact that on the latest available information over 2,750,000 supplementary benefit householders now receive a heating addition of some sort.

More important — the hon. Member for Oldham, West may care to listen to this — some 90 per cent. of all pensioners benefited, compared with 71 per cent. in 1978. That is a significant improvement in recent years. Moreover, the value of those additions in 1984-85 was £400 million — a vast increase on anything available under the Labour Government, even when one discounts inflation. Against that background the hon. Gentleman's charges against the Government are ludicrous. They simply do not stand up to a moment's examination. He spoke at length about new arrangements for single payments in periods of exceptionally cold weather, wholly ignoring that they substantially meet what he specifically asked my right hon. Friend for last year.

I shall start with a proposition that neither the hon. Member for Oldham, West, nor the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who is poised on springs at this very moment, will dispute for a second. Over the years the various systems for making payments have been contentious and unsuccessful. There is no dispute across the House about that. That is why we have tried to introduce a system which makes sense, judged by three criteria.

First, there must be clear rules for help. For that reason we propose an objective test of absolute coldness as the basic qualifying rule. I agree with the view expressed, particularly by hon. Members who represent Scottish constituencies, that nobody wants to return to a system which relies on local subjective judgments. I hoped to hear the hon. Member for Oldham, West welcome that, but I hoped in vain.

Secondly, there must be certainty and speed of response. Claimants must know quickly when a period of exceptionally cold weather has been declared and for how much they will qualify. This new system should achieve that. In addition, we have provided for flat-rate payments rather than for the production of a fuel bill some time later. That should be speedier and simpler, and I would have been grateful if the hon. Gentleman had welcomed it.

Thirdly, we have concentrated help on the groups of people—the elderly, the sick, the disabled and the very young — on whom most of the concern about risks during periods of bad weather have centred. It is precisely because of our concerns about those vulnerable groups in exceptionally cold weather that we have restricted the broad entitlement and sharpened the availability to those most in need, who are likely to receive more than they would have done under the previous arrangements.

Let me remind the Government's critics of the final conclusion of the Social Security Advisory Committee—my right hon. Friend's independent advisers. The committee gave general support to the main elements of the proposals, and said:

"The proposals submitted to us represent a significant improvement on the previous schemes for exceptionally severe weather payments, in terms of simplicity, comprehensibility and certainty of payment."

Mr. Wilson: Does the Minister agree that the vulnerable groups about which he has spoken need to buy heat when the temperature declines? Under his new scheme they will not be aware whether they qualify until seven days have elapsed. His proposed scheme is marginally better than the old one, which discriminates against cold areas like Scotland, but does he not agree that the scheme is so fundamentally flawed as to be useless?

Mr. Major: I do not accept that. It is true that one must wait for seven days, but the hon. Gentleman will recall that previously one had to wait until a bill was received. Then it had to be determined whether it was materially higher than in the previous year and documents had to be produced to prove that. The money was paid substantially later. The new scheme is a material improvement.

Mr. Frank Field: I am sure that there is widespread support for the view that such a scheme is crucial, that people know when they are eligible and that the money should be paid quickly rather than oblige people to wait months for the bill. People also want to know how many will benefit and by how much. Has the Minister estimated for the Treasury or for any other Government Department the numbers of people who will gain? Will there be more or fewer beneficiaries than under the present scheme, and will those who are eligible gain more or less than they are currently paid?

Mr. Major: If fewer people are eligible, each person will receive more and we expect the cost to be broadly the same at it was last year.

Mr. Frank Field *rose*——

Mr. Major: I shall not give way again. The hon. Member for Oldham, West is fulminating about this being a three-hour debate and I have spent most of my time giving way to his hon. Friends. We released with the documentation a breakdown of what the position would have been last year under this scheme. I think I shall now take the hon. Gentleman's near silent fulminations to heart and move on. We do not yet have final figures, but the amount is about £15 million, which is eight times higher than it was four years ago.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East) *rose*——

Mr. Major: The hon. Member for Oldham, West is muttering about this being a three-hour debate. I have some sympathy with him about that, and for that reason I will not give way again. If he is dissatisfied, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East can take the matter up with his hon. Friend.

In the context of these proposals, the hon. Gentleman might bear in mind that the Social Security Advisory Committee supported an absolute standard of coldness, recognised the reasonableness of the Government's approach, supported the principle of a fixed seven-day period, recognised that the system of linking local offices with meteorological office data is a clear improvement on previous methods, and welcomed the introduction of a system of standard payments. It is a shame that the hon. Member for Oldham, West neglected to mention all of those points in his speech. The Social Security Advisory Committee cannot be considered an uncritical supporter of the Government.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West set out proposals for a winter premium——

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Major: I have told the hon. Gentleman why I will not give way. He can take up the point with his hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West.

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The Minister has said that he will not give way.

Mr. Major: The winter premium scheme outlined by the hon. Member for Oldham, West is expensive. We do not have full details, but it looks as though it would cost about £150 million or more, depending on precise assumptions about how the scheme would work. The hon. Gentleman was somewhat coy about the priority for these proposals. As I understand the matter, it was not part of the Opposition's original list of absolute priorities in their September statements. But things appear to have changed. In statements to Neighbourhood Energy Action and at a recent conference on welfare rights activities, the hon. Gentleman seemed to be making clear that this was an absolute priority. I hope that he will now clarify that. Is it an absolute pledge? If it is, it is another ring on the cash register of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). Perhaps it is a pious hope, in which case it is deeply cynical. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman or his right hon. Friend will make it clear.

It is apparently to be a system purely for pensioners on supplementary benefit and widows and pensioners "living on the margins of poverty". No mention is made of the needs of disabled people or families with children. Are they to be forgotten in the hon. Gentleman's brand new world? Has the hon. Gentleman considered how his scheme would be operated? He is effectively asking for a further uprating each winter for pensioners and a substantial extra burden on hard-pressed local DHSS office staff or an additional cost for extra staff to administer it. Moreover, he does that at the same time as he chairs press conferences of the departmental trade unions complaining about staff pressures. It is curious that he should take both those views at the same time.

Under the present benefit system, which the hon. Gentleman seems to want to retain, the effect would be that large numbers of pensioners would be moved on and off benefit and housing benefit supplement just for winter. That is a certain recipe for total confusion and the hon. Gentleman should know that.

The feature of our reforms which has been most welcomed is the proposal that assessment of housing costs and living expenses should be based on a common test of need. Is the hon. Gentleman abandoning that principle that he previously supported? If not, the logic of his proposal is that each winter local authorities should increase housing benefit or accommodate the value of the winter premium. The hon. Gentleman is in danger of re-creating the problem that led to the creation of housing benefit supplement.

There is a further bizarre aspect that has an odd and unwelcome effect for pensioners. Let me illustrate — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman may be wholly wrong about that. The current rate for a single pensioner is £37·90. Let us take a charitable assumption, that inflation under a Labour Government would be only 5 per cent. If benefits were uprated by that amount, the pension would be increased to £39·80 at the April uprating. But if the pensioner had been receiving a winter premium of £5 which was withdrawn at the same time, the effect would be that benefit would actually go down by £3·10 at the time of the uprating. I would not wish to be the Secretary of State who tried to explain to a gathering of pensioners why, when benefits were increased, their girocheques should be less. Fortunately for the hon. Gentleman, he will never be required to do so, although I know that he has some experience of pensioners shouting at him.

There is much else relevant to this debate that deserves more attention than time permits, including perhaps the hon. Member for Dumfermline, East. I utterly reject the Opposition charges against the Government's record, but I do share with them a concern about excess winter mortality and the need to keep elderly people warm.

We have set in hand a range of measures to promote energy efficiency. There has been a major expansion in community insulation projects that has insulated and draught-proofed over 200,000 homes of pensioners, the disabled and others on low incomes. The costs of that have been borne by the Government through the Departments of Energy, Environment, Employment and Social Security.

Above all, there has been a substantial improvement in supplementary benefit rates, in heating additions and in the targeting of cold weather payments. We have an impressive record over recent years, far better than any previous Labour Government achieved, and we need no lectures from the Opposition about how to care for the elderly. When my hon. Friends vote on this amendment, they will clearly show the hon. Member for Oldham, West what they think of his motion.

8.8 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The speeches from both Front Benches reinforce my view that it is extremely difficult to conduct debates about excess winter mortality and the perplexing difficulties of the statistics about hypothermia. I accept that there are problems in exactly equating excess winter mortality, about which the Minister spoke, directly with poverty, although there are some important links. There is a public health aspect to the problem related to hypothermia and it requires sober and long-term reflection.

As the basis for my speech, I should like to look not just at the number of deaths which, of course, are important and must be attended to, but at the far more widespread problem of people who do not die because they cannot heat their homes adequately, but nevertheless suffer severe restrictions in their living standards. Some of them have to stay in bed for long periods during the day simply because they cannot heat their homes. That is a much more rational target for the Government, because there are real problems involved in curing the cause of hypothermia.

On the severe weather payments to which the Opposition's motion refers, I understand the Government's reason for introducing the new scheme and the changes that will be involved. I welcomed some of the changes, and I said so at the time. However, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was right to say that the scheme is too restrictive. The Minister said that the scheme will cost about £15 million.

I may recommend my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the Opposition's motion, but if I do that at the end of the debate it will be not because of the costs that the Opposition's scheme involves but rather because I believe that they have made very pertinent criticisms of the present Government policies, one of which relates directly to the new proposals for severe weather payments. The Government's scheme is too restrictive. I invite the Minister to consider extending the seven-day qualifying period and making it a rolling period so that the scheme is more flexible. That would not break the bank. It would lead to increased cost, but that cost would be manageable.

It would not be within the unmanageable realms of the Opposition's proposal for a flat rate payment of £5 to poor pensioners throughout the winter months.

The Minister should also reconsider the absolute temperature limit that has been fixed at minus 1·5 deg C. That is a very low temperature. I am a Scot and I am used to cold temperatures, but that is far too low. The Government should push it up slightly. It may not be too late for the Minister to do so. Perhaps the Minister will be able to assure the House that he will look at the way the scheme operates this year and that, if we are able to satisfy him that it is too restrictive when the results eventually become clear, he will reconsider it.

The Opposition motion also refers to fuel disconnection. I am very concerned about the operation of some of the voluntary codes of practice relating to fuel disconnection. The Government would do themselves no harm at all if they carried out a fundamental review of how these regimes are working. They have been in existence for some time, and in some places I understand that they are working reasonably well. However, there is a legitimate cause for concern about the working of this voluntary scheme in many parts of the country.

The Opposition's motion also refers to the need for home insulation. That is of fundamental importance to the long-term resolution of fuel poverty. Capital expenditure as well as revenue expenditure items must be taken into account when considering what should be done about home insulation. The Department of Energy has to be brought into the equation. The Department of the Environment is also involved. The Government have still not got their collective act together. There are difficulties over persuading departmental groups to work closely together in parallel and in sympathy with one another. New heating systems, new building standards, the fabric of buildings and insulation standards are the responsibility of the Department of the Environment. Fuel price policy and other related matters are the responsibility of the Department of Energy. Benefit levels are dealt with by the Department of Health and Social Security. However, there seems to be no proper co-ordination between the Departments. Co-ordination may be difficult to achieve, but the Government would reap considerable benefit if they applied more effort in that direction.

Some of the pilot projects that have been initiated by the fuel poverty campaign have produced real benefits. They have resulted in increased standards of insulation and in houses being built that can be heated at a cost that can be afforded. I could not afford, even on my relatively vast parliamentary salary, to heat some local authority and private houses in my constituency. These tenants and owners are actually heating fresh air. It goes straight up the lum, as they say north of the Border, and through doors and window frames that are not draught-proofed. Too many houses in my constituency — the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs looked into the matter in some depth — suffer terribly from damp. If I, as a parent, had to send a child of mine to bed in a damp mouldy bedroom, I should feel angry and that I was not doing my duty as a parent if I did not demand action to be taken. In the long term, it must make sense for the Government to increase capital investment in the infrastructure and fabric of our homes.

The Minister is too self-congratulatory. I have accused the Secretary of State on many occasions of beating his chest, and the Minister for Social Security is almost getting into that same league. I hope that his promotion does not go to his head and lead him to emulate the worst habits of his chief.

Supplementary benefit rates have increased by 6 per cent. in real terms. However, I invite the Minister to consider the equivalent increases in energy costs, particularly the cost of types of energy used by those in the low income groups. I refer to hydrocarbon fuels such as paraffin and coal. If he compares those two rates of increase, I do not believe that he will come down on the right side of the cost advantage equation. A far higher proportion of the income of the low income groups is spent on the cost of heating their homes. The Minister did not refer to that fact, but the Government ignore it at their peril.

I understand what the Government have done about heating additions and about better targeting, but the Minister did not refer to the cuts in November 1984 when the available scale margin changes were applied to heating additions. That reduced the lower rate of heating additions from £2·10 to £1·10.

Many of my constituents were hopping mad when these changes were made. Cuts were again made by not increasing the heating additions in July 1986, by as much as they should have been. Furthermore the Minister did not refer in his speech, although the hon. Member for Oldham, West mentioned it, to the cuts in the central heating scheme that have been made recently. The Government do not have a great deal to crow about.

Leaving aside statistics, the anecdotal evidence is that the low wage earning groups and claimants on supplementary benefit are having far more difficulty and are struggling far more to meet their fuel bills than they were two or three years ago.

The Government's case rests heavily on achieving a low rate of inflation. That is obviously to be welcomed and it is extremely helpful, although I wonder whether that is the direct result of the Government's policies or whether the fall in inflation would have occurred to some extent in any case.

I am worried about what will happen after 1988. The Minister aids that all these heating costs would be included in the new income support scheme. I am less confident than he is about that, but it is an academic argument. We shall not have to wait long for the new rates, but I await them with trepidation. I do not see how the Minister, using the Green Paper indicative figures, will be able to set rates of income support necessary to cover those costs. The statement he made was an important statement, and he may find that it is thrown back at him in later years. Apart from the problem of income support, which replaces and includes heating additions and other supplementary benefit rates, the Minister has yet to announce the alternative system that is to replace the draught-proofing grants that are available as single payments at the moment. Some of us are also apprehensive and await with trepidation the details of that scheme.

There are very real worries about fuel poverty, and the Government must not be complacent — I warn the Minister against that. On balance, I am in a difficult position, being between the devil and the deep blue sea. If I recommend my hon. Friends to vote for the official Opposition's motion, it will not be on the basis of the costs that are thereby implied, but simply because the Government have not done enough.

8.20 pm

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): I do not wish to follow too far the arguments of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) except to say that he made a characteristically woolly speech, presumably concocted on the back of a cigarette packet during the afternoon. It was interesting that he did not reach any conclusions, except vaguely to say that he might be supporting the official Opposition motion. He wants to have his cake and eat it, as always happens with the Liberal party. He wants to support the Opposition motion, but he does not like its financial implications. He cannot have it both ways. He has to make a hard decision. However, as his party is most unlikely ever to be in office, he will never have to make these hard decisions.

It is a sad day for the House when Her Majesty's Opposition, as part of their Supply day, prey on the fear of the elderly, and quite unreasonably have made this issue extremely political, notwithstanding that, when I intervened in his speech, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said that he did not wish to talk party politics, but then did so. Those of our constituents who will read this debate tomorrow will feel that they have been ill served by the Labour party, which is causing so much concern and discontent when the facts it uses do not add up.

I followed the Minister's speech carefully. I noted that, during the term of the Government, supplementary benefit has risen in real terms by over 6 per cent. I see that heating additions have been extended by 159 per cent. at a time when fuel prices have gone up by only 117 per cent. Our electorate must think that is a good record. I noted that we have introduced and fine-tuned a severe weather allowance, something that never happened under the last Government. Some of us, unlike the hon. Member for Oldham, West, can remember that Government. He seems to have forgotten much of the time that he was a Minister, and has no recollection of the severe winters and the lack of action on this front. It makes his argument all the less powerful that so little happened when his party was last in power.

The number of people who are eligible for supplementary benefit has increased. Over 90 per cent. of pensioners are now eligible, as 70 per cent. in 1978 when the hon. Member for Oldham, West was a Minister. The excess winter mortality rate has fallen every year since 1979, as my hon. Friend the Minister pointed out, with one notable exception. This was the point that I made earlier, when the hon. Member for Oldham, West ducked out and said that he could not remember the figures. Let me remind him of them.

The winter of 1978-79 saw a higher level of excess mortality than any winter in recent years. The Labour party was in government and the hon. Member for Oldham, West was a member of that government. I remember sitting on the Opposition Benches during the winter of discontent and I remember full well that in my constituency cancer patients were being sent home to die because of industrial action by the National Union of Public Employees and the Confederation of Health Service Employees, supported, aided, and abetted by the Labour party.

If it is thought that the pensioners or the other sick and needy will have any benefit under any future Labour Government, one has only to refer back to that winter when people died and suffered because of the industrial action by the people who are the paymasters of the Labour Party. The people of this country will be reminded about this in the election campaign, when it comes. They will clearly recall, what happened in that winter, and why the Labour party was kicked out. Memories of what happened will stop the Labour party returning to office.

My hon. Friend the Minister referred to the latest research, and to Professor Keating. I listened with interest to an interview in the "Today" programme yesterday morning when Professor Keating went even further. He said that he found that more people died of cold-related illnesses in centrally heated, warden-controlled accommodation than by themselves. These deaths resulted not just from hypothermia but from other cold-related illnesses such as strokes and heart attacks; here I agree with the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

Initially, I was amazed by Professor Keating's assertion, but he explained that when people are warm and comfortable they are more likely to go out and walk in the cold, and more likely to dress more modestly and suffer more. The problem is more complicated than it at first seems. With due respect to the hon. Member for Oldham, West, I feel more inclined to believe the evidence of an expert such as Professor Keating, from the London hospital, than somebody who is trying to get cheap political capital out of elderly people dying.

The Labour proposals are worth looking at closely. The hon. Member for Oldham, West, as the Opposition official spokesman on health and social security, said on 18 September this year:

> "We will also establish a winter premium of £5 a week for the months between mid-December and March for pensioners on low incomes."

When will that be implemented if a Labour Government are returned to power? That is an interesting question. The hon. Member for Oldham, West was mugged after making that statement, just as he was after making his comment about tax relief on mortgages, because other people on the Labour Front Bench have to watch carefully what the hon. Gentleman says and then correct him from time to time. It gives us great pleasure whenever the hon. Member for Oldham, West makes a policy statement. We were delighted when he was re-elected to the shadow Cabinet, because there is plenty of mileage in his comments and policy statements, as they never add up financially.

After being mugged, presumably by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) the hon. Gentleman wrote an article in *The Guardian* on 24 October. On this occasion he said:

> "All other social programmes, apart from my £3·5 billion package, are therefore implicitly conditional on such a time as and when resources become available."

That is called a wriggle. One makes the promise, gains the publicity, hopes to gain the votes and then quietly, in a little-read newspaper such as *The Guardian*, gets off the hook again. The hon. Member for Oldham, West was told to get off the hook by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, who was concerned because my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, in many telling interventions in the House and elsewhere, drove a coach and horses through the financial policies of the Opposition.

They have fallen into the same trap as the late Hugh Gaitskell fell into in the run-up to the 1959 election. They have totally failed to cost their programme. We are going to cost it for them again and again. Between now and the next general election we will draw the attention of our

constituents to just how their programme does not add up financially. Those constituents know about good housekeeping and they know about promises that cannot be kept. It will do the Opposition grave damage.

The cost of the programme will be £150 million. We have no idea where the money is coming from, and I am certain that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has no idea how he will raise the money.

There is also the problem of the order books, which have been referred to by my hon. Friend the Minister. Presumably, they will have to be revised upwards in December and then they will have to be revised downwards at the end of March. That seems immensely complicated. It will be costly and will require a lot of extra work by the staff at the Department of Health and Social Security. When I speak to the excellent DHSS staff in my constituency and see the good job they are doing at the Bracknell office and the Slough office, which is just over my constituency border, I know that they will not be pleased by the extra burden. It is putting an unnecessary responsibility on them. It will be costly and, let us be honest, it will be quite unworkable.

We have the problem of pensioners. They will be very confused when their benefit goes up and then goes down again at the time that the annual increase in benefits will be taking place. Any policy that makes benefits more rather than less confusing for the elderly in the community has very little merit. I wonder whether the hon. Member for Oldham, West has bothered to think that out. I suspect that he has not, because this debate is all about emotion and gaining votes. It is not about looking after the people he professes to care about and who he believes are in so much difficulty.

How does one cover the 1 million pensioners who are not on supplementary benefit? As my hon. Friend the Minister said, will the Opposition assist the disabled, who suffer just as much in the cold? Will they assist young families on low incomes? They have not been mentioned. Presumably that would be on top of the £150 million. In my book, young families on low incomes are just as important as the elderly, and so are the disabled.

There is an issue that I think the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) will want to deal with when he winds up the debate as the shadow energy spokesman. I am a little confused because I think that the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen are a little confused. I believe that the Labour Party has a non-nuclear energy policy. If it has, it will dramatically increase fuel costs and increase electricity costs. The people who will suffer the most are the very people being referred to by the motion.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Mon): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Labour candidate in my constituency has said that he does not believe that there should be a replacement to the Magnox B Wylfa power station——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. A number of right hon. and hon. Members are waiting to take part in the debate. I hope that hon. Members will stick to the motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Mackay: I note your point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will not pursue that line but, with your permission, I shall refer to the non-nuclear policy of the Labour party, which directly affects heating in old people's accommodation and elsewhere. I ask the right hon. Member for Salford, East, who is not in his place at the moment, to tell us how much extra that will cost and how it is taken into account in the figures that have been mentioned by the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

I would like to know whether the right hon. Member for Salford, East has consulted the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), as he seems to have one policy on nuclear energy while the rest of the Labour party has another policy. Before we reach any final conclusions, we will want to know where the Labour party stands. That is yet another extra cost that has not been properly worked out.

I believe that the conclusion we have to come to must be that the debate was initiated out of political malice and for political gain at the expense of those least able to protect themselves in the community. Nothing positive has been offered. It is doubtful whether the Labour party could produce the goods it is offering. It has not properly costed its programme and I believe that it will rue the day that it made those policy statements and introduced this important subject on a Supply day in such a partisan manner.

8.37 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I do not intend to follow the remarks of the hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) because I believe that he spoke about anything but fuel poverty. This debate—an important debate—is about fuel poverty. Even the Minister had little to offer the people who are suffering because of fuel poverty. We have had discussions on nuclear power and the comments of the Minister, but there was little from the Government as to how they will alleviate fuel poverty.

The motion hits at the heart of what is happening in the country. If Conservative Members believe that there is no problem, I suggest that they should start to take note of what is happening throughout the country, especially in constituencies in the north. I shall read from a local newspaper, the *Ossett Observer*, dated 21 November. It cannot be classed as a Labour party publication. The headline is:

"Thousands die of cold in winter."

The article says:

"More than 500 people die from hypothermia each year, according to official government figures. As many as 100 times that number die from cold-related diseases such as pneumonia, influenza and chronic bronchitis. Many more elderly people suffer the discomfort and misery of being unable to keep warm."

The newspaper quotes the Health Education Council, which says:

"many of the difficulties arise from a low income".

Because of low incomes many older people over-economise on fuel.

The massive increase in fuel prices and general increases in standing charges have hit pensioners most severely. The comment was made that the lower paid have to pay more out of their income for heating than people on higher incomes. Many of the pensioners will be waiting for this coming winter with trepidation. It has been estimated that nearly 750,000 elderly people are at risk from hypothermia. Thousands of elderly people will die from cold this winter if it is as severe as last winter. Thousands more elderly people will die in exceptionally harsh weather, and even greater numbers will suffer unduly from the cold. In the first half of 1985, hypothermia killed nearly 20 per cent. more pensioners than it did in the whole of 1984. Among people over 80 years of age, the death toll

[Mr. William O'Brien]

rose by 30 per cent. These deaths were tragic and preventable. I fear for old people this winter, and I am sure that many of my hon. Friends do also.

Reduced heating additions and the chaotic system introduced last year for paying heating bills in exceptionally severe weather contributed to enormous hardship for elderly people. The hon. Member for Berkshire, East and the Minister referred to what is happening at present and what they are doing to help people who suffer hardship and need heating allowances. I shall quote from a letter, dated 12 November, that I received from the DHSS in response to a question I asked about a matter facing a constituent in her 80s. The letter states:

"Whilst living at . . . Wood Lane, Rothwell, Mrs. F was entitled to a heating addition at the higher rate because of a combination of ill-health and damp accommodation.

Following her move to her present address, on 19 April 1986, Mrs. F's heating addition was reduced to the lower rate because, although she still satisfied the health criteria concerning heating conditions, her new accommodation was said not to be damp."

This is the sting in the tail:

"The reduction in Mrs. F's heating addition resulted in her level of supplementary benefit being insufficient to enable the Department to pay her water charges direct to the local authority. In view of this the water charges were added to her supplementary benefit and she was advised that from 14 April 1986 she was responsible for paying these charges . . . to the local authority."

In other words, this person is suffering in more than one way. She is an elderly, ill lady in her late eighties. This is the treatment she is receiving in 1986 under the Tory Government.

I call upon the Government to develop a comprehensive energy strategy aimed at encouraging more extensive insulation and improving fuel efficiency of heating appliances, and, at the same time, dealing with financial assistance to poorer consumers to reflect the real priority of fuel costs in household expenditure. I made the point earlier that people on lower incomes need more protection. More attention should be given to preventing that old lady from living in damp, draughty conditions.

From my constituency work, I am aware of the problems that high fuel prices and the threat of disconnection cause to low income families and pensioners. I want to see the following matters given serious concern, particularly when old people and children are involved. One of the previous speakers referred to the cutting off of services. In cases involving children and elderly people, consideration should be given to the abolition of the gas and electricity boards' rights to disconnect supplies for customers who get into debt. The right to cut off services, without reference to organisations or bodies who have these people's interests at heart, should be abolished. There must be an adequate income for everyone's fuel needs, particularly those who rely on state benefits, as was outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). There should be more efficient use of fuel by encouraging better insulation and less wasteful appliances and heating systems. I have outlined the direction that we ought to take in matters of that kind.

Members of the Labour party believe that fuel supply is a major issue, affecting millions of people. The number of people who cannot afford to pay for the heat and light that they need is growing. This is outlined in many of the statements that we receive from Government Departments. Fuel is one of the basic, common commodities, such as food or housing, to which all of us have a right.

In the main, fuel poverty is caused by bad housing, expensive and inefficient heating systems and poor insulation, as well as high fuel prices and inadequate pensions and benefits. We have to take these matters seriously if we are to make any improvement in the conditions and living standards of elderly people in particular and poor families in general. This country urgently needs a policy for warmth, beginning with a massive conservation programme, led by insulation in council housing, the expansion of grants for private sector housing and industry incentives to save energy.

The Government have ignored the links between conservation and fuel poverty, although it is profoundly obvious that the efficient use of fuel in the long run will lead to lower fuel bills. It has been shown that 6 per cent. of fuel can be saved through energy conservation schemes, and slightly more can be saved in newly built properties, yet energy conservation has always had a low priority for the Government. That is why I welcome the establishment of the Energy Efficiency Office. Unfortunately, the publicity distributed by that office has no back-up. Grants for insulation and local authority initiatives have been undermined by the Government's public expenditure cuts.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: That is nonsense.

Mr. O'Brien: It is not nonsense. It has been demonstrated by the problems that local authorities are having in carrying out installations and draught-proofing properties because of the reduction in the HIP programme.

A more serious matter is causing extreme hardship for mineworkers and widows of former mineworkers. Many people in my constituency in particular, and throughout the Yorkshire region in general, are retired members of the mining fraternity and their widows, who are suffering fuel poverty. The application by British Coal of a callous and iniquitous agreement is denying fuel benefits to those widows and retired miners, many of them in their late 70s and 80s, and is putting them into the fuel poverty trap and at the mercy of the DHSS.

With the introduction of the British Coal agreement in 1983, fuel poverty has been caused to people who have given all their working lives to the coal industry. In their early years, those people worked in the pits to ensure that there would be no lack of warmth in their years of retirement. There is now fuel poverty in mining communities because of this immoral and rotten 1983 fuel agreement. Many retired miners are chronically sick and need help. It is poor reward for their hard work.

The Department of Energy has been pushing up the price of gas and electricity to provide more money for the Exchequer. This is nothing more than a form of taxation of those who can least afford it. I am calling for a freeze on, or even a cut in, fuel prices to help those suffering fuel poverty. If there is to be a genuine approach to the problem, there must be a standstill in fuel prices.

Now the Government have embarked on the privatisation of the British Gas Corportion. This holds out no hope that consumers will have the benefit of cheaper fuel. The price formula proposed by the Government will

not ensure that prices are kept down. There has been no assurance that standing charges will not increase by more than the rate of inflation. I am prepared to listen to Government Members who say that there will not be an increase in gas charges following privatisation—Sid says that this is the last day to buy shares—above the rate of inflation. I feel sure that no Government Member can give that assurance. The people who suffer fuel poverty have little to which to look forward following gas privatisation.

For the 3 million gas consumers on the lowest incomes, standing charges represent 30 per cent. of their expenditure on gas. There are constant lobbies by people who represent the aged, widows and weaker groups and urges that standing charges be abolished. That would be a step in the right direction to help the people in the poverty trap.

Rather than tax everyone with fuel prices, we need the positive investment of resources in energy efficiency measures for low income households. That is what the Labour party is committed to and what the next Labour Government will implement. I believe that the Labour motion offers extensive hope to the people suffering fuel poverty. It encourages the elderly, widows, the chronically sick and the disabled to believe that there is hope. Those who accept the Government amendment will not alleviate the poverty that people are suffering and fulfill the need for more warmth and help in their homes. I ask the House to support the Labour motion and give hope to the people who are suffering in the poverty trap.

8.53 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) made points that were completely antagonistic to the basis of the Government's approach to elderly people and to those who suffer from the problems caused by fuel prices. He said that the Government had nothing to offer, as though there had been no help with grants and heating additions. He went on to say that the general idea was to keep fuel prices down, and that is true. Fuel prices have increased by about 118 per cent. while heating additions have increased by 159 per cent.

The hon. Member for Normanton mentioned standing charges. British Gas has reduced them by £1 a quarter. He went on about fuel price increases. In the past few years, electricity price increases have been lower than the rate of inflation. Because of the oil price drop, after the announcement of electricity price increases, those prices actually dropped. Prices have not been increasing at a fantastic rate. They have been kept under control. The hon. Gentleman complained about insulation and the progress in making more efficient heaters, as though the Department of Energy had done nothing. In the past few years, the Department introduced the Monergy programmes.

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman seemed to say that fuel prices have not gone through the roof but have, more or less, kept pace with inflation. That is not quite the position. In the seven years of the Tory Government, the increase in gas prices has been 135 per cent. and the increase in the retail prices index has been 80 per cent.

Mr. Stevens: The hon. Gentleman has made that point. This is the third successive year in which gas prices have increased by less than the inflation rate. In real terms, domestic gas costs less than it did in 1970.

Some of the elderly face difficulties in keeping warm. My hon. Friend the Minister explained the difficulties and said that it is not just a correlation between the temperatures in which they live and the higher death rates during winter. I think that hon. Members on both sides of the House accept that it is a complex problem. Unfortunately, there are elderly people who do not realise the temperatures at which they should keep their homes, even when they have the facility to do so. Elderly people need to be told through advertising how important it is to keep their rooms at reasonable temperatures. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) referred to people living in temperatures of less than 60·8 deg F. Some old people do not realise the importance of keeping themselves properly warm.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that many old people recognise that they need heat but are frightened to put their heaters on because they cannot afford to do so? They know full well that standing charges are often much higher than the charges for the gas that they have used. Is there not a case for abolishing standing charges?

Mr. Stevens: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that case has been made often, and early-day motions have been tabled on the subject. I was thinking about a particular group of people who do not recognise the importance of heating.

The important point has been made that some elderly people go out ill-equipped into inclement conditions. Education, especially with the help of social workers, is important. Draught exclusion has been a great help to many people. In my area the DHSS has easily been convinced of the need for it. It has carried out draught exclusion comparatively easily and quickly. Many old people probably do not realise that those on supplementary benefit can receive help in order to get such jobs done. They need to know more about such things. Although television advertises the importance of insulation, many elderly people still do not take advantage of what is available.

It was again said that the Tories do not really bother and that we disagree with the Labour party, but we care. The Government have extended heating additions to age groups and to people who were not eligible under the previous Labour Government. It is remarkable that all 65-year-olds on supplementary benefit are now eligible for heating additions. We have extended the provision to many disabled people and to people on supplementary benefit with children under five. That is a definite improvement and a help to those on low incomes.

The Government have done much. We have pointed the new system of allowances for extreme weather conditions in the right direction. It is targeted on the areas and groups of people most in need. That is where the help should go. It is right that Scotland and the north, which are much colder, should benefit rather than areas in the south where the climate is milder. Even if another Government introduced some other arrangements—we hope that it will be a long time before we have to worry about that—the emphasis should still be put on those areas which have the coldest weather and where the inhabitants need a higher heating addition.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The hon. Gentleman said that the allowances should be targeted on areas of

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need. He suggested that if the scheme was introduced, people in Scotland might be helped. Does he realise that if the scheme had been operated last year, only three out of the 14 areas in Scotland would have received any benefit. My area would have received no benefit whatsoever, yet some of my constituents in Dundee have paid for an entire month.

Mr. Stevens: It is right to go not for the flat rate system which has been advocated, but for one based on differentials. This subject is treated far too emotionally by the Opposition. Within the old social security system there were moves to give help. Help has also been given under the new social security system. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has dismissed, as he did in Committee, the suggestion that the heating allowances would be assimilated into the income support scheme so that it was paid automatically to those on supplementary benefit. Because it was not shown separately, it was assumed that it would not exist, but surely that is a much simpler and more sensible system to introduce than one that has many "ifs" and "buts" and additions about qualifying under certain conditions.

It is to the Government's credit that, during this Parliament and the previous one, they took action on energy efficiency and widened the scope of the heating additions. They introduced a scheme which gave much greater help to the elderly, and consequently the elderly are confident that measures have been taken to improve their lot.

9.3 pm

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) informed the House that last year was the severest winter for 40 years. That, combined with the miserly pension increase approved by the Government, against a background of a rising number of deaths from hypothermia among the elderly, led to a demand for an additional heating allowance of £5 a week. We and the pensioners' associations say that that payment should be automatic.

It was said that the Government had sole responsibility for pricing gas and electricity. They price those fuels beyond the means of the most vulnerable people, those on benefits. How can Ministers justify accumulated profits of £635 million from electricity and £651 million from the gas industry? As has been pointed out, those profits are a hidden tax. The White Paper on public expenditure reveals that in the three years to 1987-88 British Gas will pay the Treasury £2·9 billion in gas levy and corporation tax. The financial targets set for the electricity boards require them, in the next year, to pay £386 million net to the Treasury. Therefore, the poorest once again must bear the burden. As I have said, it is a hidden tax.

The cost of heating and lighting a home has increased at an incredible rate. Yet those industries can show huge profits and the Government, with their policies, urge competitiveness and push up the cost of fuel. The money, however, is not used to the benefit of those most in need. In a letter to me, the Prime Minister wrote:

"We are already giving considerable help to pensioners through the supplementary benefit scheme. . . . You have referred to the elderly using more fuel last winter due to the very cold weather. Help towards these extra costs was in fact available to supplementary benefit claimants during that cold spell, and payments were made throughout Great Britain with the sole exception of Lerwick, Shetland."

How can a Prime Minister be so complacent when so many people died of cold-related illnesses last year? In her reply to my question on this subject during Prime Minister's Question Time, when I requested that the £5 should be given automatically, her first word to me was an emphatic no.

Despite the mounting evidence that the poor cannot pay to heat their homes, despite the inescapable evidence of the rise in the number of deaths during the winter, and despite coroners' reports of accidental death due to hypothermia, which I have never accepted because those deaths are the responsibility of the state as they could have been prevented——

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Rubbish!

Mr. Litherland: I hope that no one in the hon. Gentleman's family has to suffer.

Despite all that, the Government will throw only a few miserly crumbs, which will evidently appease the consciences of the Prime Minister, the Government and their cohorts on the Back Benches. They can enjoy Christmas and feel cleansed as they attend religious services, secure in their minds that pensioners are well looked after and that perhaps not so many will die this year, and comforted by the fact that it will not be members of their families that could suffer the indignity of freezing to death like the lady in Blackpool last year. She was so cold when they found her that they could not even take her body temperature. The Conservatives can shout, "Rubbish."

Those Conservative Members are comforted by the knowledge that none of their families will suffer the humiliation of their electricity supplies being disconnected. Indeed, 125,000 households had their electricity supplies disconnected, according to the most recently available figures for a 12-month period. A survey of those who had been disconnected discovered that 90 per cent. of those households fell within the definition of hardship.

I have received correspondence from, among others, the Pensioners and Trade Unions Association, which says that there is nationwide indignation because of the number of deaths among the elderly last winter. The consequent pressures exerted by the churches, by social and political figures and by campaigning pressure groups has forced the Government to move—not a lot, but at least they have moved.

However, the announcement by the DHSS of the proposed heating allowance of £5 per week for those on supplementary benefit is so hedged with conditions that many of those in need will not receive allowances. Pensioner organisations are convinced that, in many cases, by the time benefit is received it is too late to avoid hypothermia. Waiting for the temperature to drop an average 1·5 deg C below freezing before paying out heating allowance is an insult to the intelligence of anyone who is aware of the problems affecting elderly people during the winter period.

There are a great number of elderly people in my constituency. In 1984, figures showed that there were 82,700 pensioners in the city of Manchester—18 per cent. of the population. Not all elderly people are poor —I recognise that—but clearly many are on very low incomes. By December 1984, 23,800 were receiving

supplementary benefit and a further 23,400 were receiving standard housing benefit. That represented 57 per cent. of Manchester's pensioner population. When one takes into account the non-take-up, it is likely that over 80 per cent. of the city's pensioners are receiving or are entitled to receive means-tested welfare benefit. That is higher than the national average. National statistics suggest that the most vulnerable group of elderly people is that living alone. A survey in 1983 showed that 54 per cent. of that group were primarily dependent on state benefit.

We recognise that it is not just the elderly who suffer—that is recognised in the debate. I receive many letters from constituents who cannot afford heating costs and who have reverted to other kinds of heating such as paraffin stoves. Such stoves are used to heat accommodation or to dry out washing, and they cause condensation which in turn causes ill health; they also cause the fabric of the accommodation to deteriorate. All that is costly.

For my sins, I sat on Manchester city council and on the fire brigade committee. In that time, I saw photographs of fires in homes which had used paraffin stoves. They showed the charred remains of the bodies of children whose chest cages had been burnt open by fire and intense heat. The only item which remained in the charred rooms, in perfect condition, was the paraffin stove which had caused the disaster. Despite all this, the Prime Minister says no.

Tonight we have bandied statistics about. We have discussed percentages and numbers, but these are not mere figures, these are people. How can we expect understanding from a Prime Minister whose heart is permanently below freezing point? We have appealed to Conservative Members to come into the Lobby with us tonight but, I am afraid, once again like sheep, they will follow the leader.

9.12 pm

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) spoke with compassion and sincerity, but, sadly, the hon. Gentleman pushed himself into a corner which is far from reality. Many of the words addressed to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister could equally have been addressed with the same amount of compassion and sincerity to his right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) when he presided over the last Labour Government. To quote individual cases, as the hon. Member for Manchester, Central did, is unjust to the debate. Although those tragic cases cause great sadness to the families concerned, there is no doubt that such tragedies occur under Governments of all political persuasions. Therefore, to try to use them as a political stick with which to beat the Government is beneath the hon. Gentleman.

In Shrewsbury, elderly constituents who have come to me suffering hardship and fuel poverty have found the local DHSS offices superbly helpful. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take note of the fact that the offices are extremely helpful — often under difficult conditions—and the vast majority of the general public, despite the occasional headlines in the cheaper papers, believe they do a first-rate job. I agree with that. It is sad that the debate, which could have made a constructive contribution towards helping the elderly and conserving energy, has deteriorated into pork-barrel politics. I suppose that that was inevitable.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Why?

Mr. Conway: If the right hon. Gentleman had been in his place throughout the debate, he would know why. Instead, he has chosen to slip into the Chamber towards the end of the debate and chip in from a sedentary position, which is beneath him.

The debate started on a bad note, and that was the position from the moment that the motion was placed on the Order Paper. Things went from bad to worse because we were faced with an inaccurate motion. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who moved it, was shown to have "facts" which were completely wrong.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security made it clear that the trend in excess winter deaths has been downward. From 1961 to 1965, winter deaths were 52·3 per cent. In 1966, they had been reduced to 39·6 per cent. There was a further reduction between 1971 and 1975 to 28·2 per cent. Between 1976 and 1980 they jumped to 33·6 per cent. As the hon. Member for Oldham, West has been reminded again and again tonight—we shall not let him forget it because he was a DHSS Minister at the time—the highest number of winter deaths occurred in 1978-79. That peak was not reached when a "wicked Tory Government" were in power. That cannot be said by any stretch of the Opposition's imagination. Instead, that happened under a Labour Government.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) has represented the alliance in the Chamber for part of the debate. He has been the only alliance Member present, and often the Chamber has been empty from an alliance point of view, which demonstrates its great concern for the elderly and for fuel poverty. It is a fact that the alliance supported the Labour Government who were responsible for the appalling record to which I have referred. We have heard this evening—this was after he had used a great deal of cotton wool—that he will join the Opposition in voting against the Government when the Division takes place.

It seems that alliance and Labour Members cannot separate themselves. In Shropshire we call supporters of the alliance Laberals. The Labour and Liberal parties are indistinguishable in their actions and the Liberals have a shameful record in supporting Socialism in the Chamber. It is sad that they intend to do so this evening. As I have said, the trend in winter deaths is downwards, and that cannot be denied.

It is a fact that the 1·7 per cent. increase in the price of gas from 1 May was the first increase for 15 months, and it was well below the rate of inflation. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House feel that the standing charge has outlived its time, but it should be remembered that it was reduced by £1. We know that electricity prices have been increased by 4·7 per cent., but that increase followed three years when the total increase of 6 per cent. was well below the general rate of inflation. That has had a serious effect on pensioners, to their betterment.

When we think about standing charges we experience an initial gut reaction. We feel that they are unfair and should be abolished. I think that that is the initial reaction of most of us, but we must consider the knock-on effects. It is so easy to say, as Liberal and Labour Members have said this evening, "Abolish this, do that and do the other," but every now and again, as the right hon. Member for

[Mr. Conway]

Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) is proving to members of the shadow Cabinet, it is necessary to consider the financial effects for the nation.

If we abolish standing charges, unit charges will unquestionably be forced up because the money has to be raised from somewhere, and the estimated cost of abolition is £550 millon a year. Where will that sum come from? Will it come from the magical pocket of the Leader of the Opposition, no doubt to be paid in dollars?

For pensioners, the knock-on effect on unit charges will be an extra £300 million per annum. The pensioners should not be fooled into thinking that the Opposition offer them great glory to come. Behind their easy words in the Chamber tonight lie serious knock-on effects for their unit charge payments.

I hope that we shall hear from my hon. Friend the Minister something about the progress that has been made in energy conservation. A considerable effort has been made to ease the life of pensioners, especially in this regard. The Department of Energy has made available project start-up grants to help voluntary insulation programmes. The record of progress on that score is worth trumpeting in the Chamber and throughout the country.

The Department of Energy is a major source of finance for the neighbourhood energy action programme, which is successful in my constituency, as it is, no doubt, in other constituencies. I hope that we shall hear more from my hon. Friend the Minister about the Department of the Environment's home insulation scheme. I appreciate, of course, that he will not be speaking for that Department this evening. There are home insulation grants of up to 90 per cent. for loft insulation, and these are effective in helping pensioners retain the value of their heat expenditure. The considerable growth in the full cost of draught-proofing materials through the DHSS single payment scheme is important. There has been an 80 per cent. increase this year alone.

There have been many crocodile tears and, sadly, false words tonight about the Government's true record. But the fact remains, as the electorate will have pointed out to them time and time again, that £11 billion more has been spent on benefits by this Administration, not out of their money or the Prime Minister's money, but out of taxpayers' money. There are higher rates now than ever before, and that cannot be and has not been challenged by the Opposition Front Bench. That money is not all going on unemployment, which is the easy claim in the newspapers. Only £4 billion of that £11 billion is directed towards the increase in unemployment, while £1·75 billion goes to pensioners and £1·5 billion to benefits for the long-term sick and disabled. There is a £4 billion — 6 per cent.—increase across the board.

The Opposition's motion tonight, supported by the Liberal and Social Democratic parties—they have not been in the Chamber, but no doubt they will turn up in the Lobbies—is too easy and glib a promise. The £5 a week benefit referred to in the motion would cost £150 million a year.

Some of my hon. Friends have asked whether the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has been advised of that. His colleagues in the shadow Cabinet promise more with every hour that passes. As his name is on the Order Paper, no doubt he will be looking forward to accounting for that extra expenditure when my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary challenges him about it.

Apart from the purely financial effects, the proposal will mean pension book chaos. The pension will be going up one month and coming down two or three months later. In addition, there will be the annual increase, which is now due in April. Pensioners will be backwards and forwards with their pension books and will not know where they are. Tremendous chaos will ensue. The pressure on our DHSS offices will be considerable, and that will hinder them even more from looking out for the special cases.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire made a moving speech in support of the Labour party's policy of a payment of £5 per week, and then went on to talk about the problems of young children in a cold environment. However, the Labour party's policy, which he and his colleagues will support tonight, makes no mention of that. It does not say that it will do anything at all for the under-fives who are presently supported by the Government's policy, nor, indeed for the disabled.

What we do know is that, as a result of the Labour party's spendthrift policies, inflation will undoubtedly return and we can look forward to the sort of fuel conservation that is practised by Mr. Arthur Scargill and his cohorts as they stockpile.

Undoubtedly, the Labour party's motion is one of pork barrel politics: think of a figure, double it and hope that the electorate will be stupid enough to accept it. But they will not be, and we know that only to well. They will look at the figures—as all the surveys now show that they are doing—and the promises being made to them with doubting eyes. Instead, they will look to the Government's record, which stands scrutiny. They will look to the record of previous Labour and Liberal Governments which stands for shame. I hope that the amendment will be carried tonight.

9.22 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) and the Government are deceiving themselves if they think that fuel poverty and fuel allowances will be ignored by the electorate. It took last winter, with the strange inversion of temperature that caused the severe weather allowance to be triggered off in the south initially, but not in the north, to direct a lot of attention to the issue of climate and how it impacts upon fuel poverty.

During the debate there has been little reference to the impact which climate can have on people. Earlier, I said that Scotland has a longer winter, a harsher climate and lower temperatures than elsewhere. Therefore, in practical terms, the cost of heating a house will be 30 per cent. more in Aberdeen than in Bristol. It is hardly surprising that 25 per cent. of hypothermia deaths in the United Kingdom are to be found in Scotland. The Government have been criminally complacent in the way in which they have approached the issue.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) was correct to direct attention not just to those who, unfortunately and sadly, die because of the inadequate level of heating allowances, but to the hundreds of thousands of elderly who are affected by discomfort caused by being unable to heat their houses.

I have had experience of discussions with Ministers in which they took the very sophisticated argument that because the family income surveys did not show increased expenditure on heating, there was no need to supply money for heating. The fact is that many elderly people are scared to burn fuel during the winter months because they do not believe they can afford to do so. As a result, they live in conditions of extreme discomfort and there are cold related illnesses and, unfortunately, deaths.

There has been much hypocrisy from the Labour party during the debate. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was a Minister for Social Security and admitted, after leaving office, that he bitterly regretted having suppressed information about the effect of hypothermia. My former colleague Mrs. Margaret Bain was very active on that score then.

In my research on this matter I came across articles that are horribly reminiscent and show just how little improvement has occurred. An article in *The Times* on 6 February 1976 stated:

"A state of war in the Government has been declared this week by the voluntary agencies campaigning for a cohesive policy to stop the mounting toll of deaths from hypothermia among elderly people and the prospect of young babies being irreparably damaged by the cold."

The Department of Health and Social Security under a Labour Administration decided around 1977 that the minimum recommended room temperature for old people of 70 deg F should be discontinued and thereafter the DHSS would make no recommendation. We have to judge the Labour party's proposals for a £5 a week winter premium against that background. That is better by far than the Government's proposals.

I made the point to the hon. Member for Oldham, West that that form of flat rate payment is discriminatory in its approach. It means that those who live in the south, who require less heating for their homes and who have more money left for food and clothing, will receive the extra premium. I do not object to that. However, no extra sum will go to those who live in the colder parts of the United Kingdom who also have to sustain longer winters. The period from mid-December until March does not cover the Scottish winter which runs from November until the end of April. That must be corrected. Should the Labour party be in power after the next election, the Labour Government will have to revise that scheme as it would cause a tremendous amount of dissatisfaction in Scotland.

The new severe weather allowances introduced by the Government amount to no more than a con trick. It is particularly depressing that an elderly person can be refused any payment even during severe weather, because he as £500 or more in a bank account. The Minister must accept that £500 is very close to the cost these days of an ordinary funeral. The elderly have a great respect in these matters. They do not wish to die and be buried in a pauper's grave. They would therefore prefer to go without heating so that their savings will be available when they die.

There is also a problem in relation to the unemployed who are struggling to keep their families warm. As I understand it, under the new arrangements, children over the age of two pass the cut-off point and the fuel allowances will not be available to a family who would otherwise qualify if the child was under two years of age. That is very harsh.

I cannot accept as a pretext or excuse for delay the much delivered quotation of Professor Keatinge that people in sheltered housing and warm conditions have a similar rate of death to those who live outside that accommodation. Research could take ages. Why is it that Scandinavians, Americans and Canadians who have adequately insulated houses and a high fuel allowance do not die prematurely during the winter months as we do? Why do the Government not make available money now and an adequate programme to insulate houses to a proper degree of warmth?

Both the Government and the Opposition have failed to take account of two factors that arose in the 1970s—the poor quality of housing erected in the 1960s which was inadequately insulated—concrete shells—and the savage increase in fuel costs. The Government's proposals are entirely useless. They may be slightly better in theory than the previous severe weather allowances which gave more comfort to the south than to Scotland, but when the figures are totalled, less money will be available to people living in Scotland for heating allowances this year than last year. That is the acid test and by that standard the Government have failed.

9.30 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): The debate is taking place at a most appropriate time as it is the end of Energy Efficiency Year and shortly after the week of action on cold homes. I shall deal with the responsibility of the Department of Energy, which overlaps into that of the Department of the Environment.

The Government have ignored all the evidence from last winter. As has been stated, during the first three months of 1986 there were 578 hypothermia-related deaths in Great Britain. International comparisons show that the British people suffer more in cold weather than people in other countries with similar or colder weather conditions. Both sides of the House should examine that and what can be done about it. Yet the Secretary of State for Energy appears to believe that there is no such thing as fuel poverty. He prefers to believe that it is the same as clothes or food poverty as that would absolve him from taking any initiative to deal with it.

Fuel poverty is more complex and covers a range of issues. Certainly it is about a lack of income, but it is also about poor housing conditions, inappropiate heating systems and a lack of insulation or draught proofing. Evidence shows that the elderly and low-income households live in poor housing conditions, often lacking the basic amenities, and in the coldest homes. Such families are also less likely to have central heating systems and adequate insulation in their lofts or cavity walls.

Mr. Powley: I accept entirely the right hon. Gentleman's point about the importance of loft insulation. Is he aware that, despite the Government's allocation of sums to local authorities for home insulation schemes, in each of the past five years local authorities have underspent considerably, sometimes by as much as one third of the sum allocated? Does he agree that they should make greater efforts to use all the resources available? Obviously, we would all like more, but local authorities do not even use 100 per cent. of the resources available.

Mr. Orme: I take the hon Gentleman's point and I shall deal with it. The Government are responsible for ensuring that these resouces are available; I shall say something further about that.

I represent an inner city. In part of my constituency the people are extremely poor and there is high unemployment. People who come to see me and who have, for example, underfloor heating or some form of central heating or who have to pay for electricity through a meter, tell me that they do not use heat because they cannot afford to use it. Consequently, they suffer from the cold and tell me about going to bed early during the winter because of the cold. Surely, in an energy-rich nation like ours, resources which are so essential should be available.

On Monday morning there was a doctor on the "Today" programme on BBC Radio 4 — if I dare to mention that in this House. He said that perhaps it would be cheaper for the Government to allow some of the people suffering form cold to go to Spain during the winter because that would relieve the problem of hypothermia. He made the point that our housing was deplorable. For instance, there are no figures for hypothermia in Iceland, Norway or Finland or in any part of Scandinavia. People there do not die from cold, because their homes are properly insulated. The Government should turn their attention to that, because it is a priority matter.

The need for improvement to our housing stock is becoming increasingly urgent. The forecast expenditure by local authorities—I am coming to the point made by the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) — for 1985-86 on heating and insulation improvements was just £193. That is a far cry from the estimated £4 billion that is needed. If a priority programme for home insulation was created and made a national campaign by the Government, not only would it insulate homes but it would create needed jobs. I have seen such schemes in Newcastle upon Tyne. One estimate shows that 50,000 jobs could be created by that type of expenditure. Surely expenditure of that sort would be much better than money spent on tax relief, which is what the Government are considering for the future.

All these problems lead to fuel disconnections. Difficulty in paying for fuel and the accumulation of debt are major problems, especially for low income families with children. A study of families on supplementary benefit concluded that paying for fuel is the greatest problem they face. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) took a week living on unemployment benefit to accept that this is the case for millions of families. He made a point about the cost of fuel, even with that very short experience.

In the year to 31 March 1986, there were 138,000 disconnections of either gas or electricity. Increasingly, families are unable to afford to have their supplies of heat and light reconnected. Some 23,000 households are without fuel for over three months. In our present society, that is a disgrace.

The Government have made no concerted attempt to tackle these problems. Their policies are marked by a lack of co-ordination. The gas and electricity authorities have made huge profits. Last year, the gas levy was over £600 million, without profits, and very high profits have just been made by the electricity authority. John Edmonds, the general secretary of the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trade Union referred the other day to the privatisation of British Gas and said that it would be far better if the price of gas were reduced by 10 per cent. for those who need such a reduction. I underline that comment.

This year, 1986, is Energy Efficiency Year. We have been bombarded with glossy advertisements that exhort us to conserve energy. Those who are most in need of help should have their homes insulated and draught-proofed. They should also have new heating systems. These measures would enable them to have energy-efficient homes. However, they have not benefited from the Government's programme. The Department of Energy exhorts us to insulate our homes, but the Department of the Environment reduces the amount of money in the reserve fund available for this programme. That happened right at the beginning of Energy Efficiency Year. The local authorities in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling, some of the coldest places in Britain, have run out of money for home insulation grants. They are able to claim additional funds, but they have not been told that they can do so. I ask the Minister to answer that point.

Mr. Powley: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Orme: No. There are only five minutes left to me, and I have some important matters to put before the House.

It is a shame that the Government have not delivered the resources to back up their advertising campaign. Not only the Department of the Environment overlooks the work of the Department of Energy; so does the Department of Health and Social Security. The Department of Energy has produced a breakdown of those areas in Britain that are colder than others. For example, it considers that the Pennines are averagely cold and that the north-east of Scotland is 20 per cent. colder.

The Minister used a most interesting phrase: "absolute coldness". What does that mean? The Department of Health and Social Security does not seem to be aware of it. It has a completely different basis for severe weather payments, which makes it far less likely that it would have to pay out. The solution to these problems is outlined in the Opposition's motion and it has been dealt with by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and by other right hon. and hon. Friends.

There should be a statutory code of practice relating to disconnections. The Government know that the Opposition referred to disconnections in Committee on the Gas Bill. We understand that the final decision over disconnections rests with the authority, but before disconnections take place, statutory authority should be obtained. While it is being obtained, other means should be found to assist those who have difficulty in paying their bills.

Mr. Eric Cockeram (Ludlow): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Orme: No. The Labour party is committed to the introduction of such a code and it will do so at the earliest opportunity.

As for the neighbourhood energy action campaign, I pay tribute to Newcastle upon Tyne, Glasgow and Hull, which have led this campaign. They are all Labour authorities. It should be noted as such. Such a programme, if we were to develop it on a national scale, would create warm homes and many thousands of jobs.

Our motion shows the House and the Government the central issues facing thousands of people this winter. The

Government could assist, by implementing our motion, which is modest in its proposals, but if they are not prepared to implement it, they should explain why. We believe that it could be done now, and the Government should be tackling these problems. We shall return to this issue time and again.

9.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): I must confess to having read with disbelief the Opposition's motion for the evening's debate. The Government are criticised for the alleged inadequacy of the system of exceptionally severe weather payments, yet the motion completely ignores the Government's excellent record in providing help through the social security system. The motion seeks safeguards to protect pensioners from disconnection, but entirely ignores the code of practice which already provides pensioners with general protection against disconnection and with specific protection from 1 October to 31 March each year. The motion calls for a major programme of home insulation, but overlooks the fact that there is already a major programme that utterly dwarfs anything that existed when the Labour party was in power.

The hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) and the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) mentioned disconnections. These remain steady at just over 0·5 per cent. of average domestic electricity credit consumers and just under 0·25 per cent. for gas consumers.

Both industries operate a code of practice, monitored by their respective consumer councils, to safeguard from disconnection genuine cases of hardship. The industries make the maximum effort to handle constructively any failure to pay bills and its consequences. Both industries operate schemes to enable consumers to pay off debt or to avoid getting into debt, such as budget payments, installation of prepayment meters, which can be calibrated to recover part debt, and saving stamps.

The code of practice has already been reviewed and revised twice by the industries to keep it up to date and to take account of changed circumstances. In addition, its operation is monitored by the gas and electricity consumer councils.

The Policy Studies Institute, when it reviewed the code in 1981, thought that many of those disconnected had been in arrears for some time during which they could and should have obtained help under the code. The review concluded that the statistics show substantial patience displayed by the industries, especially the gas industry, in the face of persistent non-payment by their debtors. The statistics also show that there are very few elderly households among debtors, and even fewer among those who suffer disconnection. Only 1 per cent. of the disconnections studied were in pensioner households.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) mentioned, albeit with an understandable measure of diffidence, the subject of energy efficiency in the home, as did the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) and the right hon. Member for Salford, East. The right hon. Gentleman is not always diffident, I grant him that. I have no hesitation in saying that the Government have done vastly more to promote energy efficiency in the home—in other words, to tackle at source the problems that we are discussing—than the Labour party ever did.

Let me remind the House what we have done, which has made a massive difference to the lives of a large number of people. We have encouraged loft insulation through the homes insulation scheme and improved the help that the scheme gives to low-income households. *[Interruption.]* There is nothing particularly funny about low-income households. We have supported neighbourhood energy action and the voluntary sector insulation projects.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Can the Minister give an assurance that the schemes which are undertaken by community projects for the elderly and people on social security benefits will continue as they are now, even when the Social Security Act 1986 comes into effect?

Mr. Goodlad: I shall come to those important points in a moment.

The Energy Efficiency Office has developed a comprehensive range of publications to provide the domestic householder with objective advice, much of it relevant to low income households. Energy Efficiency Year, and the associated Monergy campaign, represent the biggest campaign ever aimed at improving the energy efficiency of the domestic sector, including low-income households.

The Government are again reviewing the thermal insulation standards in the building regulations to ensure that new homes are built to better standards. The Government are also working with the British Standards Institution to encourage the voluntary adoption of higher standards.

The Government have provided 2·5 million grants under the homes insulation scheme to encourage householders to carry out two of the measures—loft insulation and hot water cylinder insulation—that are most cost-effective even without a grant. In view of the subject of this evening's debate I should remind the House that it was this Government which, in 1980, extended the homes insulation scheme to provide enhanced grants at the 90 per cent. level for the elderly on low incomes and which, the following year, extended the 90 per cent. grant to the disabled on low incomes.

Both those groups also benefited from the Government's decision in 1984 to extend the scheme to provide "topping up" grants for those with less than 30 mm of existing insulation. In the six years since 90 per cent. grant was introduced, over 420,000 households on low incomes have been helped, either through a grant for initial insulation or through one for topping up their existing insulation. That, I would suggest, is an achievement of which the Government are justifiably proud.

One of the most remarkable success stories of the past few years is the growth of the voluntary sector insulation projects. I know that the whole House will want to congratulate David Green and Robert Davies, who set up the first project in Durham as long ago as 1975. But the sad fact is that, by 1980, the total number of such projects, despite the attention of the Opposition, was less than half a dozen. In 1981 the Department of Energy stepped in with its programme of active support of those projects. The projects provide a low cost or free basic insulation service to low income households, and they are able to do that because they bring together several types of Government finance.

[Mr. Goodlad]

The Department of Energy has provided seedcorn and project grants to enable voluntary organisations to plan projects, and to buy a van, tools and initial stock of materials to start up work. It is also the major source of finance for neighbourhood energy action, the national co-ordinating body.

Mr. Allen McKay: Will the hon. Gentleman answer my question?

Mr. Goodlad: I shall answer it in a moment.

The labour costs are met through the Manpower Services Commission's community programme for the long-term unemployed. [*Interruption.*] Hon. Members may not like hearing this, but they are going to hear it.

Materials costs are met through the Department of the Environment's homes insulation scheme, which provides grants of up to 90 per cent. for loft insulation, and through DHSS single payments, which pay the full cost of draught-proofing materials for qualifying claimants on supplementary benefit.

Since 1981 the expansion of those projects has been dramatic. From five then, the number increased to 60 at the end of 1983 when the Energy Efficiency Office was set up. The number of projects then doubled in 1984 from 100 to 200, and in 1986 there has been an 80 per cent. increase to nearly 340. A further 200 projects are at the planning stage. They already employ over 5,500 people, and they have treated over 230,000 homes — about 100,000 in 1986 alone. That means that well over 250,000 people on low incomes — many of them pensioners or disabled — have been made warmer and more comfortable by the work of the projects. That is, I would suggest, an excellent example of the Government and the voluntary sector working together. It is also an excellent example of several Departments working together towards a common objective. The total cost to public funds of the various kinds of Government funding for these projects is, in fact, about £30 million annually.

The Energy Efficiency Office produces and distributes a wealth of material on the basic measures that all householders should take, in their own interests, to reduce their energy bills or to live more comfortably. New publications in Energy Efficiency Year include the Monergy guides on cutting home energy costs, the Monergy fact files on the seven basic measures, and Monergy news for general interest articles. These publications are in addition to the high profile television and press advertising campaign. On the future of the voluntary sector insulation projects, I am glad that hon. Gentlemen value so highly the schemes brought in by the Government which they did not bring in themselves.

Following the social security reforms in 1988, my right hon. Friend the then Minister for Social Security assured the House in February that he would wish to be assured that there were adequate alternative arrangements to enable the work on these projects to continue. Gas prices after privatisation have been mentioned. As the House knows, these will be strictly controlled by a formula which will protect the customer. The formula will discipline the company to achieve savings in the onshore costs under its control and will ensure that customers share in the benefit.

As has already been mentioned, gas standing charges were reduced by £1·00 this year. Following privatisation, British Gas will be required, under the terms of the authorisation, not to increase standing charges by more than the rate of inflation. This is not an assurance; this is a requirement.

Standing charges are the fairest way of recovering those fixed costs to which every consumer gives rise — meter readings, accounting and billing, and emergency services. For these reasons, standing charges are favoured by the industry's consumer councils and have been recommended by the Council of the European Communities for general adoption. To abolish them would cost for each industry £500 million. The lost revenue would have to be recovered through higher unit rates, penalising those who need more warmth, such as the very old, the young, the sick and the disabled.

Successive Governments have concluded that concessionary tariffs, including the abolition of standing charges, would not be a sensible way of helping those in need. In 1976, when announcing the then Government's response to a review of the scope for helping poor consumers by way of concessionary tariffs, fuel allowance, reduction or abolition of standing charges, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), the then Secretary of State for Energy, said:

> "The Government have concluded that none of these possibilities offers a satisfactory way of helping poor consumers with their fuel bills."

Opposition Members had what I regard as the effrontery to raise the matter of energy prices. Of course, energy prices are a commercial measure for the nationalised industries. Rates of return in the nationalised industries as a whole are low by private sector standards. The prices are not above levels which can be justified by economic criteria. It is not true, therefore, to regard such prices as a means of indirect taxation.

Domestic gas prices were increased by only 1·7 per cent. overall from last May—the first increase for 15 months. Domestic electricity prices increased last April by around 4·7 per cent., after three years in which the total increase was only 6 per cent. This was followed in July by a reduction of about 3·5 per cent. on the unit rate for those on a typical domestic tariff. Last month, a further reduction of about 1·2 per cent. was introduced.

This means that since the last election domestic gas and electricity prices have fallen in real terms—gas by 7 per cent. and electricity by 10 per cent. In cash terms, since the last election, the price of gas has increased by about 3 per cent. a year. Under the last Labour Government, it increased by about four times as fast. Similarly, the increase in electricity prices has been about 2 per cent. a year. Under Labour, it rose 11 times as fast, or as much in six months as in the last three and a half years.

In the short term, the best way in which to help low-income households with their fuel bills is through the social security system. The Government pay £140 million more in real terms in heating additions to low-income households than our predecessors did in 1978-79—

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 189. Noes 258.

Division No. 16] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*

Knox, David
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shephard, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the considerable improvement under this Government in support with heating costs for vulnerable groups through the supplementary benefit scale rates, the weekly heating additions and the simpler and better targeted arrangements for help during periods of exceptionally cold weather; supports the comprehensive action taken to improve energy efficiency in the home; and applauds the beneficial effect of low inflation on the costs of fuel, which is of immense benefit to all consumers but most especially those on low incomes.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister was good enough to deposit in the Library on 24 November full details of the bilateral agreements referred to in the Government's motion. As I have a keen interest in the matter, I spent some time ploughing through the documents. However, at an early stage I met the obstacle that the vital document, called, "Quantitative Limits Negotiated In Bilateral Agreements Under the GATT MFA" is entirely in French. For the past few days I have been struggling with expressions such as bouclés du genre éponge, les bas à varices, salopettes à bretelles, soutiens-gorge et bustiers——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not understand that either, but what is the point?

Mr. Wainwright: I submit that this fact made it almost impossible for me to prepare adequately for this debate. I must add that after the strenuous representations made by the admirable library to the Minister's office, only today, just after noon, an English translation arrived but it was too late for most of us.

Mr. Speaker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point but I have no authority over such papers as they are matters for the Government. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will be able to raise this matter in the debate.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): I find myself in a very uncomfortable position. I learned of this alien document only at 7 o'clock this evening. On inquiry I learned that, as the Scrutiny Committee required ratification of this Community document before 8 December to enable us to participate in the textile committee's proceedings and to vote, it was thought courteous to hon. Members who might wish to make inquiries in the Library if at least a document were deposited there.

I can only say that I share the distaste, if not the indignation, of the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright). I apologise profusely to him and to the House for this oversight.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it possible for the Minister to let us know before we start the debate what he is proposing to agree in the bilateral arrangements under the multi-fibre arrangement?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot do that, but I will now call the Minister to tell us.

10.16 pm

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9809/86 on renewal of the Arrangement regarding international trade in textiles (MFA), and of the Community's bilateral textiles agreements and of the Department of Trade and Industry's unnumbered explanatory memorandum of 24th November 1986 on the provisional application of bilateral agreements on trade in textile products between the European Community and certain third countries; and welcomes the Government's achievement in the conclusion of a new Protocol extending the Multi-Fibre Arrangement for a further five-year period and the satisfactory negotiation of 26 new bilateral agreements under the arrangement.

The motion before the House deals with the outcome of negotiations to renew the multi-fibre arrangement and the associated bilateral agreements. We debated the subject in May 1985, when the negotiations were still at a formative stage. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State outlined the Government's approach. In February 1986, just before the Community agreed its negotiating mandate, we debated the matter again. I took careful account of the points made by hon. Members and I have throughout kept in close and detailed touch with industry and other interested parties.

The House can now view the outcome of the negotiations against the United Kingdom's objectives. The process of negotiation involved discussion first within the Community, then within the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and, finally, at a bilateral level with our supplier countries. In my view, the results of the negotiations largely meet United Kingdom needs and should be welcomed.

The House will know that there is a strong weight of pressure in favour of liberalising the trade regime for textiles. This comes from the developing countries whose exports are restricted by the MFA, and from exporters to those countries who believe that their access is limited thereby. There is also pressure from consumers who are affected by the higher prices that can result. In addition, the Third world lobby cogently argues that the developing countries should be allowed special and preferential access to Orgnaisation for Economic Co-operation and Development markets in general and the United Kingdom in particular.

I am sure that hon. Members will also recall the assessments that have been made of the high costs of such a regime on the economy as a whole. There is a school of economists who claim that protection for one sector has costs for others. I fear that in the light of these considerations the new arrangement that has been negotiated, and which I shall describe, may not go as far as those advocates would wish.

I shall begin with the new protocol renewing the multi-fibre arrangement which was concluded on 1 August. A copy is in the Library of the House. I apologise for the fact that the accompanying documents are not in English.

A feature of the new protocol is that it extends the arrangement for five years. This is a longer period than in previous renewals, and I know that the industry welcomes this. The protocol provides for special treatment for the least developed countries and I am sure that this attitude will be widely welcomed on both sides of the House. The United Kingdom had pressed for this. In addition, the protocol also states that all participants should contribute towards liberalisation of trade. This is a clear signal that we expect others to reduce their trade barriers to our exports. There is a provision that there should be no cuts from previous quota levels. Here it should be borne in mind that there were pressures in the United States in particular for such cuts.

A further new element of the protocol, which was included as a response to problems experienced particularly by the United States, is that restrictions may now be introduced on products of certain new fibres, such

[Mr. Alan Clark]

as ramie sweaters, where these are directly competitive with traditional MFA products, and are threatening market disruption. In most other respects the protocol essentially renews the arrangement for a further period with little change.

The bilateral agreements — within the terms of the protocol — were negotiated between May and November, and all our MFA low-cost suppliers have now initialled agreements. The detailed quota levels have been placed in the Library. The terms are in accordance with the mandate agreed by Community Ministers last March and also meet the United Kingdom objectives that I last described in the House in February.

The new agreements will provide continued effective protection for the sensitive sectors of the United Kingdom textile and clothing industry, while providing some elements of liberalisation. For the non-dominant suppliers in particular, access levels and growth rates have been increased. For the dominant suppliers, which supply over half of MFA imports, growth rates remain low. On the eight most sensitive products, growth rates for dominant countries are in some cases as low as 0·1 per cent., and almost all are less than 1 per cent.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Could the Minister give some idea of overall growth rate so far as it will affect the United Kingdom market?

Mr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman will know that the total that we are discussing within which growth rates are taking place is only 8 per cent. of overall consumption. I do not think that is it comprehensible within that 8 per cent. to give an average overall figure. If the hon. Gentleman pays attention to what I am saying, he will find that the sectoral figures will emerge in the course of the debate. I repeat that all such figures have to be seen in the context of an overall band of only 8 per cent. of consumption.

To see what effect these changes will have on the market as a whole, one has to take into account the fact that almost 60 per cent. of consumption in value terms is supplied by domestic industry. Of total imports, 20 per cent. come from MFA suppliers, and that is only 8 per cent. of consumption. Of these, the majority are supplied by the dominant countries, whose growth rates remain low. The additional increases in access are therefore very marginal in terms of total United Kingdom consumption. Within this framework, the Community was mindful of the degree of openness of the supplier country's own market.

Special treatment was provided in line with the protocol for the least developed countries; the agreement with Bangladesh contains no quota restrictions. Approximately one quarter of the existing quotas, either for the Community as a whole or for certain member states, which had been consistently under-utilised, were not renewed. But in any case, if the need arose, it would be possible to introduce restraints, provided that imports rose above certain specified levels and were threatening market disruption.

A degree of liberalisation has been provided for children's clothes: in the case of the quotas on certain products, suppliers can bring in a specified proportion in the form of children's clothes at a special rate — for example, Singapore can send five children's garments for every three units of quota up to a limit of 5 per cent. of the total quotas on T-shirts and trousers.

The Community's approach was regarded as positive and constructive by the developing countries, as it provided a movement towards a more liberal regime. At the same time, we have kept tight controls where they are most needed by our industry. The industry had reservations but it gave the Protocol a cautious welcome and I believe that when it has studied the detailed content of the bilaterals it will decide that these too, given the mandate, are satisfactory from its standpoint. We have of course kept in close and detailed touch with the industry throughout. I have had a number of meetings with the unions and I hope that the House will feel able to recognise that we have negotiated effective protection for the most sensitive sectors.

Mr. Bowen Wells: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. He seems to be suggesting that the industry does not know what he is proposing in the bilateral arrangements, or, at least, has not had a chance to reply to his proposals on the bilateral arrangements. Is that detail known to the industry and if so, is its reaction to what he is proposing positive or negative?

Mr. Clark: There have been consultations with the industry at every stage.

Mr. Wells: Yes, but does the industry know the bilateral arrangements?

Mr. Clark: Yes, of course it does. My hon. Friend may be able to develop his thoughts if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He will then be able to cite what authority he has for his arguments.

As regards the longer term, the Community has stated that the final aim is the return of textiles to GATT rules. However, I must assure the House that no commitment has been given that all special restrictions on textile and clothing trade will come to an end in 1991. The Community has made it clear that that is a matter that will have to be negotiated in the GATT round.

Of course, in that round all the major derogations and exemptions from the basic rules of the GATT will be on the table for negotiation — in particular, the exemption from GATT disciplines enjoyed by some of the highly advanced developing countries which are among the major MFA suppliers. I should mention that, while those countries maintain barriers which restrict a wide range of the United Kingdom's goods and services, not least among them are barriers which restrict imports of textile and clothing products and it is our aim to bring those to an end.

The result of the MFA negotiations represents a good example of the European Community in negotiating as a bloc. It fully meets the interests of the United Kingdom, taken as a balance of consumers and producers, and I invite the House to endorse the motion in the name of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

10.28 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move, to leave out from "countries" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"but regrets the failure to negotiate within the Arrangement a new article on social development and working conditions or to secure reciprocal access to the markets of the supplying

countries, and records its concern at the continuing absence of an industrial strategy to reverse the high level of job losses and closures in the British textile industry."

The Minister said that the industry had given a cautious welcome to the protocol and the 26 associated bilateral arrangements. It would be fair to say that the abiding emotion of the industry is one of relief that it has a continuation of the MFA in any form. It is fair to say —I appreciate that this goes back beyond the Minister's time — that at one point at the turn of the year the industry was in some doubt whether the Government were in favour of a continuation of the MFA.

Tonight we see a situation full of paradoxes. The Government, who have been most dogmatic in their statements of rhetorical support for free trade, are represented at the Dispatch Box by a Minister who is one of the most formidable opponents of free trade and who is particularly eloquent when he addresses the House in the vernacular rather than any alien tongue.

The Minister, in the name of a Government who are committed to free trade, is recommending a model of planned trade which regulates the trade between Governments and imports to and exports from their respective countries. I must state straight away that, in principle, that form of collective bargaining is congenial to the Opposition, and we hope that the Government can be persuaded to extend that interventionist approach right across the trade balance that threatens to become severely imbalanced.

It is not possible for us to share the Minister's satisfaction with the state in which the protocol leaves the industry. The textile industry is a clear example of the damage caused to our manufacturing base by the policies pursued by this Administration in their earliest phase. Between 1979 and 1982, output fell by 25 per cent., investment halved and 750,000 jobs were lost—one in three of all the jobs that existed in 1979. That dramatic retreat on the part of the industry demonstrates that an exchange rate policy would be of far greater significance and importance to the industry than anything that can be secured through the MFA or similar trade negotiations.

It is true that since 1982 the industry has shown substantial recovery—entirely through its own efforts—but none of the indicators are back anywhere near the 1979 level. Profits may have rallied, but jobs continue to dribble away. In the first half of this year, 4,000 jobs were lost within the industry. Only last week, Pringle placed half of its work force on short-time working. I understand that this week Lyle and Scott has followed that lead. Those companies are operating at the upper end of the market. I understand that the pressure that is affecting them is the sharp drop in the numbers of American tourists visiting Britain during the summer and their failure to purchase high quality textiles. Pringle and Lyle and Scott are the latest casualties of the raid on Libya that the Prime Minister found it inconceivable to prevent.

Mr. Stephen Dorrell (Loughborough): Cheap.

Mr. Cook: No. The loss of Pringle's sales is attributable to the decrease in the numbers of American tourists coming to Britain. If the hon. Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) would like to attribute that decline to any factor other than President Reagan's attempt to make the world safer from terrorism, I would be interested to hear from him.

Mr. Dorrell: I would attribute it to Gaddafi's activities.

Mr. Cook: On the contrary, Mr. Gaddafi has not been particularly active in retaliation. I understood that that was why the American tourists were staying away.

There are no grounds for complacency in the light of the recent export-import figures. Imports have risen in eight of the last nine months and exports have gone down in five of those nine months. That presents a sombre and challenging background against which we must judge MFA 4.

I start with a point of agreement. I welcome the fact that MFA 4 removes the poorest countries from the quota restrictions — most notably Bangladesh. I note that Bangladesh is still within the scope of the grimly named "basket extractor systems"—a term for which I in no way blame the Minister. I hope that will not trigger off a repetition, as we witnessed last year, of quotas being invoked against Bangladesh.

It is necessary to recognise that there is something anomalous about Bangladesh receiving special treatment because of its poverty, whereas India and Pakistan, in the same sub-continent with standards of living not much above those in Bangladesh, are capped by quotas. I appreciate that there were severe problems in negotiating the bilateral arrangement with India because, understandably, India sought a large rise in quotas. However, if we are serious about using the MFA to help the poorest at the expense of the more successful nations of the Third world, such an increase must be conceded to the other countries in the Indian sub-continent, preferably at the expense of the dominant countries.

That leads me to the area of the debate where we would cast a slightly jaundiced eye over the protocol that the Minister has recommended to the House. The trade pressure from the MFA countries comes from not the poorest countries, but the dominant countries.

Mr. Dorrell: From Europe.

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct. Imports from European countries have been increasing at double the rate of imports from MFA countries. I would welcome a robust approach from the hon. Gentleman towards imports from Europe.

The greatest pressure on the textile market in Britain comes from the four dominant countries in the MFA. They account for half the quotas and imports from the MFA in jerseys, shirts and trousers. I accept that the protocol is a fairly faithful replication of the mandate. However, the Minister will be aware that in relation to the dominant countries, the industry feels that the quota increases are too liberal—with a small, not a capital, "l". Any multi-fibre arrangement negotiated with the Liberal party would undoubtedly have oscillating quotas, depending on who was speaking on its behalf.

Last time the House debated the matter the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) spoke on behalf of the alliance and prompted a speech from the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith), who I presume was speaking in his Back Bench capacity, in which he said that it was a pity his party had not chosen someone to speak for it who knew something about textiles. I understand that today we are to be treated to a speech from the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright). Clearly, the dispute in the previous debate will be resolved by ensuring that neither party to it takes part today. We look forward to the hon. Gentleman's speech to find out whether tonight the

[Mr. Cook]

Liberal party is in favour of or against the MFA and whether it favours the MFA being extended or choked off at the end of the five years.

Mr. Cyril Smith (Rochdale): So do I.

Mr. Cook: We share the hon. Gentleman's suspense.

We regard the quotas of the dominant countries as too liberal. Tory Members will be aware that the industry stated that any increases in quotas should be confined to growth and consumption in the United Kingdom market — about 1 per cent. per annum. The quotas in the bilateral arrangements provide for increases two, three or four times the growth in the domestic market. I appreciate that that represents a relatively marginal increase in their slice of the domestic market. Nevertheless, arithmetically, the conclusion is inescapable. It means that domestic producers have to accept a steady reduction of their market share within the United Kingdom and the Common Market. *[Interruption.]* As the hon. Member for Loughborough will be aware, the whole point of the quotas is to cap the competitive edge which these countries have because of their lower costs. That is why we describe them as the low-cost countries contained within the MFA. The industry is certainly making rapid progress towards greater competitiveness and it has increased productivity by 40 per cent. since 1980. Nevertheless, those increases in quotas are likely to be taken up and will represent a diminishing share of the industry's domestic market.

It is not simply a matter of quotas. There is great anxiety in the industry about the loosening of the restrictions on the supplying nations which keep them to the quotas. The extent to which the quotas are malleable is demonstrated by the remarkable surge in imports from the MFA dominants earlier this year. In the first eight months of this year imports to the Community from Taiwan increased by 42 per cent., from South Korea by 38 per cent. and from Hong Kong by 34 per cent. Those increases took place within the regime of the previous MFA.

The new arrangement provides new exceptions to the quotas which contain the capacity for even greater surges of imports. There is particular anxiety about the interstate transfers for which there is provision in the bilaterals and which could result in a 16 per cent. increase in certain quotas over five years. The Minister must accept that the industry will expect him to maintain a close watch on certain developments and a willingness to intervene should it turn out that interstate transfers are being abused and becoming a means of circumventing quota restrictions.

I now come to the other side of the coin. If we accept that it was inevitable, and even desirable, that during negotiations there would be an increase in quotas, it would have been reasonable for us to expect something in return from the supplying countries for those increases in quota. Despite the Minister's brave words, the protocol shows that we have got nothing in return.

The most obvious thing we might have hoped to get in return was that the supplying nations would prise open a slice of their textile market as we opened the door to our domestic textile market. Instead, protectionism among the 26 members of the MFA is stark. There are one or two honourable exceptions, because Hong Kong and Singapore operate open markets. The extent to which we can supply textile exports to those countries demonstrates what can be done in an open trading situation.

Hong Kong and Singapore export per head of population £9·50 worth of textiles to Britain. Per head of population they import £7 worth of textiles from Britain. That is an imbalance in their favour, but it is a perfectly reasonable one. However, if we look at South Korea, Taiwan and the other members of the dominant four, and include Brazil, we find that those countries export textiles to Britain at the rate of £4·80 per head of their population. In return, they import from Britain textiles to the value of 6p per head. It is impossible to defend that balance as being a result of the differential trade advantages of the two nations. Patently, above all else, that differential represents protectionism. The tariffs with which they surround themselves are astronomical. Brazil has a textile tariff which exceeds 100 per cent. Such a tariff is there not to regulate but to prohibit trade.

The Minister took pride in presenting to the House 26 bilateral agreements which, on the whole, provide for greater access to the British market. I understand that only one of the bilaterals provides for greater access to the market of the supplying country. That is South Korea, which has agreed to reduce its tariffs, but has in the meantime introduced, as a balancing act, deposits on textiles coming into the country.

So far, the points I have made are common to both management and work force. It is fair to say that my next point is pressed more by the unions than by management, but it is also endorsed by the World Development Movement, whose support for the multi-fibre arrangement cannot always be taken for granted. Both the unions and the World Development Movement agree on the need for a social clause in the MFA. Only last Friday the European trade union committee on textiles at its meeting in Luxembourg carried a resolution calling for an article on social development in the MFA which would oblige supplying nations to observe International Labour Organisation standards on working conditions. We find that request entirely reasonable.

If we accept that those countries should have a growing share of our market, we have a reasonable entitlement to ask that they ensure that that growth is passed on to their work force. In the past year, while MFA 4 has been under negotiation, the people of Britain were deeply moved by press reports about child labour in the textile factories in Thailand. It would be entirely wrong if we were knowingly to sanction that type of employment practice by deliberately setting a quota for imports of products from those factories.

Sadly, this area represents another missed opportunity. I am advised by the European trade union committee on textiles that in two weeks of negotiations in Geneva by the 26 bilaterals, exactly 30 minutes was devoted to a perfunctory attempt to get the supplying nations to accept a social clause. I regret that there is no social clause in the protocol. I hope that we will see an extension of MFA 4 into MFA 5, and that when the negotiations start again greater priority will be attached to the social clause than we have seen this time round.

I echo the words of the Minister, that the textile industry is a major industry. It remains important, despite the assault that it had to withstand because of the policies of this Government in their earlier years in office. It is important in terms of jobs, because it has more employees

than the vehicle, aerospace and shipbuilding industries added together. The jobs are located in regions that have been particularly susceptible to the recent recession, and those jobs are especially important in the fight against unemployment.

The textile industry is important to the economy. Its output is greater than the output of the high technology and telecommunications industries added together. It is the third largest sector of manufacturing industry. It is outstripped by only two other sectors. It is a great and significant industry.

MFA 4 offers a breathing space to the industry. I am confident that the industry will use that breathing space to follow through the progress that it has made in the last three years. The industry would be helped in that task if the Government were now to follow up their intervention in overseas trade by intervention at home. It would help the industry to plan an industrial strategy for this sector, with, as its objective, dare I suggest, a return to the target figures—not the employment figures—of 1979. I suspect that that broader task which still awaits us during the next five years will have to await the Government that comes into office after the next general election.

10.45 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): After the speech of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) it is difficult to know exactly where he stands on MFA 4. I believe unequivocally that this is an arrangement with which the textile industry can live. It provides a much better deal than at one time seemed possible. My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade deserves our thanks and congratulations for standing up for the interests of the United Kingdom during the complicated negotiations in Geneva.

Our textile industry does not demand permanent protection. The lifting of some quotas as part of the agreement has been accepted without fuss. The objective must, above all, be fair trade. If possible, it should be free trade, but it must be fair trade. We cannot open our markets fully while other countries are still prepared to use all the means that are available to them to protect their home markets. I think, for example, of South Korea. It gave every indication this summer of liberalisation, but when it came to the point it found new ways of preventing our exporters from gaining access to their customers. If high tariffs and quotas need to be relaxed, some countries are quite prepared to utilise restrictive licensing and distribution systems, as well as import deposits and bans, as a recent report of the National Economic Development Office clearly showed.

In the multi-fibre arrangement we recognised that account should be taken, when fixing quotas, of the needs of the very poor countries — Bangladesh has already been mentioned — in building up their domestic industries. It was also right that we should give due credit to those countries — for example, Hong Kong — whose markets are genuinely open to our goods. I am afraid that it is often the fast-developing countries like Taiwan and Brazil, which have significant populations and money to spend on British high quality goods, that discriminate blatantly against us. Tariffs of up to 100 per cent. are not just unfair, they destroy jobs in places like the West Riding and in other areas where such jobs are at a premium.

Over the years the multi-fibre arrangement has not restricted change. Indeed, MFA 3 permitted an annual growth rate in imports of up to 6 per cent.—nearly four times the growth rate of clothing sales during the period to which it applied. It is not in our interest to hold back international free trade. Indeed, this country depends upon it for its prosperity. However, we must not allow ourselves to be kidded that the situation that we should like to see already exists. Despite the fact that President Reagan held firm against a surge of protectionism in the United States, there remains the possibility of new measures in the future, with all the dangers that these present — that goods could be diverted towards our markets.

The new MFA will last for five years. That in itself will provide stability, which can only be good. We should use that time to try to persuade those with less open markets than our own to engage in play fair. At the end of the day, we must be prepared to be tough with countries like Korea. At the end of the day, too, we cannot give a commitment, as the west Yorkshire end of the Liberal party would like us to do, that MFA 4 represents the end of the road for these arrangements. To do so would invite our competitors to string out their excuses for the delays in becoming more open to our goods, up to the point where they would no longer need to make any excuses. One should not play one's cards when there is no need to do so, and when others are keeping theirs close to their chest.

In the mean time, it is a pity that some people are so wedded to the idea of gloom and doom in the textile industry that they react to almost any news with condemnation. Mr. Alex Smith, chairman of the TUC textile committee, was wrong to react so bleakly to the signing of the agreement. The people to whom I talk in the textile industry tend not be optimists at the best of times, but their realistic assessment was that what was signed in Geneva was acceptable, bearing in mind that many people wanted to see an end to such arrangements.

The textile industry has pulled itself up by its bootstraps, by its own efforts. Let us admit that some of the criticisms that were made a few years ago of our marketing and fashion skills were justified, but now our goods do not just have a good reputation in quality terms, they are much more fashionable and can compete with the best from Italy and other countries.

If one visits textile departments such as those at Huddersfield polytechnic, one comes across enthusiastic people who can transmit that enthusiasm to the young people considering a career in the industry. It is their future about which we should be concerned, and the new MFA will help to ensure that the textile industry is still around and able to offer a career in years to come.

10.51 pm

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): As to the documents that were provided in the Library for the debate, I accept the apologies that the Minister was good enough to give freely. He is aware, as I am, that it would not have required superhuman labour to put an English translation in the Library in the latter part of last week.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who opened for the Labour segment of the Opposition, seemed positively jealous of the amount of talent in the international trade in textiles that the Liberal party is able to deploy. The fact that on previous occasions such colleagues as my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has led for us does not mean that every time we debate these matters he is sent in to bat number one. As

[Mr. Richard Wainwright]

it is now rather more than 20 years since I was elected for the traditional textile and Socialist seat of Colne Valley, I do not feel particularly modest, although always nervous, in addressing the House.

As the House knows, the concept and system of the MFA was devised first to provide some traditional shelter, and every MFA document down the years has stressed the temporary nature of the system for our important and varied textile industry, so that it could re-equip, regroup and adjust itself to contemporary world conditions. It also aimed, to quote the 1974 MFA, which was typical, to

"achieve the expansion of trade, the reduction of barriers to such trade, and the progressive liberalisation of world trade in textile products".

I am glad to acknowledge freely that MFA 4, which the alliance has always recognised was necessary and timely, and on which we have had admirable tuition always from my hon. Friend from across the Pennines, the Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith), embodies to a substantial, if not a perfect, extent, the concept of liberalisation of world trade in textiles. It is more relaxed in any of its provisions than its predecessors, and we in the alliance welcome this.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that a policy document was launched by the Liberal party on 30 July entitled

"Liberals launch strategy for Textile and Clothing Industry"?

I believe that the report was launched by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and that it urges that the next multi-fibre arrangement renewal be the last and states:

"The British textile and clothing industries deserve better".

Would the hon. Gentleman confirm that that remains Liberal party policy or is he enunciating a new policy on behalf of the alliance tonight?

Mr. Wainwright: I shall come to that. I have never been accused in the House of holding back Liberal policy. Indeed, I am proud to proclaim it. It is odd that the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) should leap in so quickly to try to pinch my peroration from me. I shall come to the admirable document which was promulgated by my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil in the name of our party. We are especially glad not only that the Government have had the wisdom to commission an admirable, scholarly and impartial analysis of the position of the textile trade from Professor Silberston of Imperial college, but that they have paid great heed to his findings in their attitude to the MFA through the European Community. I shall remind the House of a key passage in Professor Silberston's admirable report:

"Taking all considerations into account, the benefits to the economy as a whole of relaxing the MFA would appear to outweigh the costs. Once the necessary adjustments have been made, the economy as a whole should benefit, although considerable problems would certainly arise for the textile and clothing industries."

Because the Government have failed to provide for the inevitable problems of some parts of the textile, and to a lesser extent the clothing, industries, we cannot join in the smug self-satisfaction of the Government motion. Professor Silberston was frank and correct in claiming that the economy overall would benefit from what we now have as a relaxed MFA but there will be some serious problems for some parts of the textile and clothing industry. The Government should have taken that on board as well.

There are some more welcome parts of the new MFA. We thoroughly approve of the exemption from any quota limit whatever, of such poor countries as Bangladesh, Guatemala, Uruguay, Haiti, Mexico and Colombia. It is certainly a step forward to have such an impressive list of countries which are now to be allowed to send their exports to the Community and other parts of the western world without any hindrance. We hope that one result of that will be to check the notable decline of the developing countries' share of imports of textiles into this country. As hon. Members will know, that has fallen in recent years from 34·5 per cent. of our United Kingdom imports of textile and clothing in 1976 to a mere 27·5 per cent. in 1984. That is not much of a tribute to liberalisation of expansion of international textile trade and not much contribution to getting the appalling weight of debt off the shoulders of the extremely poor and deprived countries.

I would like to welcome the disappearance on new year's day, as a result of MFA 4 and the bilaterals accompanying it, of an iniquitous restriction which the Government placed on the import of shirts from Bangladesh — of all poverty-strickeen and heavily unemployed countries — as recently as July 1985. To have got rid of that is to have got rid of a serious blot on Britain's reputation as a good neighbour in world trade.

In contradistinction to the Labour amendment, I point out with satisfaction that those suppliers with notably open home markets—I refer to such countries as Hong Kong and Singapore—have had their virtue rewarded in the MFA by being permitted higher growth rates than those of closed economies such as South Korea, Taiwan, and so on. These countries suffer under MFA 4 as a result of their narrow, selfish and protectionist policies, so they should suffer as a result. I am surprised that the Labour amendment implies that that is not happening.

With some regret, I now refer to the amendment from the Labour segment of the Opposition. I find it intolerable that countries that are burdened down with debt to Western moneylenders — countries that in the last 12 months, have sent more money back to the West than it has lent them, countries whose blood we and other rich countries are sucking—should be lectured in the Labour amendment about the necessity for them to establish social development and good working conditions. Of course they should. We all want good working conditions throughout the world. It is not the place of moneylenders, who are contributing to the depths of depression of these countries, to tell them how to organise their social frameworks or their working conditions.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall) *rose*——

Mr. Wainwright: I shall not give way. I have given way generously, and it took an enormously long time. I hope the hon. Gentleman will catch the eye of the Chair.

Mr. Cyril Smith: Will my hon. Friend give way for a second?

Mr. Wainwright: To my hon. Friend, of course.

Mr. Smith: I ask my hon. Friend to advance a theory about why Labour Members will not press their amendment to a vote tonight. Is it because they do not agree with it, or because of the point my hon. Friend has just made, or because only six of them are attending the debate?

Mr. Wainwright: My hon. Friend is as percipient as always. I am grateful to him for assisting my argument. There is an element of moan and groan in the Labour amendment. Why do not hon. Gentlemen listen to the increasingly robust attitude of some of the more go-ahead textile producers in this country? For example, Viyella proudly proclaims and makes no secret of the fact that it is willing to take on any country in providing value for money in the form of the textiles that it produces so well. Only last week, I was glad to hear the great firm of Dawson International, which is not by any means wholly occupied in the quality end of the trade—it has some very run-of-the-mill cloth producers in its group—say that it, too, was prepared to take on any of the low-cost producers and out-perform them in their line of goods. That kind of robust attitude will stand up to the depressing influence of the Government's economic policies.

The situation would be much more bearable for some of our textile companies if the Government were to expand the economy and bring down their record rates of real interest, which are the enemy of companies that invest in modern textile plants, except for those companies with cash mountains. Of course things would be better if the Government were more robust in their anti-dumping policies. We in the alliance parties have still not given up hope of the Minister. He has a more robust attitude against dumping than his predecessors did. We still want to see the fruits of his labour. I make no secret of the fact in concluding——

Mr. Robin Cook: The hon. Gentleman seemed to be about to conclude. Before he finishes his remarks, I press him on the question that was put to him earlier. It appears that he takes the view that the British textile industry is moving to a position in which it can take on all comers. Before the hon. Gentleman lapses into French so that we cannot follow the latest twists in Liberal party policy, will he make it clear whether the Liberal party would favour an extension of the MFA when MFA 4 expires?

Mr. Wainwright: I am immensely flattered by the zest with which Labour Members pursue Liberal policy. How wise they are to pay such close attention to it. The very next line in my notes contains the warning about which my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil has often spoken. The industry should be given a fair warning and reasonable time to prepare. The alliance believes that MFA 4 should have been explicitly announced as the last one. After all, it is lasting for five years, a year longer than the previous one. We have no quarrel with that, but we believe that, in the interests of ordinary trade planning, it is necessary that the industry should be given a warning.

I am astonished at the recklessness of the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), who seemed to think that there was no need to sound a warning to the industry, that the Government could reserve their position and, if they decided to have no MFA in 1991, that the industry could take it on the chin. We do not believe that. We believe that the industry should be given time to plan. I remind the House that by 1991 the industry will have had 17 years of well-deserved shelter from the full blast of world competition. That is surely enough, and it has proved to be enough, for the robust and enterprising companies to become prepared to play their part fully in the open market.

I must admit that I represent an area in which the wool textile industry has been receiving purely nominal benefit in recent years from the MFA. It is now so fully occupied that I have received virtually no representations from my constituency about the new MFA either way. I acknowledge that that is something of a privilege. The alliance is well aware that sections of the textile trade will find adjustment much more difficult. We are glad that they now have five full years in which to prepare to take their place as the self-reliant industries that I am sure they wish to be.

11.7 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I do not want to follow too closely the remarks of the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright), because his statements cannot stand up to close scrutiny. How can one even contemplate doing away with the MFA or saying beforehand, as the alliance apparently does, that this will be the last one, when world competitors would send to this country goods made by child labour? Until there is competition on equal ground, as the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said, with an arrangement incorporating a social clause specifying the conditions under which these goods are to be made—at least imposing a minimum standard—no British firm, however modern its technology and machinery, will be able to compete. Britain needs to be protected by a strong multi-fibre arrangement for as far ahead as we can imagine.

This is a critical industry. It is very localised. I think that in the east midlands 20 per cent. of the 500,000 or so people in the textile and clothing industry are working. During my recent visits, especially in Leicester, I have been continually asked by management and people on the shop floor to stress whenever I get the chance the need for some form of regulation brought about by the MFA if the industry is to continue. We do not want it obliterated by cheap imports. It has modernised tremendously, at great cost, and often, regrettably, using very superior and expensive Italian and German machines—these days, unfortunately, British machines are rarely used. Even so, a firm in Leicester recently had to shut down five or six of its most modern Italian machines, costing more than £150,000 each, because they could not be operated economically. For the time being, they have been put in mothballs.

The industry is very important to the east midlands. Production and output in textiles and clothing has improved steadily, but is still well below the level of the late 1970s. In 1979, the output indicator was 117·9 but today it is only 104. Although some ground has been made up since the depression in the intervening eight years, there is still no certainty that the present position will be maintained without constant and regular monitoring of our competitors' imports. That is why I particularly welcome this MFA.

However, I would have welcomed a social clause, as that would have been a sensible step. In the period leading up to the termination of this MFA and the next regime—for orderly world marketing there will have to be some form of regime for the foreseeable future—I hope that the Government will prepare to take big steps towards encouraging supplier countries to enter into some sort of social clause relating to the conditions of their employees.

I had thought that my hon. Friend the Minister would mention BRITE, or basic research into industrial technology for Europe. That is of critical importance to our textile and clothing industry. Basically, BRITE is

[Sir John Farr]

funded by no less than £392 million of EEC money, covering the same period to the end of, I believe, 1991 as MFA 4 covers. That huge sum of money is available for research into all the modern applications that are so necessary if our industry is to stay abreast of events.

My hon. Friend the Minister, who is so diligent in these matters, will be familiar with BRITE. I hope that he will give an assurance that British companies get their share of that money. There has already been co-operation between a French firm and three Portuguese companies, which are spending a lot of that money on putting robots into the production line for Portuguese textiles. Other firms are combining. There is an application with robotic connections involving two firms in Belgium. They are working hard on trying to modernise their production techniques. A lot of money is also available for specific schemes in relation to introducing modern computer technology and improving existing computer technology in the production of textiles and clothing.

I hope, therefore, that in welcoming MFA 4, my hon. Friend the Minister will comment on BRITE. It is vital to the nation that we should get our share of the European money available.

11.15 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): First, I declare my interest as a member of the Transport and General Workers Union, which represents many textile workers. This brief debate takes place against a backdrop of massive job losses in the textile and clothing industry during the Government's lifetime. There have been widespread closures and major reorganisation. If that is appreciated, it helps to dispel the allegations that are made by many that the multi-fibre arrangement is unduly protectionist. It puts into perspective the hesitant calls that have been made by some sections of the alliance that the MFA should cease at the end of this agreement.

I join the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir. J. Farr), who expressed regret that there is no social clause within the arrangement. It is my information that the debate on a social clause took all of 30 minutes in the recent discussions. That is regrettable, because there is mounting concern, certainly within the trade unions which represent textile and clothing workers, that there should be a concerted effort to try to improve the wages and conditions of those who work in the textile industry in the developing and least developed countries.

A document was published by the TUC in 1985 entitled "A Fair Balance in textile and clothing trade", a passage of which reads:

"in some instances the benefits of industrialisation are not passed on to the workers in textiles and clothing. This judgment is supported by the appallingly low wages earned by workers in many supplier countries . . . there is increasing evidence that the supplier countries are competing amongst themselves to attract foreign investment by suppressing pay. The widespread appearance of free trade zones in these countries over the last five to ten years, in which companies receive considerable tax concessions from host countries and in which workers are frequently denied employment rights laid down in ILO Conventions on Minimum Labour Standards, is a worrying phenomenon"

Indeed it is. We in the Labour party are extremely anxious to ensure that in future we receive in the United Kingdom an increasing share of textiles that are produced by the least well-off countries. That is a central part of our policy towards the textile industry.

Mr. Stuart Holland: Does my hon. Friend not agree that the official Liberal spokesman on these matters, the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright), in claiming that the Labour party wishes to reduce imports from the heavily indebted countries, referred to Singapore and Hong Kong, which are not third world countries with heavy debts? It is precisely by planning a shift in import trade towards the least developed countries that the objectives of which my hon. Friend is talking can be fulfilled, and not by the out-dated Manchester laissez-faire approach.

Mr. Madden: That is right. The more that we debate the difficulties of the industry, the more we come to see that most difficulties cannot be overcome by leaving the industry to the mercies of the free market. We must look increasingly towards the advantages and merits of planning. That is what the debate is all about and that is——

Mr. Wainwright: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. A mere glance at the record in the *Official Report*, when it is published, will showed that I never cited Singapore or Hong Kong as countries burdened by debt. That was not part of my argument. I was referring to countries such as Bangladesh and Guatemala.

Mr. Stuart Holland: I am glad to get a retraction from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Wainwright: I was correcting the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) has the floor.

Mr. Madden: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to intervene in the debate between my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) and the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright).

Mr. Robin Cook: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Madden: No. I must work towards a conclusion.

I understand that the Governments of America and Sweden permit official observers from the trade unions representing textile and clothing workers to be present at negotiations. It would be a welcome advance if the British Government, in future negotiations that are of central interest to those who rely on these industries for their livelihoods, were to permit their trade unions to attend the talks as official observers.

What is the Government's policy towards the textile and clothing industry? We are so often treated to dollops of bland complacency served up by Ministers as an excuse for a coherent policy. In the closing minutes that are available, will the Minister tell us the Government's policy towards that important industry? It remains a major employer and exporter and a vital industrial activity within some of the most hard-pressed areas of Britain.

If low pay guarantees jobs and job security, my area and many others where the textile industry has been operating for many years, paying below the average, should have below-average unemployment. The reverse, of course, is the truth. West Yorkshire and Bradford have unemployment that is way above the average. That exposes the myth, peddled by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and others, that low pay creates jobs and job

security. We have only to look at the prevalence of low pay within the British textile and clothing industries to dispel that notion completely.

What is the Minister doing to assist the British textile and clothing industry to take full advantage, for instance, of resources that are available from the EEC? What is he doing for those areas of Britain which are looking at ways of securing help from the EEC to expand their textile and clothing activities?

What is the Minister doing to improve training? I recently talked to the management of a firm in Bradford which is proposing to move from Bradford to Doncaster because it claimed that it cannot recruit the skilled machinists in Bradford. That is astonishing.

I have talked within the past few days to another textile employer in Leicester who also complained that he cannot secure skilled workers in his firm. What are the Government doing to ensure that adequate training takes place to enable such firms to find the skilled work force that they require to expand in areas which are suffering from appallingly high rates of unemployment?

What is being done further to improve design? References have rightly been made tonight to the improving design capability of the British textile and clothing industry. But we all know that further advance must be made. What are the Government doing to enable local authorities to open design shops where our products can be shown not only to the British market but to those who seek to sell abroad?

Finally, I again ask the Minister to tell us what co-operation there is between the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Employment and other Departments which are charged with regional assistance and development, combating unemployment and trying to help industrialists and manufacturers not only to stay in business but to expand? What co-ordinated policy-making is taking place and what assistance is being given on the ground?

The industry, because of its importance, is anxious to obtain information on the Government's objectives. There is grave concern about the GATT rules and rumours circulating within the industry that the British textile and clothing industry will be sacrificed for concessions for financial services and agriculture.

Mr. Alan Clark: Not true.

Mr. Madden: The industry is demanding clear and precise information about the Government's objectives for the British textile and clothing industry. They are looking for coherent and co-ordinated policies and for positive assistance. It is prepared to help itself, but it wants to be able to do that within a framework where the Government are taking a lead and are giving leadership.

The British textile industry has suffered much in the past and looks forward with some guarded optimism to the future. It is looking to the Minister, his Department and the Government to give it clear information. The closing stages of the debate will give the Minister an opportunity to give us some idea of the future of the British textile and clothing industry.

11.25 pm

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): I do not know the textile industry managers, directors or workers to whom the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) has been speaking. They are certainly not those to whom I have been speaking, who tell me that they want the Government off their backs and are proud of the fact that in recent years they have proved they can manage their own affairs.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Is it not a fact that the Opposition want the return of training levies, when they are the last thing the textile trade wants? Most companies know how to do in-house and group training.

Mr. Lawler: My hon. Friend is right. The last thing the trade wants is a further financial imposition when companies are participating fully, for example, in the YTS and other schemes to great effect and have developed close links with colleges and schools to ensure that the shortage of skilled labour in the industry is overcome.

The industry cannot be accused of shielding behind the MFA to protect its inefficiencies. What was once an industry synonymous with empty mills, large-scale redundancies and perhaps not perfect designs, slow deliveries and less than speedy initiatives in developing export markets is now an industry that is synonymous with developing the use of new technology, production and training techniques and, above all, successfully breaking into new markets and achieving record export earnings last year.

It cannot be said that the MFA curtails exports, for the reverse has been the case. Under the MFA, imports have grown by 16·5 per cent. in a market that has increased by only 2·5 per cent. Investment in the British industry last year increased by 12 per cent., output was increased and productivity achieved a 40 per cent. increase, whereas the rest of manufacturing industry averaged only 28 per cent. It is wrong to describe it as a sunset industry. It is not only surviving, but leading the way in a manner which other sectors of British industry would do well to follow.

But restricting the industry's growth is a denial to it of access to many foreign markets. The new protocol will be most welcome if it leads to markets being opened up. There are too many countries where the British textile industry cannot get a look-in. I applaud the moves in the protocol to reward countries that open their doors to our industry by allowing them more generous access to our market. However, I hope that that move will not be diluted by rewarding countries that do not deserve such a reward.

We have allowed South Korea a 3·4 per cent. increase in its quota for sweaters. That means that in 1987 that country will be allowed 3·4 per cent. increase on 11,500,000 sweaters, which will be an awful lot more sweaters coming into this country. South Korea will be allowed a 2 per cent. increase in its wool cloth quota. In other words, its industry will be allowed to export 155 tonnes of the material to Britain.

In response, South Korea has made promises to liberalise its market to British textile goods from 1 July. The industry in Britain is still holding its breath, waiting for the issue of those licences. The one concession for our industry announced so far by South Korea means that 24,000 sq m of wool cloth will be allowed into that country in the six months July to December of this year. That compares with a massive 600,000 sq m of wool cloth that will come into Britain from South Korea next year as a result of the recently negotiated bilateral agreement. Our cloth exports to South Korea will be subject to a 60 per

[Mr. Lawler]

cent. tariff, while cloth entering Britain will be subject to a 13 per cent. tariff. There is nothing in prospect for the British industry from the agreement with South Korea, at least until 1 January 1988. I hope that the Commission, with backing from the Government, will consider threatening — and, if necessary, carrying out those threats—the renegotiation of bilateral agreements if the other countries do not honour the promises that they have made.

The same applies to Brazil. There is an EC quota of 13,000 wool tops. The total production in Brazil is only 14,000 wool tops, yet our access to Brazil is effectively closed. If anything got in, it would be subject to a tariff of 105 per cent. Yet we allowed Brazil a 19·5 per cent. increase in its exports to Britain. There is inequality, and it must be remedied if British industry is to have a fair chance.

Even modest increases in allowing access to our overseas markets could mean a significant difference to the prospects of the British industry. If Korea allowed an average of £1 a head more for domestic consumption of British textile goods, if the same was allowed in Taiwan, and if in Brazil only 50p per head was allowed, it would mean a massive 4,500 jobs in Britain. That is a measure of how much the industry could benefit from the genuine liberalisation of world trade.

Perhaps the greatest danger round the corner is the newly elected Democratic majority in the United States Senate. That majority was elected on a platform of protectionism, which would not only cause great damage to British industry but would set off a new, escalating trend of protectionism throughout the developed world. If that happens — I sincerely hope that it does not — the Commission must be ready to respond and to renegotiate bilateral agreements if our partners in those agreements increase their protectionist measures.

The wool textile industry still employs about 14,000 people in Bradford. It can compete on price, quality, delivery and design. I hope that the new multi-fibre arrangement will be used positively and constructively by the Government, through the Commission, to ensure that the long-term objective, with which none of us would disagree, of liberalising trade is achieved through bilateral agreements. But, if necessary, they must be renegotiated to bring pressure on the parties to honour their promises and to allow British textiles into those markets. The industry will expand, if only it is given the chance.

11.33 pm

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): I welcome the Minister's success in obtaining this MFA 4. I do so with some reservations, but I recognise his difficulties. The employers in the industry will give the arrangement a fairly warm welcome, but the Minister will wish to examine closely the small print in the arrangement, which in this case relates to the bilateral agreements. They may already have had the opportunity to consider the arrangement, but they will have to study it closely and see how it works in practice before they finally decide to accept it.

I wish to comment on the speech of the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright). I almost said my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley, because he was a neighbour of mine for many years until the boundary commissioners, unkindly, separated us by moving us both. He accused the Labour party of telling moneylenders that they should accept a social clause. He said that it was wrong for us to expect moneylenders to do that and that we were wrong to lecture them. But he lectured them, because he spoke about the need to help developing and recently wealthy countries.

It is easy for those who are comfortably off and have comfortable jobs to demand further sacrifices, not from the employers but from the workers. Those workers are low paid and have difficulty in finding alternative employment because this important industry is localised, as my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said.

In my constituency, the only employer of any importance until recently was connected with the textile industry. Those employed in that industry who lost their jobs found it difficult to find alternative employment.

We cannot rely on the modest improvement in the industry's economic position over the last few years. I attended a press conference at Maple mill, Oldham, in January when Courtaulds announced a substantial investment programme of £4·5 million for some of the mills in the Oldham area. I welcomed that, because it meant that at least there would be a continuation of some employment in the industry. But at the end of that investment programme, fewer jobs will exist. The workers will not receive help from the modest improvement in output. Modernisation which leads to improvement also results in fewer jobs. I support the call by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) for the Government to examine that aspect of the agreement.

If we are to liberalise trading—I do not disagree with that, because it is the proper course—we must consider the consequences for those workers who rely on textiles for their employment. The Government must consider how they can encourage new employment in the areas which are losing out.

If we are to sustain the industry we must consider the two things which advantage those who export to Britain. One advantage has been dealt with already — the protection which some countries give their industry. The other advantage is the lower wages and poor conditions which apply to workers in some other countries. A social clause is necessary. I hope that the Minister will bear that in mind, even though he has been unsuccessful so far.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): My hon. Friend mentions two matters. Will he accept that a third matter is important? I refer to labelling. This is important to the textile industry because names similar to English names are often used. If the country of origin does not feature on labels, further problems will be caused.

Mr. Lamond: I completely agree. I once had the good fortune to come up in the draw for private Members' Bills and I tried to introduce a Bill about that matter because of its importance. Of course, my Bill was lost.

The Minister should not think that the protocol will wipe the slate clean, and that now that he has an MFA 4, he can go back to sleep over the matter of textiles. The problem will still exist and many more problems may develop as the bilateral agreements become clear. I welcome the Minister's success. He has held his job for somewhat longer than some of his predecessors, but he should not rest on his laurels. We will be back to see him about the matter in the light of developments.

11.40 pm

Mr. Alan Clark: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply. I do not know how to interpret the reference by the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) to the length of time that I have spent in this job. I shall not pursue that point now.

This has been a useful and constructive debate. I listened carefully to the points that were raised and I am sorry that I do not have longer to answer all of them. In common with the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton, I feel that the subject will remain with us and perhaps we shall have the opportunity to discuss it at greater length on another occasion.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) raised the question of reciprocation, a point taken up by many other hon. Members. The element of reciprocation at present has been essentially passive. We have been liberalising in the direction of those countries that allow better access to our imports, and we have been trying to restrict the level of liberalisation of those countries that have resisted them. Of course, a far more positive and active level of reciprocation is what I hope will be achieved, and that is what we shall insist on in the GATT negotiations where we would seek positive reduction at every level of tarrif barriers against our imports. The House will note that this agreement lasts for five years and that should bring it substantially over the period of the GATT negotiations so that our team in the GATT is not faced with the prospect of the arrangement falling off the edge half way through them. It will have cover throughout and in that context I hope that we shall be able to negotiate a significant level of reciprocation.

The level of support that the Government give to the textile industry is a matter that I should like to dwell upon, but I shall have to omit the details. The support is extensive and I am satisfied that it covers aspects of design, fashion colleges and universities. I should like to consider the point made by hon. Members from both sides of the House.

I am aware of the concern that has been expressed under the broad heading of the so-called social clause. The clause would mean the sanction of further restrictions on trade if social and working conditions were not improved. That begs many questions: to what standard would they be improved? How would it be enforced and monitored? It can be argued that social and working conditions are more likely to be improved by allowing a country to sell its goods than by preventing it from doing that. However, I must state that I have noted the concern that has been expressed. I do not reject that possibility out of hand. Anxiety has——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

Question, That the amendment be made, *put and negatived.*

Main question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9809/86 on renewal of the Arrangement regarding international trade in textiles (MFA), and of the Community's bilateral textile agreements and of the Department of Trade and Industry's unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum of 24th November 1986 on the provisional application of bilateral agreements on trade in textile products between the European Community and certain third countries; and welcomes the Government's achievement in the conclusion of a new Protocol extending the Multi-Fibre Arrangement for a further five-year period and the satisfactory negotiation of 26 new bilateral agreements under the Arrangement.

House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Schedule 1 to the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 be amended as follows:

PART I OF SCHEDULE 1

1. The following entry shall be omitted—

'Umpire or a Deputy Umpire appointed for the purposes of section 9 of the Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985.'.

PART II OF SCHEDULE 1

2. The following entries shall be omitted:—

'The Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

The British Film Fund Agency.

The Forestry Commission.

The Gas Consumers' Council.

The Livestock Marketing Commission for Northern Ireland.

A Medical Board or Pneumoconiosis Medical Board constituted for the purposes of Part III of the Social Security Act 1975 or Part III of the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Act 1975, including any panel constituted for the purposes of any such Board.

The Mental Health Review Tribunal for Northern Ireland.

The National Consumer Council.

The National Enterprise Board.

The National Film Finance Corporation.

The National Research Development Corporation.

The Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority.

The Staff Commission established under section 7 of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1979.'.

PART III OF SCHEDULE 1

Additional entries

3. There shall be inserted at the appropriate places:—

'Adjudicating medical practitioner or specially qualified adjudicating medical practitioner appointed under or by virtue of Part III of the Social Security Act 1975 or Part III of the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Act 1975.

Chairman of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

Chairman of the Agricultural and Food Research Council.

Chairman of the British Library Board.

Chairman of the Economic and Social Research Council.

Chairman of other full-time member of the Forestry Commission.

Chairman of the Gas Consumers' Council.

Chairman or Deputy Chairman of the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland.

Chairman or Deputy Chairman, in receipt of remuneration, of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England.

Chairman of the Letchworth Garden City Corporation.

Chairman of the Livestock Marketing Commission for Northern Ireland.

Chairman of the London and Metropolitan Government staff Commission.

Chairman of the Mental Health Commission for Northern Ireland.

Chairman or Deputy Chairman of the National Consumer Council.

Chairman of the National Enterprise Board.

Chairman of the National Research Development Corporation.

Chairman of the Natural Environment Research Council.

Chairman of the Science and Engineering Research Council.

Director of Royal Ordnance p.l.c.

Managing director of the National Research Development Corporation.

Member of a panel of persons appointed under Schedule 5 to the Rent (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 to act as chairmen and other members of rent assessment committees.'.

Entries omitted

4. The following entries shall be omitted:—

'Paid Chairman of an Area Transport Users Consultative Committee established under section 56 of the Transport Act 1962.

Chairman of the Dental Committee of the Northern Ireland Central Services Agency for the Health and Social Services.

Chairman of the Domestic Coal Consumer Council.

Director of Britoil p.l.c. nominated by a Minister of the Crown or government department.

Director of Cable and Wireless Public Limited Company nominated by a Minister of the Crown or government department.

Director of the Cereals Committee Limited appointed by a Minister of the Crown or government department.

Director of any company in receipt of financial assistance under section 5 of the Films Act 1985, being a director appointed by a Minister of the Crown or government department.

Director of the successor company within the meaning of Part V of the Telecommunications Act 1984, being a director nominated or appointed by a Minister of the Crown or by a person acting on behalf of the Crown.

Industrial Assurance Commissioner or Deputy Industrial Assurance Commissioner appointed under the Industrial Assurance (Northern Ireland) Order 1979.

Any member of the British Library Board in receipt of remuneration.

Any member, in receipt of remuneration, of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England.

Member of the Board of the Royal Ordnance Factories.'.

Other amendments

5. (1) In the entry beginning 'Boundary Commissioner or Assistant Boundary Commissioner', for 'Assistant Boundary Commissioner' there shall be substituted 'Assistant Commissioner'.

(2) In the entry 'Chairman of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland', after 'Chairman' there shall be inserted 'or Vice-Chairman'.

(3) For the entry beginning 'Chairman of any of the Post Users' Councils' there shall be substituted—

'Chairman of the Post Office Users' National Council.'.

(4) in the entry 'Chairman of the Prescription Pricing Agency', for 'Agency' there shall be substituted 'Authority'.

(5) In the entry 'Director of British Telecommunications plc appointed by a Minister of the Crown or government department', after 'plc' there shall be inserted 'nominated or'.

(6) In the entry 'Member appointed by a Minister of the Crown of the Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales or of an agricultural wages committee established under the Agricultural Wages Act 1948, or chairman of such a committee' the words from 'or of an agricultural wages committee' onwards shall be omitted.—*[Mr. Luce.]*

11.44 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): It is typical that such a controversial measure should be moved at this time of night without any explanation. I should like to ask the Minister a probing question. Why is the uprating in relation to income levels linked on this occasion to earnings rather than to the cost of living? Is that the normal practice, or is it an innovation? If the latter, what is the justification?

11.45 pm

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): I appreciate that question. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, when the Act was adopted in 1957 we started with a level of £500. That has been adjusted

from time to time. The broad indicator has been the adjustment in line with the earnings index. Therefore, I thought it right that since the last sum was set at £4,000 in 1983 we should take into account the earnings index in that time scale. I have acted consistently with previous Governments' policies and followed that particular indicator.

Question put and agreed to.

European Assembly (Elections)

11.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move,

That the draft European Assembly Elections Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 18th November, be approved.

The regulations are needed to take account of the changes in electoral law made by the Representation of the People Act 1985. They represent a further step in the process of following up all the consequences of the 1985 Act. The House may recall that some provisions in that Act, notably the increase in the deposit and the extension of the franchise to overseas electors, are already in place.

The present regulations introduce several changes, but I shall mention only three substantive changes. The first deals with absent voting. Schedule 1 to the regulations lists provisions in the 1983 and 1985 Acts which are to apply to Assembly elections with any necessary modifications. The new provisions on absent voting at parliamentary elections introduced by the 1985 Act will also apply to Assembly elections.

The second deals with deposits. Schedule 1 also has the effect of increasing the deposit at Assembly elections to £750. The House will remember that in 1979 the deposit at Assembly elections was fixed at £600. Schedule 2 applies provisions in the Representation of the People regulations and the corresponding regulations for Scotland.

The third major change deals with combined elections. Schedule 3 makes detailed provision, similar to that for parliamentary elections, for the conduct of any Assembly election, the poll at which is combined with a parliamentary or local government election.

Subject to the regulations being approved by Parliament, our intention is to make them by the middle of the month. The provision on absent voting would then come into force on 1 January 1987, which is the same time as they come into force for parliamentary elections. These will deal with elections held on or after 16 February 1987. The provisions on the combination of elections will come into force for any election, notice of which is published on or after 16 February 1987, again as for parliamentary elections. The increase in the deposit will apply at any election, notice of which is published on or after the fourteenth day after the regulations are made.

These are fairly complex regulations, and I have explained only the three major changes. I commend them to the House.

11.48 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The House has previously endorsed the principle of consistency of electoral arrangements for Parliament and the European assembly elections. These regulations, which the Minister with such commendable lucidity and brevity has outlined, achieve that. The Minister explained the modest purpose of the regulations, which are complex, and the Opposition do not intend to divide the House on them.

The regulations honour and reflect what we did in the Representation of the People Act 1985 about absent voters, proxy votes, the deposit and combined elections. On the basis of consistency, I invite the House to endorse the regulations.

11.49 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): We do not under-estimate the importance of these regulations, because they will give effect to the third round of elections to the European assembly. They contain three key points to which I should like to refer hon. Members. The first is rule 17 which says that there will be no change in the electoral system.

The second is on page 38 of the regulations and in describing the ballot paper it says that there will be a chance to, "vote for one candidate only." That excludes an opportunity for a regional list or for any other form of proportional representation. [HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] Page 49 of the explanatory memorandum which goes with the regulations says quite clearly:

"Such elections are conducted in accordance with the simple majority system of elections."

It will come as no surprise to hon. Members to know that the Liberals and the Social Democrats are opposed to the House agreeing to the terms of the regulations and we hope that the Government will agree to withdraw them and give them further consideration. Hope springs eternal, and the reason why we have to keep on pressing the Government on these matters is that it is quite clear that they would like to carry on with the cosy arrangement that has existed for far too long for European and Westminster elections.

We do not like the way in which the regulations were brought before the House last week. In an almost surreptitious way, the Government tried to slip the regulations through to a Standing Committee. The last time we discussed these regulations was in January 1984 when they were, quite properly, debated in the House and not sent off to a quiet corner of the building where in a Standing Committee a small cosy group of people could just push them through without any ado.

Curious as it was, that time hon. Members from all parts of the House rose in unison to block the motion and to stop the regulations from being sent to a Standing Committee. It is significant that leading members of the Government party as well as people from outside the House joined together to ensure that there would be a debate today.

The history of these regulations goes back to the first round of the European elections, at the time of the Lib-Lab pact. The Labour Government of the day put forward two options. The first was for England, Scotland and Wales and the second was for Northern Ireland. The option for Northern Ireland was for a system of proportional representation. Presumably, that was because, when people take to the bullet and the bomb, the way to ensure that minority views are adequately heard is for the Government to introduce a fair electoral system. That seems an extraordinary way to go about things, but in this part of Britain, because we conduct our affairs in a more democratic way and without the violence that, sadly, characterises Northern Ireland, we are excluded from having the option that Parliament deemed appropriate for Northern Ireland.

In 1977, we decided to carry on with the first-past-the-post system in European elections. Labour Members had a free vote, but members of the then Labour Government were urged to support proportional representation. Conservative Members also had a free vote. It is interesting to look back at the figures in the *Official Report* for the vote at the end of that debate, because 224 hon. Members voted for the regional list option, one of the two options before the House. That figure included 147 Labour Members and 61 Conservative Members.

Among the Conservative Members who supported us that night in 1977 were the present Secretary of State for Energy, a former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr Heath), the present Secretary of State for Education, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the present Solicitor-General, the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, the Secretary of State for Defence and the Secretary of State for Scotland. We look forward to seeing them all in the Lobby with us tonight supporting us again. We know that they are always consistent in their support in such matters.

At that time, the present Home Secretary said from the Front Bench that the first-past-the-post system had to be used in the first round of elections, but he then said that we should move to proportional representation when we had become used to European elections. During that debate in 1977 he said:

"I say this as one who actually favours electoral reform in this Kingdom and who has spoken and voted for it accordingly."—[*Official Report*, 13 December 1977; Vol. 941, c. 318.]

The delight of our party when we learnt of his appointment can be imagined.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I apologise for interrupting the hon. Member, but there are fairly narrow regulations. They are concerned with the rules and practices governing the administration of elections. It is not in order to go into the merits of first-past-the-post or proportional representation. I am sure that the hon. Member will relate his remarks to the regulations.

Mr. Alton: I shall indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but on advice from the Clerks, whom we consulted on the matter, because there are references to the kind of electoral system that will be used——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that, on reflection, the hon. Member will not in any way wish to involve the Clerks. I have made, I hope politely and kindly, a suggestion as to what is and what is not in order, and I am sure that the hon. Member will take note of that point.

Mr. Alton: Yes, I shall, and I am grateful for your help, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall carefully refer to the regulations and to the explanatory note that accompanies them. Rule 17 on page 19 refers to the method of election. According to the regulations that are before the House tonight, the modifications list no change whatsoever. Our objection on these Benches is that there is to be no change. The way in which the Assembly elections will take place is set out on page 38. The colour of the ballot papers is specified. It says that people will be able to vote for one candidate only. That is another of our objections to the way in which the elections will be conducted.

On page 49 we find the following paragraph:

"These Regulations provide for the conduct of the election of representatives to the European Assembly in England, Wales and Scotland. Such elections are conducted in accordance with the simple majority system of elections."

You will understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that is deeply repugnant to those hon. Members who sit on these Benches.

We were pleased, therefore, when the present Home Secretary was appointed. We wrote to him and he replied in these terms:

"Thank you for your letter of 3 September and for your kind words about my appointment as Home Secretary. My views on the principle of electoral reform have never been a secret, but they are of course personal, and not shared by the Government as a whole or by a majority in the House of Commons. I obviously therefore cannot give you the undertaking for which you ask."

Delighted as we were by his appointment, it seems that the Home Secretary would be more of a friend to the cause of electoral reform if he returned to the Back Benches.

We want the regulations to be rejected, first, for reasons of elementary justice. During the 1979 European elections, the Liberal party polled 13·1 per cent. of the vote. In 1984, the alliance polled 19·5 per cent. of the vote. That gained us no seats whatsoever in the European Assembly. It cannot be right that when so many people in 1979——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman again, but he must realise, as must the whole House, that I have to observe the rules of the House. These are very narrow regulations. I have to tell the hon. Gentleman once more that, although I know that he feels strongly about the method of election, he is not in order on the regulations that we are debating now.

Mr. Alton: I refer you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to column 1153 of *Hansard* of 26 January 1984 when we had a debate on these regulations. My hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was able to put forward the kind of arguments that I am putting before the House tonight.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are not debating that matter. We are debating fairly narrow regulations, and I must ask the hon. Gentleman to accept the ruling that I have now given to him twice.

Mr. Cyril Smith (Rochdale): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If an instrument is before the House that says that there shall be no change, are we not entitled to pray in support of our case reasons why, in our view, there should be a change?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not in this particular case, because it is quite outwith the regulations that we are debating.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that the Chair will recognise that I rarely raise points of order. I have read the document that we are debating, and I have also seen the words that specifically state the way in which the elections should be conducted. As we know, within the Chamber, hon. Members have a wide variety of views on the matter. I say this without wishing to upset the Chair's judgment, but I should have thought that it would be difficult for a speech to be out of order that included some reference to what is in the regulations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A marginal reference is not out of order, but what I had to say to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) was that I understood that he would seek, at an appropriate moment, to speak about different methods of election. This is not within the regulations that we are debating, and it is my job to ensure that the debate is conducted within the rules. I am sure that the hon. Member for Mossley Hill will respond to my request.

Mr. Alton: I will indeed, Sir.

Mr. Cyril Smith: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Mossley Hill has already said that he will respond to my request, so he should proceed.

Mr. Cyril Smith: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If regulations before the House say that there shall be only one name on the ballot paper, is that not setting out the form that the elections should take, and, if that is what the regulations say, are we not entitled to argue that that is wrong and to argue why it is wrong?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is certainly entitled to argue that, but not on this occasion.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Without in any way challenging what you said, Sir, I would like to draw your attention to the first paragraph of the explanatory note on page 49, which I shall read out for the benefit of those hon. Members who do not happen to have the regulations in front of them, or have not yet turned to page 49:

"These Regulations provide for the conduct of the election of representatives to the European Assembly in England and Wales and Scotland. Such elections are conducted in accordance with a simple majority system of elections."

Surely, if that is in the explanatory note, it has been put there to explain matters to those hon. Members who are taking part in the debate. Therefore, is it not within the rights of every hon. Member to argue against that, as the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) has just been doing, as he does not believe in the system of simple majority elections? That must be within the terms of the draft European Assembly Elections Regulations 1986, which we are discussing. Is it not reasonable for hon. Members on both sides of the House to apply their minds and their arguments to the system of elections which may not be in accord with the simple majority system because they do not believe that that is the correct way to do it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have already said that a passing reference would be in order, but these regulations deal with the rules and practices governing the administration of the elections. They do not deal with the method of election. A passing reference to the method of election would be in order, but it would not be in order to have a long debate on the merits of the first-past-the-post system or proportional representation. The hon. Member for Mossley Hill has already accepted my ruling on that matter, and I am sure that he does not intend to pursue it any further.

Mr. Alton: I intend to pursue the points that I have raised that are in the regulations, as you have directed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

On page 38, there is a proforma ballot paper which will be used if the regulations are passed. By the same token, if the House decides to reject these regulations, we would have to go away and devise some other way of doing things. My point about the ballot paper as it appears in the regulations is that it lead to the disfranchisement of large numbers of people. A total of 2·5 million people were disfranchised at the previous European election and 1·6 million people were disfranchised at the election before that. If the ballot paper in the regulations is accepted, it will be a monstrous piece of villainy and a blatant injustice

[Mr. Alton]

and millions of our citizens will be cheated of their democratic rights. Surely that would be totally unacceptable.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Would the hon. Gentleman accept that the mere fact that they have not managed to accumulate the necessary number of votes to win an election does not mean that people are disfranchised, but simply that they have lost an election?

Mr. Alton: It is obvious that the hon. Gentleman does not care a great deal about justice. If he subscribes to the adage of Edmund Burke that there should be no taxation without representation, I am sure that he will agree that the millions of alliance voters who are completely without representation in the European Assembly should be entitled to have large amounts of tax given back to them.

The next point about the regulations concerns the treaty of Rome. Article 138 of the treaty says quite clearly;

"The Assembly shall draw up proposals for elections by direct universal suffrage in accordance with a uniform procedure in all member states. The Council shall, acting unanimously, lay down the approriate provisions which it shall recommend to members states."

The treaty of Rome makes it clear how we should proceed in organising our European elections. The ballot paper before us in the regulations and the qualification on page 19 of the explanatory memorandum that there will be no change made in the modifications to the elections, make it clear that we will not comply with the treaty of Rome. The Assembly will never be able to act unanimously because the British Government refuse to accept any fair voting system. The ballot paper we are going to approve tonight will distort the entire make-up of our delegation in the European Asembly.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Can the hon. Gentleman tell me whether the Council has come forward with any such proposal that the British Government have refused to accept or, if it not true, that no such unanimous proposal has emerged to date?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Member for Mossley Hill will resist the temptation to widen the debate. I have already said more than once that we must stick to the regulations, which are fairly narrow.

Mr. Alton: I do not wish to be drawn down a road which you will rule against, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Political Affairs Committee has recently recommended the regional list system for the next round. In the March 1982 vote, about eight Conservative Members of the European Parliament voted for the regional list system. Therefore, the system has great support in Europe and in many quarters of the House.

My next point is that the ballot paper in the regulations does not provide for more than one candidate. That will mean that we will be back to the massive Euro-seats we have used in the past two elections, which are on the simple first-past-the-post system. In a debate in 1977, the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) recommended the regional list system:

"We are talking not about 635 constituencies, but about 81 constituencies. There is no doubt that with 81 constituencies for Europe, if we go through the normal method of election, the slightest swing will result in the parties in this country being under represented in the councils of Europe. We are talking about an Assembly that does not spawn a Government, a body which is advisory and supervisory. The list system is appropriate for Europe. A different type of representative will be created, perhaps with a regional interest that is not in competition with the House of Commons."—[*Official Report*, 13 December 1977; Vol. 941, c. 416.]

We have failed in the regulations to incorporate the thinking of the then Home Secretary into the way we go about our affairs. I regret that. Our failure to provide a fair electoral system will make us the laughing stock of Europe. It demonstrates that there is no spirit of fairness or justice in this place and that we are not committed, to the concept of a far-reaching European Community where there is harmonisation of many of the things that we should ensure are harmonised. A common voting system for the European Assembly would be one step in that direction.

A common voting system would at least mean that people throughout the European Community vote in the same way. It would be a signal from the House that we intend to ensure that people's votes, regardless of where they live or where they come from, will count equally. In the regulations, we carry on the nonsense that we have one system for Northern Ireland, yet a different system for England, Scotland and Wales. That cannot be right. Therefore, I invite the House to reject these regulations.

12.10 am

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I did not intend to speak in this debate, but, in a sense, I have been spurred on by one or two of the observations made by some of my hon. Friends. It is important in a short speech—I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in view of your earlier strictures, that it will be a short speech — to put on record the fact that many Conservatives in the country and a number of Conservatives in the House equally regret that the system is as it is set out in the regulations.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): As one who stood with me to ensure that these regulations should be debated tonight, rather than be referred to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, will my hon. Friend agree that, had it not been for the presence of Conservative Back Benchers who believe in electoral reform these matters would not now be debated?

Hon. Members: That is right.

Mr. Squire: At least some hon. Members have already given the answer to my hon. Friend. I need add no more. My hon. Friend is right.

I regret that it has been made clear that we are the only western European country that still defends an out-dated and out-moded system. I do not wish to refer to the arguments, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am aware of your earlier comments. It is clear that, on the central question that one should address to any electoral system, it fails. Quite simply, it produces a result that does not reflect the votes cast. I urge all hon. Members to ponder that point. It applies on many other levels that are not covered by the regulations, but it holds true in this respect. The sooner we recognise that we are losing some friends in European Governments who are otherwise supportive of us, because of our obstinacy, the sooner we may grudgingly and belatedly be dragged into a realistic, modern system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has suggested that he is out of order. Of course he is. I hope that he will either resume his seat or address his remarks to the narrow regulations.

Mr. Squire: I am happy to say that much of the regulations are such that I would not question them. I have made clear the point of my objection. It applies to matters already covered by one or two other hon. Members. It is important to put on record that there is also objection on the Government side.

12.14 am

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): I ask the House to look briefly at schedule 3, which refers to the modification of Assembly elections rules. Paragraph (2)*(e)* of the regulations was referred to by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). It states that the ballot paper

"shall be of a different colour from that of any ballot papers used at an election the poll for which is taken together with the poll for the Assembly election."

This encompasses a situation in which European Parliament elections take place at the same time as domestic elections. My concern is that the regulations specify that the ballot paper for the European Parliament elections will be a different colour from the ballot paper for the domestic election.

Any elector may infer that, because the colour is different, the system of election might be different. Some people may consider that the different colour demonstrates whether the elections are fair or unfair. Many Conservative Members consider that electoral reform is necessary. We can no longer be the odd man out in Europe. Conservative Members believe that electoral reform will be inevitable. We favour that approach because we believe that it will safeguard this country from the tyranny of domination by one part or the other.

12.15 am

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Some minor points have not been touched on so far. One is the fact that the Labour Benches are completely denuded, except for the presence of the distinguished hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), who is resting his feet on the Table. The lack of attendance is a condemnation of the Labour party's lack of interest in Europe generally——

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): In democracy.

Mr. Rathbone: —and in democracy specifically.

There has been much discussion about the pros and cons of electoral systems for this House and for local government and assemblies, but those pros and cons tend to centre on the creation, or lack of creation, of strong government. That question does not arise in respect of elections to the general Assembly. We are not talking about a choice of Government; we are talking quintessentially about the representation of all parts of national interest and nation political belief in an assembly in Europe. It is a tragedy that the measure has not been drawn up in a way that would allow us to debate in full, according to your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the pros and cons of the various systems of election. I would not think of challenging your ruling on that, Sir, but it is sad that we cannot go into all the details of the advantages not only of proportional representation generally as opposed to first-past-the-post but different systems of proportional representation as opposed to first-past-the-post.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The proposed system, which will involve marking X on the ballot paper, means that the representation from the United Kingdom will not necessarily be truly representative. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that that has implications for our European partners? The unbalanced nature of our delegation to the European Assembly affects the committee structure within that Assembly? Therefore, the electoral system will have consequences not only in this country but in the Assembly.

Mr. Rathbone *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) said that he he was sad that he was not able to develop the argument. Indeed, the whole House may be sad, but the fact is that it is my job to ensure that the debate is directed to the regulations. If the hon. Member were to follow that line, he would be out of order, as I am sure he knows.

Mr. Rathbone: I would not think of doing so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I have to give credence to my honourable opponent, the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). It seemed that there was a germ of truth in what he said, even though it may have been out of order.

It is more than sad that we are considering a measure that will set the direction for important elections in the knowledge that, whatever the intricacies and details of the regulations, they will guarantee—it is not by chance—that the outcome of the elections will not be representative of this country. As a good Conservative, I believe that those elections would be much more sensibly conservative if we had another form of election rather than the one laid down in the regulations. I hope that the House will ensure, for the future, that we have the opportunity to debate the system as well as the details of elections.

12.20 am

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is a handful of Liberal Members here tonight, which is an extremely large number for them. That makes me suppose that they intend to vote against these regulations. We need to understand what they will achieve by voting against them. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) accused the Government of disfranchising electors, and said that the electors had been cheated of democratic rights. What rubbish! It is the Liberals who propose to disfranchise electors and to cheat them of their democratic rights by voting against the regulations. I shall explain why.

One of the most important results of the regulations is that we shall extend to overseas citizens the absent voting procedure in respect of the European Assembly. Liberal Members are taking advantage——

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hogg: I shall not give way. The Liberal party may not like it, but unfortunately it will have to listen to it. The Liberals are seeking tonight to deny to British citizens overseas the ability to vote in European Assembly elections. That would be the result of their actions. I hope that the electorate understands that it is the Liberals, not us, who are cheating them of their democratic rights.

Mr. Cyril Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Am I right to assume that if the regulations are defeated it is perfectly possible for the Government to introduce new regulations; or are we to assume from what the Minister said that, if they are defeated, that is the end,

[Mr. Cyril Smith]

and no other regulations can be introduced? Alternatively, is the Minister just being his usual silly, ridiculous, childish self?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that that is not a matter for me. I am under the impression that the House now wishes to come to a decision—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—but that is not a matter for me.

12.24 am

Mr. Alex Carlile *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman wish to raise a point of order?

Mr. Carlile: No, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to intervene in the debate.

I was quite content to hear the debate out and to let it conclude until I heard the Minister's speech. He displayed an outrageous lack of logic in suggesting that by opposing these regulations — because his fourth-form debating tactics will not put us off—we would bring them to an end, along with a review of European electoral regulations. That is absurd. If these regulations are voted down, the Government will have to produce much better regulations. Schedule 3(6) states:

"After paragraph (1) of rule 29 (equipment of polling stations) there shall be inserted the following paragraph:—

'(1A) The same ballot box shall be used for the poll at the Assembly election and the poll at the parliamentary election or, as the case may be, local government election.'"

Until I heard the Minister, I had assumed that the Government adopted a fairly serious approach to the regulations. I also assumed that that paragraph was inserted to provide convenient arrangements at polling stations. But, having heard the Minister, I am extremely suspicious about the motive for this change in rule 29. Why are the Government insisting that the same ballot box shall be used for Assembly elections, parliamentary elections and local government elections? Is it an economy measure, for which one could almost forgive them? Is it so that police cars are not too full with a multiplicity of ballot boxes, again for which one could almost forgive them? The answer is that the Government believe that they can hide the unfairness of the electoral system that these regulations continue within the darkness of a single ballot box.

It is my view—and I am sure my right hon. and hon. Friends agree—that when the electors go to the polling station, and the European elections and the parliamentary elections are taking place on the same day, they should have the advantage of separate ballot boxes for the different elections. Perhaps when there is only one election the Government can get away for the time being with perpetuating a bankrupt electoral system, partly because of the Labour party's apathy, but they should not be allowed to get away with disobeying the spirit of the treaty of Rome, ignoring the views of parliamentarians throughout Europe, casting aside the opinions of the British people and overturning democracy in this shameful way.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 74, Noes 12.

Division No. 17] **[12.26 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Nicholls, Patrick
Ashby, David	Ottaway, Richard
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Baldry, Tony	Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Bevan, David Gilroy	Portillo, Michael
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Powell, William *(Corby)*
Bottomley, Peter	Powley, John
Bright, Graham	Raffan, Keith
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Rhodes James, Robert
Bruinvels, Peter	Roe, Mrs Marion
Burt, Alistair	Rowe, Andrew
Butterfill, John	Sackville, Hon Thomas
Carttiss, Michael	Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Cash, William	Sayeed, Jonathan
Conway, Derek	Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Cope, John	Silvester, Fred
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Sims, Roger
Dorrell, Stephen	Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Durant, Tony	Spencer, Derek
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*	Stern, Michael
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Goodhart, Sir Philip	Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*	Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Hicks, Robert	Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*	Thurnham, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*	Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*	Trippier, David
Lilley, Peter	Twinn, Dr Ian
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*	Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Lord, Michael	Waller, Gary
Lyell, Nicholas	Watts, John
MacGregor, Rt Hon John	Wheeler, John
Maclean, David John	Wolfson, Mark
McLoughlin, Patrick	Wood, Timothy
Malone, Gerald	Yeo, Tim
Maude, Hon Francis	
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*	Tellers for the Ayes:
Moynihan, Hon C.	Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Neubert, Michael	Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Ashdown, Paddy	Meadowcroft, Michael
Beith, A. J.	Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Bruce, Malcolm	Steel, Rt Hon David
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*	Wrigglesworth, Ian
Cartwright, John	
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	Tellers for the Noes:
Kirkwood, Archy	Mr. David Alton and
Livsey, Richard	Mr. James Wallace.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft European Assembly Elections Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 18th November, be approved.

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Motion made and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 94(3).

That, in the course of its consideration of the matter of Agriculture and Fishing in Scotland, the Scottish Grand Committee may meet in Edinburgh on Monday 8th December at half-past Ten o'clock.—*[Mr. Cope.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Objection taken.

North Middlesex Hospital (Cancer Treatment)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Portillo.*]

12.36 am

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise tonight the subject of the proposed closure of the radiotherapy cancer treatment unit at the North Middlesex hospital in my constituency. No other issue since I have been in this House has caused more public concern among a wide range of my constituents than the proposal of the North East Thames regional health authority to close this unit. All the political parties in Edmonton are united—as are the residents' groups and all the other representative groups in my constituency, including the local authority—in opposing this proposal of the health authority.

Nor is it just a parochial matter concerning Edmonton. This matter has concerned the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Atkinson) and, in the borough of Haringey, my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi). I am pleased to see on the Treasury Bench my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), who, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), have been particularly strong in ensuring that the wishes of their constituents are known to the Government and the regional health authority. I am grateful to them for the support they have given me in this matter.

This issue goes beyond the London boroughs of Haringey and Enfield. It affects also our neighbours in Essex and Hertfordshire — my hon. Friends the Members for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison), and for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine)—all of whom have been active in objecting to the ill-founded proposal of the regional health authority.

The Minister will be aware that this proposal affects the whole of the North East Thames region. It is proposed to decrease the number of radiotherapy cancer treatment units from nine to five. This has already provoked one Adjournment debate, when my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) raised the whole question as it affects the county of Essex. I will not tonight go over the ground that he covered. Our problems are similar, though my constituency is affected more as a built-up area.

It is strange for the House to debate the Health Service and not to mention cuts, but no cuts are involved in this matter. Indeed, the region's plans would result in the expenditure of several million pounds extra in the short term, and probably increased expenditure in the long term. I would argue, however, that the region's proposals will lead to a cut in the standard of service to my constituents and to people in neighbouring constituencies. The firm medical opinion of consultants such as Dr. Maurice Sutton and his colleagues at the North Middlesex hospital, and other medical opinion, is that there is no proof that the extra spending which the region has earmarked will result in the better treatment of patients. If we are to spend extra money in the Health Service, it should be concentrated to the benefit of patients, not to the benefit of others in the Health Service.

Some specialists involved in the proposal suggested that the demand for radiotherapy will decline. The region has not put the case strongly, but we must argue against it. Drug treatment for cancer is popular in some areas, but there is no proof that it is especially efficient. Indeed, the toxicity of the drug means that more deaths may arise from its use. In the latest *British Medical Journal*, an interesting article suggests that the results of the drug treatment of cancer are disappointing.

Cancer will affect one in three people and will probably result in the death of one in four people. We have an ageing population, and it would seem that radiotherapy will be in increasing demand, not decreasing demand as some have suggested. Therefore, it is important to keep open centres that can provide a service to the population.

Why then has the North-East Thames regional authority suggested the massive disruption of cancer treatment provision in our area? It is difficult to say why it has done so, but part of the reason goes back to the DHSS itself. The Department's Standing Medical Advisory Committee suggested that every region should examine cancer treatment provision and suggested that larger units should be introduced. One can understand why the region undertook the review. However, the treatment already provided in the region is among the best in the country. If one was to produce a league table of survival rates of cancer patients, our region falls between third and fourth places. The Department cannot say that the provision in the region is poor or inferior, so we must find other reasons. We know that the change is not proposed on the ground of cost since the region's plans will be significantly more expensive.

Some people in the DHSS argue that larger catchment areas would be more efficient, and the figure of 1 million people has been bandied about. Yet there is no scientific evidence to support the view. It is an interesting and debatable opinion, but it is only an opinion. I suggest that it is the opinion of those who already work in large units and that it is based upon their experience, not upon hard evidence.

North Middlesex hospital has one of the best buildings for radiotherapy in the country. It is modern and purpose-built and no adaptation costs are incurred for the machinery. It is a pleasant building for patients. It is light and airy and not down in the dungeons where one normally finds radiotherapy treatment in hospitals. Some radiotherapists elsewhere are envious of the facilities. It is a shame that the facilities at the hospital should be declared redundant and that new facilities will have to be duplicated elsewhere — perhaps at the Royal Free hospital or at St. Bartholomew's hospital.

The region's proposal has already cost money. About £41,000 has been wasted by the region because a linear accelerator was on order for the North Middlesex hospital but it was cancelled at the 11th hour, 59th minute, by the region. I presume that the region had to pay the cancellation fee and many thousands of pounds for the adaptation and removal of one machine to make room for a new machine.

My main objection to the proposal is that it ignores the patients. The Coopers and Lybrand report, commissioned by the North-East Thames region, might be a fine piece of intellectual property. I have read the volumes and they make sense. I can understand the rational argument. Bigger centres can be appealing, particularly for a medical administrator, because all the people are in one place. It

[Dr. Ian Twinn]

is appealing for specialists in the teaching hospitals. Larger centres, more machinery, more ancillary staff and more patients add to the status of a department. It might be useful to specialist researchers who might find it convenient to be associated with a radiotherapy treatment centre. All such arguments must be weighed in the balance.

Unfortunately the proposals do nothing for the patients. They might do a lot for medical specialists, but they do nothing for the patients. The position of patients will become worse if the proposals are implemented. Patients who need radiotherapy are usually seriously ill. They might have only months to live. That will be true for many lung cancer patients. Any journey will be painful and trying, and will make many patients anxious. The North Middlesex hospital is easy to reach. It is directly off the North Circular road, it is within a 10 minutes' drive of the M25 and it is on the A10 main arterial road.

My constituents from Enfield and Haringey and others from Essex and Hertfordshire can get to the hospital by private transport or by ambulance relatively easily. If they have to go to the Royal Free hospital or to St. Bartholomew's, travel will be difficult. They can be collected by ambulance only in the morning — 12 patients per ambulance—and be returned after dark. It would be difficult to justify the cost of doing more than that. There are no parking facilities near the Royal Free hospital or St. Bartholomew's hospital. Journey times will be at least double. I find that worrying.

Members of the regional health authority are not united on the proposal. The working group reported in March 1986 to a closed meeting. I have seen its private report, and paragraph 101 recommends that the centre should be established at the North Middlesex hospital for three reasons: it is close to the centre of population; it will reduce travelling time; and there is space for expansion.

In a mysterious way, those recommendations have disappeared from the published report. The region has not justified that and it has not seen fit to answer the criticisms. I found the region's attempt to justify the decision afterwards very mysterious. The region's statement entitled:

"A review of cancer treatment services in the North East Thames Region."

claims:

"One of the major considerations in the Review is the importance of avoiding excessive travelling time of patients undergoing treatment for cancer . . . accessibility to services will generally be improved across the Region."

However, the only way in which the region can justify that perversion of the truth is to provide hostel accommodation for patients. Instead of living at home in the last few months of their lives, my constituents will be forced to live for five nights a week in central London away from home, or they will have to endure nasty ambulance journeys in central London. The region's argument is a perversion of the true position.

The region has been over-influenced by fashion. It has been tempted by the idea that big is better, whereas there is no proof that that is the case with cancer treatment. Although I cannot prove it, I suspect that the region has been influenced strongly by the lobby from the teaching hospitals which would like to concentrate all the new resources in those hospitals, away from the district general hospitals. The problem is that the population exists close to the district general hospitals while the teaching hospitals are concentrated in the de-populated areas of central London.

If the decision is allowed to be implemented, there is a danger that the consumers in the Health Service will be ignored, that many millions of pounds will be wasted in satisfying the desires of those producing the service and that no benefit will accrue to the patients. When my hon. Friend the Minister considers these decisions, if they eventually arrive on her desk, I hope that she will take all these factors into account.

12.52 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) on his success in the ballot for today's debate. I have had cause to be impressed twice by his efforts on behalf of his constituents in the past two days. He came to see me yesterday to discuss the Cry-Sis organisation that helps families with crying babies. Then, as now, he put the case for his constituents with dignity and in detail in a way that would have greatly impressed them.

My hon. Friend referred to an Adjournment debate of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 31 October. He was right to state that representations have been made on the issue by numerous hon. Members, specifically my hon. Friends, the Members for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) and for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar). I must enter the same caveat as I entered previously.

I am obviously a little restricted in the scope of my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton, because if, following consultation by the district health authority on the proposal to close the unit, any of the local community health councils concerned object to the proposed closure and the district and regional health authorities confirm it, the proposal will indeed be referred to Ministers for a final solution. Because of that, it is absolutely essential that I do not anticipate the outcome of such consultation by stating a view. My hon. Friend will therefore recognise the unusual circumstance of this Minister having no opinion whatsoever and merely serving this debate by listening carefully to what has been said.

As my hon. Friend said, the North-East Thames regional health authority has reviewed its cancer services. The review is not a cost-cutting exercise. As my hon. Friend rightly said, if fully implemented it would cost more money. It is intended to benefit patients not just in one part of the region, but in the entire region, as has been repeatedly demanded in parliamentary questions on this subject. If the proposals come to Ministers for a final verdict, my hon. Friend can rest assured that any decisions taken will ensure that the best overall service to patients in the region is provided.

It may help if I describe the timetable to my hon. Friend. If matters proceed as planned, the region expects to provide districts with a consultation document for issue in January 1987. The districts would then submit detailed proposals to the region with the results of the consultation. If the local community health council has objected, the matter will come to Ministers for a decision. We are therefore talking about a substantial period of time, even if matters proceed as planned. I can assure my hon. Friend that nothing will be done in a hurry.

If the radiotherapy unit at the North Middlesex hospital were to be closed, it would be the subject of full public consultation. Local people would have the opportunity to express their views, and I have no doubt that, with the assistance of their excellent Member, they would do so with force and in the appropriate detail.

The intention is to set up regional cancer treatment centres. Departmental guidance is contained in the report of the standing sub-committee on cancer, entitled "Acute Services for Cancer", which was circulated two years ago under cover of Health Notice (84)23. If my hon. Friend has not seen a copy, I shall gladly ensure that he sees either it or the relevant bits of it. He will find that it is a question not of fashion, but of careful consideration of how cancer patients should be treated, not only in the 1980s but well into the next century.

The report recommended that radiotherapy centres should normally serve a population of not less than 1 million — equivalent to about 4,000 new cases of radiotherapy a year. North East Thames regional health authority serves a population of about 4·4 million and has a resident population of about 3·7 million. On straightforward population criteria the region would require only four units. However, the region is also required to consider geographical matters, travelling patterns, and so on. On that basis the original proposal was for five centres, and following further review it decided on six. Unfortunately, there are at present nine centres. If the broad overall strategy is to be accepted, it follows that some will have to close. That is the crux of the matter.

I understand that it is suggested that the special cancer facilities are concentrated on six regional cancer treatment centres at the London hospital, the Middlesex, the Royal Free and St. Bartholomew's in London, and Colchester and Harold Wood in Essex. Those centres would provide the full range of cancer diagnosis and treatment.

As a result of the region's proposals, the existing radiotherapy units at the North Middlesex and University College hospital in London, and the Essex County hospital, Oldchurch at Romford and Southend in Essex would be subject to closure. The region tells me that it believes that the proposed regional centres would be of sufficient size to make the best use of both human skills and physical resources and to encourage staff to develop specialist expertise, particularly to aim for expert knowledge of particular cancers and thereby to add to the list of cancers that are now curable.

The difficulty with the North Middlesex hospital arises from the choice between it and the Royal Free. The regional health authority undertook an option appraisal on the two hospitals which showed that a regional cancer treatment centre at the Royal Free would be better placed to serve the catchment population and to provide the back-up specialist facilities required to support such a centre. I am told that it looked at referral patterns, the viability of centres and the impact of losing radiotherapy on either hospital. On that basis, the Royal Free was its preference.

The only factor favouring the North Middlesex, to quote from my brief,

"was patient travelling difficulties, particularly for residents of Enfield Health Authority."

Obviously, I express no view, but I have heard with interest my hon. Friend's comments.

The broad overall strategy of introducing regional cancer treatment centres, which has been departmental strategy now for several years, was accepted by the regional health authority early this year nem. con. The strategy is accepted and not regarded as a fashion or a fad. it is regarded as the right way to run cancer treatment in future. The difficulty comes with how one applies it in practice. In other words, the principle is accepted, but the practice is a different matter.

I note what my hon. Friend said about teaching hospitals and the influence of consultants on large units. However, they have led the way in research on this important illness and demonstated methods of ensuring that cancer is no longer the killer that it used to be and that there is hope for sufferers.

I understand that the other cancer services will remain district-based. The regional health authority's intention is that the bulk of cancer treatment will continue to be provided at district level, that serices for chemotherapy, surgery, counselling, diagnosis and screening and health promotion will all be district-based. Consultants from the regional cancer treatment centres will hold clinics at local district general hospitals to enable their specialist expertise to be made available locally and to minimise as far as possible the travelling required for specialist treatment services.

I have inquired about community services for cancer patients in the Haringey district health authority area. I am told that they are quite good and are being further improved through advertisements being placed for two more MacMillan nurses who will work with cancer patients at home. They will be in addition to the existing nurse who is at present supported by district nurses. That arrangement will continue. Therefore, my hon. Friend's constituents can look forward to an improved service, particularly for those patients who are recovering from this illness at home.

My hon. Friend spoke about one or two aspects of treatment and compared chemotherapy with radiotherapy. I defer to his considerably greater knowledge on some of these subjects, but I can tell him that all these treatments are under constant review. Any assertion that a treatment works means that the treatment has to be rigorously tested on patients who are already ill, especially if those treatments are dangerous and produce side effects. That is true of both chemotherapy and radiation treatment, and we need to be absolutely assured that a treatment has benefits that outweigh any of its possible disadvantages before it is offered to a patient.

My hon. Friend spoke about survival rates. I agree that the record of his local health authority on cancer treatment centres is excellent, but I am sure he would agree that it also depends a little on how early in the progress of the disease patients present themselves. There is some evidence to suggest that in some parts of Britain where general practitioners and perhaps health promotion services actively encourage people to come early, that is exactly what they do and their survival rate, particularly for illnesses such as cervical cancer, are thereby much improved. We want to encourage that practice everywhere, and I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree about that. In response to his earlier comment, perhaps I should add that we do not have Health Service hospitals with dungeons. At least I hope we have not. If we have, I should like to hear about them.

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

The National Health Service is changing all the time and must respond to change. Shifts in population have considerably affected all the London regions. There are alterations in the patterns of illnesses affecting our ability to deal with them, and there are improvements in medical practice. As radiotherapy equipment becomes more sophisticated and as radiotherapy treatments become more refined, it is right that the provision of radiotherapy should be restricted to a few centres. The question which then arises is: which ones?

The rest of the cancer services in the North-East Thames region, comprising the majority of treatments, will be improved under the regional health authority's proposals, and that should command some acceptance. We appreciate the deep feelings of local residents which my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton, have represented to us. If we are required to take a decision on this matter, I can guarantee to my hon. Friend that we will take those feelings firmly into account.

Question put and agreed to

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 3 December 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GAIRLOCH HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION

Mr. Secretary Rifkind presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Gairloch Harbour: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered upon Tuesday 9 December and to be printed. [Bill 12.]

SHETLAND ISLANDS COUNCIL (HAM VOE, FOULA) ORDER CONFIRMATION

Mr. Secretary Rifkind presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Shetland Islands Council (Ham Voe, Foula): And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered upon Tuesday, 9 December and to be printed. [Bill 13.]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Missiles

1. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards elimination of all strategic nuclear missiles by 1966.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Reagan agreed at their meeting at Camp David on 15 November that NATO's strategy of forward defence and flexible response would continue to require effective nuclear deterrence based on a mix of systems.

Mr. Cohen: It has been widely reported by many, including President Reagan and Secretary Shultz, that at the Reykjavik summit, before it broke down over star wars, President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev had agreed on the elimination of all strategic nuclear missiles by 1996 without condition. If the British Government do not agree with that, on what basis was the United States able to put the proposal on the negotiating table? Why do the Government not agree to that aim and work towards it instead of increasing Britain's nuclear capacity by 800 per cent. with the purchase of Trident and sending silly notes to the Russians which effectively say "Nuclear for ever"?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will look forward to taking part in some future debate on this subject. The three important priorities of British policy and Alliance policy were clearly set out by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Reagan at Camp David. These were INF, 50 per cent. cuts in strategic weapons and a complete ban on chemical weapons. We should focus our attention on these priorities, and if we manage to realise them it will be an historic achievement.

Mr. Conway: When my right hon. and learned Friend is considering policy, will he bear in mind that Britain's unilateral action on the production of chemical and biological weapons has had no effect whatsoever on the Warsaw Pact nations? What hope could there be in pursuing a unilateral policy?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend makes precisely the point which was made more than once in our last debate on this subject. The response of the Soviet Union to the prolonged abstention from the production of chemical weapons by the United States and the United Kingdom is a classic condemnation of the folly of unilateral disarmament.

Mr. Wallace: We know that the talks at Reykjavik foundered on the strategic defence initiative. On that important issue, can the Secretary of State say what representations, if any, were made to his United States counterpart on his present interpretation of the anti-ballistic missile treaty as it relates to SDI development? Will he inform the House of his present position on that?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It might be useful to draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to one of the few sensible passages in the speech made yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition, when even he said that Mr. Gorbachev was wrong to link the prospect of all arms control progress with concessions on SDI.

Mr. Carttiss: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the credibility of the Soviet Union in calling for a nuclear-free world would be greatly enhanced if it ceased its aggression in Afghanistan, which country the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) visited recently without calling for a Russian-free Afghanistan?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right. The continued presence of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, with more than 100,000 troops, calls in question to a considerable extent the seriousness of its commitment to progress on this topic.

Mr. Healey: Is the Foreign Secretary aware that two days after President Reagan met the Prime Minister, Secretary Shultz stated, in speech in a Chicago, that it was the firm intention of the United States to seek the abolition of all ballistic missiles within 10 years? Does he really believe that the United States would provide the British Government with ballistic missiles for Trident submarines at the very moment that it was abolishing all its own ballistic missiles? Does he even believe that the United States would provide the British Government with an 800 per cent. increase in the target capability of British nuclear forces at the same time as it was cutting its own nuclear forces by 50 per cent.? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that the Defence Secretary in his speech this week confirmed the figures which I have just given?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am aware of the fact that, at Reykjavik itself and immediately thereafter, Mr. Gorbachev affirmed the legitimacy of the presence and modernisation of Britain's nuclear strategic deterrent.

Subsequently, at Camp David President Reagan reaffirmed the United States' modernisation policy in the same respect, and specifically did so in relation to Britain. I am aware also of the fact that President Reagan likewise has reaffirmed his commitment to the priorities agreed with the Prime Minister at Camp David.

Central America

2. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to seek to pay an official visit to Central America.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): My right hon. and learned Friend's next visit to the area will be to Mexico in early January next year.

Mr. Flannery: Before the Foreign Minister goes to Mexico in January next year, will he undertake to talk to his American counterpart and raise with him the democratic principle that a freely elected Government do not attack another freely elected Government or connive to attack such a freely elected Government? Will he make it clear that the mess that the President of America has now got himself into stems from an undemocratic arming of the so-called Contras? They are basically the people who defended the dictator, Somoza. Will he make it clear, publicly and loudly, that we do not agree with the attacks on a democratically elected Government and that that has always been the principle——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is unfair to go on as long as that.

Mr. Eggar: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already made clear, it is not for Ministers at the Dispatch Box to answer for United States policy. We continue to advocate political solutions to problems in Central America on the basis of Contadora objectives rather than military solutions.

Mr. Corbyn: Before the Minister goes to Mexico next year, will he consider the problems of El Salvador and the fact that 50,000 illegal killings have taken place in the past seven years, that 1,500 people were killed last year by death squads, and that 234 cases of torture have already been recorded this year by the Committee of the Mothers of the Disappeared? Is it correct that, in those circumstances, with the guilt so much upon the El Salvador army, the British Government should pay for the training of El Salvador army officers in this country, to go back to continue the killing and murdering of the people of El Salvador?

Mr. Eggar: I imagine that the hon. Gentleman referred to the training offered to one El Salvador cadet. Similar assistance has been offered to many developing countries in many parts of the world. That assistance is entirely consistent with our wish to see improvement in the combat behaviour of the El Salvador army. Similar training facilities have been offered by Contadora group countries.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware that if the Foreign Secretary were to visit Nicaragua he would confirm that many more civilians, including women and children, are being killed by the increasing ferocity of the attacks by the US-funded Contra terrorists? Does he agreee that if the terrorist leader, Arturo Cruz, is allowed to incite support for terrorists at a conference to be held this weekend in the Barbican and organised by the Committee for a Free Nicaragua, under the direction of the research assistant of the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), it will make a total farce of the Government's claim to support the Contadora peace process? What action will the Foreign Office take to stop this terrorist leader from speaking in London?

Mr. Eggar: I, too, read the press report that appeared this morning. There is, of course, no official involvement of any kind in the conference to which the hon. Gentleman refers. As the Government have repeatedly made clear, we have advocated a political rather than a military solution to the problem in Nicaragua.

South Africa

3. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the Government of South Africa regarding the policy of apartheid.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have repeatedly made known to the South African Government our abhorrence of and opposition to apartheid. Most recently on 14 November, with our European partners, we made representations to express our concern at possible forced removals from Oukasie township.

Mr. Pike: In view of the Government's declared continued opposition to the policy of apartheid and the phrase in the Queen's Speech referring to the Government's support for the independence of Namibia, what do the Government intend to do to pursue that policy and to ensure that that independence is secured as soon as possible?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We intend to maintain our pressure for the implementation of resolution 435 as part of our overall policy for progress in South Africa.

Sir Ian Lloyd: Has my right hon. and learned Friend noted the courageous and ingenious solution prepared by the multiracial conference in the town, known as Indaba? Does he share my regret that it has been rejected by President Botha? Will he offer what ecouragement and support he can to the people of the town to hold aloft the beacons of hope and reason in that country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have followed the progress of the Natal Indaba with interest. When I was in South Africa in the summer I discussed it with the provincial administrator of Natal, whom I have known for many years since we were at Cambridge together. Like my hon. Friend, I welcome the efforts that have been made to reach agreement between all sections and groups in Natal along the lines projected. I am surprised at the move that appears to have been made towards rejection of those proposals.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Foreign Secretary going to congratulate the anti-apartheid movement on the way in which it has persuaded Barclays bank to withdraw its holdings in South Africa? Is he aware that we hope that this approach will be followed by many other companies? Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman any comments to make on the brutal killings last night of a couple in South Africa who were noted for their campaigning against apartheid?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot make a specific comment on that tragedy because I am not armed with information

about it, beyond what the hon. Gentleman, no doubt, has already seen. One regrets all deaths from violence in this type of situation. It has been our view that decisions of the kind to which the hon. Gentleman refers must be taken on commercial grounds. A continuation of the present policies in South Africa is not likely to discourage such decisions. We do not think that disinvestment for South Africa is likely in the long run to be in the interests of changes away from apartheid.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that before Barclays pulled out of South Africa the social policies that it adopted played no small part in persuading the South African regime to liberalise as much as it has done? What possible incentive could there now be to the South African Government to continue with those liberalising policies when the more they liberalise, the more they are attacked by Labour Members?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I note the premise from which my hon. Friend is arguing, but the failure to move away fast enough from the policy of apartheid, which the whole House deplores, is one reason why this type of difficult commercial decision is forced on companies in this position. Of course, my hon. Friend is right to commend the way in which British companies, while they remain in South Africa, have been trying to lead opinion in the right way.

Mr. Anderson: Has the Foreign Secretary noticed in the past few weeks that the South African Government have shelved amendments to the Group Areas Act, have rejected the Kwazulu-Natal option and have intensified forced removals and the torture of children in detention? In the light of those movements all one way and his snub during his July visit, does he still believe that he can influence the South African Government constructively, or would he rather congratulate the anti-apartheid movement and the National Union of Students on the Barclays withdrawal, follow their course, and say that he can constructively disengage our Government from South Africa?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is making a more than usually convoluted analysis of a situation that is difficult enough anyway. From the view point of both sides of the House, progress towards the removal of apartheid is much slower than we would wish. We make that judgment at the end of a period in which some voluntary disinvestment has taken place and some additional sanctions have been put in place and in which there has been some advocacy of all kinds. None of those had the effect on the scale that we would like. It must be said that some of the recent action by the South African Government, including the deferment of action on the Group Areas Act and the declaration made about the effective organisation status of the United Democratic Front, must be seen as discouraging. We must continue to renew our plea for an unmistakeable commitment to the abolition of apartheid and the commencement of the necessary dialogue.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: As the Kwazulu-Natal plan would have brought about universal franchise and a non-racial Executive for an important province of South Africa, is not the present rejection of that plan deeply disappointing? Does my right hon. and learned Friend think that this is because of electoral considerations and a reaction to the anti-apartheid movement and some of its extreme manifestations, and will he convey to the South African Government our feeling that this is a great disappointment and that we feel that this kind of approach should be supported?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand precisely the point made by my hon. Friend. I cannot help him with an explanation about the reason underlying the apparent lack of enthusiasm for these proposals. However, it must be said that the party on which the South African Government depend was not taking part in the Indaba discussions. The discussions were not fully representative of all those concerned. I am sure that it is right for the South African Government to take note of the points on this topic expressed by my hon. Friends the Members for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) and for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison), sitting as they do beside each other — spiritually as well as physically.

Immigration

4. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much revenue he anticipates receiving annually from fees charged for entry clearance certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Income from entry clearance fees during the next financial year is estimated at £23 million. This is still well short of the cost of operating the entry clearance service overseas, which is about £35 million.

Mr. Madden: Is it not extraordinary that the Prime Minister should hold tea parties at Downing street to beg Americans to visit Britain and yet impose a £20 visa tax on selected black nation people who wish to visit Britain? Will the Minister investigate claims that officials of the British embassy in Islamabad are accepting visa applications from those at the head of the queue and telling the other people in the queue to come back the next day? Clearly, this allows Ministers to claim that applications are being dealt with on the day that they are lodged, but it is causing considerable inconvenience, especially to elderly people who have to travel hundreds of miles to lodge their applications.

Mr. Eggar: If the hon. Gentleman would like to provide me with details of what he has just said, I shall look into the matter. It is typical of the hon. Gentleman that he does not accept that our posts in the Indian subcontinent did an excellent job during the period when the visa regime was introduced. The vast majority of applicants are processed on the day on which they apply, and any waiting times are extremely short.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Whatever view an accountant might take of this matter, does my hon. Friend agree that the justice of the visa system is widely supported in Britain? Will he also note that the letters that I have sent to him from my constituents represent a range of minority communities which support what we have done?

Mr. Eggar: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments. The feedback that we have had from the subcontinent and from many hon. Members in all parts of the House has been positive.

Mr. James Lamond: If it is shown over a period of time that considerable difficulties are being encountered by those who apply for visas, will the Minister not allow the

cost to deter him from taking steps to improve the situation and to reduce the waiting time? Will he make quite sure that those people who have to come in an emergency, for example, are speedily dealt with?

Mr. Eggar: I am personally keeping this under very close review. We have considerably reinforced our posts throughout the subcontinent and I shall continue to keep a close watch on what is happening. In urgent, compassionate cases, of course I am always willing to receive telephone calls in my office to see if I can do anything to expedite the applications.

Mr. Budgen: [*Interruption.*]—When my hon. Friend makes his statement will he please note that there appears to be very little objection to these proposals from the Asian community? The system seems to be settling down very well.

Mr. Eggar: I am sorry that I threw such confusion into my hon. Friend's throat. I agree with what he says.

Mr. Tony Banks: Can the Minister tell us whether all high commissions are staffed up to full complement to process visas? Secondly, can he say how many visa applications have been refused in each of the countries where they have recently been introduced?

Mr. Eggar: I am afraid that at the moment I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the answer to his second question, but I shall willingly write to him with details. The staff has beeen considerably incresed and we are keeping a close watch on it. We expect an increase in applications during the summer months, because that it is traditionally the time of peak travel, and we have plans to reinforce the posts thereafter. It is not only in the area of the visitor that we are increasing staff resources, because we have seen a dramatic improvement in waiting time in Dhaka over the past year. Waiting times have been more than halved for settlement queues for the priority cases.

Mr. Spencer: Is my hon. Friend aware that I was charged £20 for my entry visa to India and that if it had been refused there would have been no right of appeal? Is he further aware that it was limited to the stated purpose for which the journey was made? Does he agree that our system confers greater rights on applicants than so some of those upon which the Labour party lavish such praise?

Mr. Eggar: It is a unique aspect of our visa application system that there is right of appeal. That is not shared by other countries.

Mr. Dalyell: Three answers ago the Under-Secretary of State said that he had support for the visa system from both sides of the House. Can he name any hon. Members on the Opposition Benches who support the system?

Mr. Eggar: I have received letters from many hon. Members in which they have made it clear that they are grateful for the way in which we have been able to process applications from their constitueents.

Iran-Iraq War

5. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent initiatives he has taken to increase support for the existing United Nations Security Council resolutions calling for a ceasefire in the war between Iran and Iraq; and what specific steps he has taken to draw to the attention of the Security Council the use of chemical weapons in that war.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We gave our firm support to Security Council resolutions 582 and 588, both adopted this year, and shall continue to press for their implementation. We have strongly supported successive statements by the President of the Security Council condemning the use of chemical weapons in the conflict, in particular the statement on 21 March, which was subsequently supported by the Twelve.

Mr. George Latham: While friends of the United States of America and Israel will greatly regret the supply of weapons to the brutal and violent regime of Ayatollah Khomeini, will my right hon. and learned Friend assure us that our hands are clean? What are the allegedly non-lethal weapons that we are allowed to supply?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that he requests. The guidelines that we have followed are those that were stated to the House in answer to the leader of the Liberal party on 29 October 1985. Those are the guidelines that we believe to be right and which we have followed.

Mr. Beith: Are the British Government opposed to the supply of weapons from the United States to Iran, whether or not that is related to attempts to release hostages? If they are, why was that not made clear during the Prime Minister's visit to President Reagan? Why have the British Government been supportive of President Reagan on this issue when senior members of his own Administration have been distancing themselves from him?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Our policy has never been in doubt. Since this matter has come to light the United States Government have said that they will not supply any further arms to Iran, but will make every effort to stop the supply of arms to that country from any source. That is a welcome reaffirmation of the policy that we have followed.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Can my right hon. and learned Friend comment on the fact that we are apparently not prepared to sell equipment such as that manufactured in my constituency by Leyland and Birmingham Rubber, which produces defence equipment to protect people from the affects of chemical weapons to which he referred? Surely, in the interest of humanity, let alone the possibility of us selling equipment to either of those countries which would be beneficial to them, we could make a more sensible contribution to our export drive and to humanity as well?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Neither my hon. Friend the Minister of State nor I are aware of any applications for export licences for such products. The guidelines that we apply are those to which I have already referred. We have and will continue to scrutinise rigorously all applications for export licences, applying those standards.

Mr. George Robertson: If President Reagan continues to reaffirm his view that it was right to sell arms to Iran so as to establish influence with the regime, does the Foreign Secretary share the Prime Minister's implicit faith in the tactic of establishing relations with the Iranians by drowning them in billions of pounds worth of arms?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that the hon. Gentleman has taken his gift for parody even further than usual. There is no question of the United Kingdom supporting such a policy. Our policy is exactly as I have stated. We should,

of course, like to bring Iran back into better relations with the West and to see an end to the Iran-Iraq war, but that is no reason for us to depart from the guidelines that I have enunciated again today. We are responsible for the policies of this country, not of the United States.

Disarmament

6. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have received from their allies on the United Kingdom's attitude to arms negotiations; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Since the Reykjavik meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev, the process of close Alliance consultations on arms control has continued both multilaterally and bilaterally. That has included the meeting of the North Atlantic Council on 13 October and the Nuclear Planning Group meeting in Gleneagles on 21-22 October. There have, of course, been several bilateral contacts with the USA and France.

Mr. Soames: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the concerns and attitudes of our European allies, including the Socialist Governments of Spain and France, show that the policies of the Labour party are out of touch with European as well as United States opinion and will undermine rather than assist arms control?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. The attitude of Socialist Governments throughout Europe shows how far from reality the Labour party now finds itself.

Mr. Cartwright: Have the Government had representations from their allies about their apparent reluctance to endorse the zero-zero option on intermediate-range nuclear weapons? Does the Foreign Secretary accept the repeated statement of the Secretary-General of NATO, Lord Carrington, that zero-zero was implicit in NATO's original twin track decision of December 1979? Are the Government now going back on their oft repeated statements that cruise and Pershing deployment could be halted, reduced or totally eliminated if the Soviet Union was prepared to remove its SS20 missiles?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No. I am only disappointed that the hon. Gentleman, careful student that he is of the observations of the Secretary-General of NATO, had not studied so closely my own observations in the debate on 14 November, when I stated plainly that the Government have no doubt about the legitimacy of going for the zero-zero agreement on the basis discussed at Reykjavik. The hon. Gentleman is right in that that has been the policy of the Alliance at least since 1979 and it has been our consistent objective since then — on the right terms, including dealing with Soviet shorter-range weapons.

Sir Peter Blaker: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that a few minutes ago the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) referred to a speech in which Secretary Shultz declared his determination to secure the abolition of certain categories of nuclear weapons within 10 years? The right hon. Gentleman concluded that that statement threatened the future of our Trident programme, but does my right hon. and learned Friend also recall that in the 1960s both superpowers declared their firm intention to secure general and complete disarmament within 10 years or so?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I recall that. It has been an oft-proclaimed objective not just of both superpowers but of Governments of all parties in this country, but we must proceed in that direction by realistic steps, and they are as defined and agreed by President Reagan and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at Camp David.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that the Prime Minister is in favour of the zero-zero option only after the next general election and that she went to Camp David to persuade the United States President not to follow up the Reykjavik negotiations before the general election as it would jeopardise her campaign to keep the bomb and Britain's independent nuclear deterrent and prevent the Tories from running a scaremongering campaign against the Labour party on that issue? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the Prime Minister is against multilateral as well as unilateral disarmament?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman compounds a series of absurd propositions. The Government have been, and are; committed to further progress in the direction of arms control on the basis of the clear priorities set out after the Camp David meeting. In the absence of advance in that direction, it is also Government policy to recognise the necessity for the nuclear deterrent to remain in place as part of the West's defensive policy. That is recognised by virtually every Government and party in the Alliance, save that to which the hon. Gentleman has the misfortune to belong.

Mr. Cash: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there is some irony—which compounds the absurd position to which my right hon. and learned Friend referred — in the Leader of the Opposition cavorting around the United States advocating a policy that was denied even by General Secretary Gorbachev when he conceded that we should have the nuclear deterrent? Furthermore, does he agree that the idea of a European ditch has as much chance of success as the Maginot line or Offa's dyke?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Yes, that is one of the most astonishing aspects of the various propositions to which the Leader of the Opposition has been committing himself. The way in which he is arguing in favour of a ban of United States nuclear forces from this country gravely jeopardises the presence of United States conventional forces in defence of NATO, gravely jeopardises the Alliance, and gravely jeopardises the security of this country.

Mr. Healey: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that his unwillingness and inability to answer my earlier question was due to the fact that the Government are so frightened that President Reagan will cancel Trident, as Skybolt was cancelled some years ago, that, according to the *Daily Telegraph*, they are investigating the possibility of reviewing Britain's deterrent to some sort of cruise programme? Is he aware that the Prime Minister herself, in this week's issue of *Janes Defence Weekly*, rightly pointed out that a deterrent based on cruise would be much more expensive than Trident and would come into service much too late to be of any value?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is encouraging to have the confirmation of the right hon. Gentleman, with his distinguished expert knowledge of the matter, of the

wisdom of the United Kingdom remaining committed to the Trident programme with the full support of the President of the United States.

Iran-Iraq (Service Personnel)

7. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many members of the armed forces of *(a)* Iraq and *(b)* Iran have received military training in the United Kingdom since 1980.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Renton): Some members of the Iraqi armed forces received training at Ministry of Defence establishments in the United Kingdom in each of the years 1981 to 1986. A small number of Iranian military personnel also received training at these establishments in the United Kingdom between 1981 and 1984.

Mr. Wareing: Upon what moral principle has the Government's policy been based? Will the hon. Gentleman assure the House that no further military personnel from Iraq or Iran will be trained in this country? Will he investigate the activities of Jackob Nimrodi, who has a flat in London, and who I understand negotiates 80 per cent. of Iran's import of arms procurement from an office in Victoria street? Will he arrange that that office is closed forthwith?

Mr. Renton: The training of military personnel in this country is done only in line with the defence guidelines to which my right hon. and learned Friend has already referred. Such training is essentially non-combat related.

On the hon. Gentleman's last point, I assure him—and I have read the newspaper cuttings very carefully, too—that we have no evidence whatsoever of any illegal activity in respect of the purchase of arms, either for Iraq or Iran, through this country. Such purchasing arrangements are not illegal, but it would be illegal to try to export without an export licence. Were there any evidence of that it would be investigated immediately.

Mr. Jackson: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is in British and Western interests to seek to break down the self-imposed barriers of isolation in Iran?

Mr. Renton: Yes, my hon. Friend is right. As a long-term objective we will seek to establish a better relationship with the Iranian Government so that once this dreadful war is ended—a war which both sides of the House bitterly regret—we may have a reasonable relationship with a country that will be of extreme importance in the middle east.

Mr. Ernie Ross: What is the difference between America and Israel selling arms to both sides and us training the personnel of both sides? Would it not be better to do something more specific to try to bring peace to that area?

Mr. Renton: I repeat again that the numbers in training have been extremely limited, and that the training itself is essentially not combat-related. It is carried out only in accordance with the very clear guidelines that were first put into effect in December 1984, which were enunciated to the House by my right hon. and learned Friend in late 1985, and which he has just repeated.

Sir John Farr: Does my hon. Friend have any evidence that training in the use of very sophisticated weapons is taking place by other European countries, particularly France? Will he tell the House anything he may know about that?

Mr. Renton: As my hon. Friend will be aware, we are not responsible either for training in other countries or for defence sales from other countries. As part of the campaign in which we have taken part, not least in the United Nations, we urge that all countries that are suppliers of military equipment to either side should exercise guidelines that are as strict as ours. I must stress that such guidelines have lost British manufacturers orders worth many hundreds of millions of pounds in recent years, but none the less we believe that such guidelines are right and are morally defensible.

Mr. Tom Clarke: How can the Minister equate this training programme with his right hon. and learned Friend's enthusiasm, as expressed at the Dispatch Box today, for resolutions 582 and 588 of the Security Council especially when one country is sponsoring terrorism in Nicaragua?

Mr. Renton: As I have already explained, there has been no military training of Iranians at all in Britain since 1984. The numbers that have subsequently come here from Iraq have been very limited indeed, and their training is essentially non-combat related.

Falkland Islands

8. **Mr. Wood** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit the Falkland Islands.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no plans at present to visit the Falkland islands.

Mr. Wood: Does my right hon. and learned Friend believe that the response of the Argentine Government to the British proposal for an agreed multilateral fisheries conservation regime in the south Atlantic suggests that the Argentine Government are more interested in pursuing propaganda about Falklands sovereignty than in reducing tension in the area?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that the Argentine response was disappointing, but perhaps inevitable. It was no doubt intended to rally domestic opinion and, perhaps, to mobilise international support. We have made known our willingness to review with them the best way forward on conservation policy and other ways of restoring our relationships to a more normal basis.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Secretary of State press the Falkland Islands Development Corporation to accept the plans of my constituent, Captain E. P. Carlisle, for a ship-based slaughterhouse to slaughter sheep on the Falkland Island as the beginning of a new meat industry?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sure that the plans to which the hon. Gentleman has referred deserve study.

Mr. Harris: Will my right hon. and learned Friend reject absolutely and completely the criticism from Opposition parties and internationally about the imposition of the exclusive fishing zone around the Falklands, as that must make sense for the conservation of these very valuable fish resources?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall certainly do that. As I made plain to the House when we announced the decision, the decision was taken because of the urgent need for conservation. We had tried for a long time to achieve a collaborative and co-operative solution. We would have preferred multilateral arrangements under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, without prejudice to the question of sovereignty, and we would still like to put in place a multilateral alternative.

Mr. Dalyell: Does not failure to talk play into the hands of the Argentine military, who have not gone away?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No. I am always astonished at those who assert that the posture of the United Kingdom in relation to the Falkland Islands has, or might have, a decisive effect on the future of Argentine democracy. We hope that Argentine democracy is more securely established than that. We hope that it is sufficiently securely established to recognise the right of the Falkland islanders to their own democratic rights.

Mr. Bowen Wells: Will my right hon. and learned Friend also confirm that the institution of a fishing zone around the Falkland Islands is the most obvious way to bring income to the Falkland islanders, thus enabling them to become more independent of support from this country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is quite right to draw attention to that additional beneficial possibility as a result of the establishment of the multilateral regime.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that he has now received from the Food and Agriculture Organisation a draft proposal for a multilteral fisheries regime in the south Atlantic? In view of the refusal of the Soviet Union to recognise our unilateral regime or to apply for licences, would it not be better to think again and to proceed on a multilateral basis? Finally, will he have a copy of the FAO report placed in the Library, or is he afraid to have it published because it underlines the Government's foolish and dangerous policy on this issue?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have not received the FAO report, although we have seen a first draft of it. It broadly confirms our assessment of the need for conservation steps to be taken in the south Atlantic.

Mr. Foulkes: Multilaterally?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Multilaterally, of course. From the moment that we made the announcement we said that we would prefer a multilateral regime. During the past 18 months we have been striving to establish a multilateral regime. We have failed to obtain a response on that from the Argentine Government. We would still like such a regime. If the hon. Gentleman would like to address his case to the Argentine Government instead of to this one he might be more effective in his advocacy.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that when the fisheries regime was sensibly introduced, the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) spoke of dire consequences, of conflict, and even of conflict with the Soviet Union? Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House how the regime is progressing?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There are increasing signs of willingness from all countries involved, especially those involved in fishing, to make applications for licences on the basis of the regime that we have outlined.

Intermediate Nuclear Forces

9. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs his policy towards the zero-zero option for intermediate nuclear forces.

Mr. Renton: NATO partners have consistently made it clear that arrangements on INF must include equal and global limits. An agreement for the elimination of longer-range intermediate nuclear forces in Europe would have to include tight constraints on the numbers of SS20s in Soviet Asia, and on Soviet shorter-range intermediate nuclear forces. Effective verification will be essential.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Was not President Reagan's unilateral action in breaking the SALT 2 agreement a retrograde step? Likewise, have not the British Government been equally destructive regarding agreement on a zero-zero option by linking it with conventional reductions? Is it not time for a constructive dialogue on those important issues?

Mr. Renton: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's last point. That is precisely what has been happening in recent weeks, and what we hope will continue to happen in the months ahead. On SALT 2, we have repeatedly made it clear that the SALT agreements should be observed by both sides. We have also made it clear that the Soviet Union has a case to answer as regards possible breaches and that it should respond to legitimate United States anxieties about Soviet compliance. On zero-zero, it is clear that as we move, as I hope we shall, in the months ahead to long-term elimination of long-range weapons and constraints on short-range weapons, the disparities in conventional weapons and conventional manpower, which are much in favour of the Soviets at present, must be confronted at the same time, especially if central Europe is to become a safer place.

Mr. Dorrell: Can my hon. Friend think of any conceivable reason why the Warsaw Pact should reduce its INF deployments to zero if the west adopted the policy advocated by the Opposition of reducing ours to zero without any conditionality on the Soviets or any negotiations with them?

Mr. Renton: That is right, of course. The fact that NATO countries were so firm in deploying cruise and Pershing in western Europe has brought the Soviets back to the negotiating table and will, we hope, lead to an eventual zero-zero intermediate forces agreement.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Are there not great gains for Europe——

Mr. Skinner: Owen's puppets.

Mr. Meadowcroft: —especially in the intermediate nuclear forces zero-zero option? Given that those are not directly linked to SDI, what initiative are the Government making in respect of the Geneva talks to put that question back on to the agenda?

Mr. Renton: I am sorry, but due to the interruptions of hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), I did not hear the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Meadowcroft: What are the gains for Europe in the zero-zero option on intermediate nuclear forces? What initiatives are the British Government taking?

Mr. Renton: Of course, there are great dangers to Europe in moving towards the removal of long-range intermediate nuclear forces. Secretary Shultz consulted extensively NATO allies after the Reykjavik talks and the Vienna talks. The Americans have shown considerable willingness to listen to west European NATO allies' points of view on that subject. Most recently, the statement arrived at by President Reagan and the Prime Minister at Camp David was a positive step forward that has been welcomed by our European allies.

Sir Patrick Wall: As we move towards zero-zero in intermediate weapons, are there any discussions with the Soviets on short-range nuclear weapons—the SS21, 22, 23 and 24—which must be linked with any reductions in intermediate weapons?

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend is right. There must be an agreement to limit short-range intermediate nuclear weapons. We would like to have an INF agreement that would incorporate a freeze on Soviet SS22 and SS23 systems. This would circumvent agreement on long-range intermediate nuclear weapons and, at the same time, there would be an agreed right, if necessary, for the United States to match the figures that the Soviets have at present.

Nuclear Weapons

10. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy concerning proposals for a nuclear weapon-free corridor in central Europe.

Mr. Renton: Proposals for a nuclear weapon-free corridor or zone would not enhance NATO security. Such areas could still be targeted by weapons located outside the zone. Such weapons could also be moved into those areas at short notice, and at a time of crisis. Real progress will be made only through significant, balanced and verifiable reductions in nuclear armaments.

Mr. Caborn: It is unfortunate that such a negative answer should be given by the Minister. I am sure he will know that the recommendation came from the Olaf Palme commission, which called for, as part of the entire strategy, a 300-mile corridor in Europe. Indeed, that policy has been picked up by the SDP in West Germany, which has come to some arrangement with regard to a 150-mile corridor, if it is in a position to implement it. Although that would be only a small but significant step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, will the Government rethink their position in a more positive light, not the negative position that has been given from the Dispatch Box?

Mr. Renton: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that the Foreign Minister of the German Democratic Republic, Mr. Fischer, who was with us last week, did not once mention a nuclear-free corridor. The reason is that such corridors only give the illusion of security. Where the weapons are targeted matters far more than where they are based. The hon. Gentleman represents part of the city of Sheffield, which has declared itself a nuclear weapon-free zone. I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that, rather than spend £250,000 a year on a peace budget and £500 on a CND balloon on nuclear free-zone day, the hard-pressed residents of Sheffield would prefer a reduction in their rates.

Mr. Waller: Is my hon. Friend aware that the nuclear issues and emergency planning committee of the city of Bradford metropolitan council is actively promoting its own foreign policy and recently met Herr Schneidratus of the East German embassy, when Councillor Rye and his colleagues on the committee responded enthusiastically to the idea of a nuclear-free corridor in central Europe? Is that not a naive reaction, bearing in mind that the idea of a nuclear-free zone in central Europe is completely discredited and that it would involve the withdrawal of our deterrent from central Europe while the Warsaw Pact retained its intermediate weapons to the east of the Urals, which can hit anywhere in Europe?

Mr. Renton: I notice, too, that Manchester is promoting a nuclear-free Europe at a cost of at least £500,000. The city's nuclear-free zone is being guarded by five full-time staff at a cost of £95,000 a year. The inhabitants of eastern Europe, notably the German Democratic Republic, would prefer, not a nuclear weapon-free zone or corridor, but the withdrawal of some of the 400,000 Soviet troops who are stationed in that country.

Mr. George Robertson: Instead of sneering at genuine efforts to promote peace and understanding in Europe, can the Minister give a more constructive response to a proposal which would help to reduce risks and tension in Europe by increasing the time span for taking decisions on the central front? Is there not something to be said for a policy which unites the SDP of West Germany, the Communist party of East Germany and the leader of the British Social Democratic party, who endorsed it in the Palme commission report?

Mr. Renton: I wonder whether the policy also has the support of the Liberal party. The hon. Gentleman is far too intelligent not to know that nuclear weapon-free corridors 300 km wide mean absolutely nothing in the event of hostilities being declared. Weapons that have been moved out can be moved back quickly. What matters is where the weapons are targeted, not where they are based. It is significant that the Cristian Democrats in the Federal Republic have not shown any inclination to back those proposals.

Iran-Iraq War

11. **Mr. Mikardo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the authorities in Iran and Iraq on the use of chemical warfare.

Mr. Renton: We take every suitable opportunity to express our views on the use of chemical weapons to the Iraqis and Iranians. My right hon. and learned Friend last raised the issue with the Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Tariq Aziz, when he met him at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, on 24 September.

Mr. Mikardo: I am grateful for that reply. Is it not time to go beyond the presidential statements and guidelines to which the Foreign Secretary referred in reply to a previous question? Should we not be getting together with our friends and allies to find some way of stopping or reducing

the supply from Europe to either or both of those countries of chemical weapons, equipment to make them or equipment to adapt fertiliser factories to make them? Should we not be doing something instead of just talking?

Mr. Renton: It is a pleasure to find myself in agreement with the hon. Gentleman. He will know that at present we impose export controls on 10 chemicals which are capable of being used in the manufacture of lethal chemical agents. A longer warning list has been circulated to the chemical industry and traders, and similar measures have been taken by other industrialised countries. More important, as the hon. Gentleman knows, we have taken the lead at the conference on disarmament in Geneva of seeking a worldwide ban on the production and storing of chemical weapons. In that context we have tabled our initiative about challenge inspection and we look forward to discussing it with other countries in the months ahead. This is an area in which the United Kingdom is in the lead.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Will my hon. Friend press on with the Government's initiative to have a worldwide ban on chemical weapons? In particular, will he make representations to the Soviet Union that it should not assist any country in the middle east to develop its chemical warfare potential?

Mr. Renton: Yes, I can assure my hon. Friend that we are already in detailed discussion with the Soviet Union about some of the clauses in the regime for challenge inspection that we have tabled at Geneva. We shall continue to press the Soviets not to do anything to facilitate the export of ingredients which can be used in chemical weapon manufacturing.

Mr. Deakins: If industrial countries are not supplying chemical weapons or the means to make them to Iran or Iraq, does the Minister accept that they are getting the weapons from somewhere? Can we not widen our efforts and ensure that they cannot get those weapons from anywhere? Does he agree that even if we must raise the issue at the United Nations, we should do so?

Mr. Renton: Yes. The hon. Gentleman judges on a difficult point. The problem is that many chemical ingredients can be used either for genuine ordinary chemical manufacture or for the manufacture of dangerous chemical agents. In producing the warning list that is now circulated to the chemical industry we tried to establish which chemicals were particularly dangerous in this area. We constantly consider the list and we shall do everything we can to make international export controls more effective prior to arranging a worldwide ban on chemical weapon production, which must be verifiable. That is the answer to the problem that the hon. Gentleman identified.

South Africa

12. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is yet satisfied that sufficient progress has been made by the South African Government towards the dismantling of apartheid to warrant the withdrawal of economic and other sanctions; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): No, Sir. While we do not believe that general economic sanctions would be effective as a means to end apartheid, measures of the kind agreed by the Twelve on 16 September are an important means of signalling to the South African Government the urgent need for change.

Mr. Carlisle: Does my hon. Friend accept that it would be better to dismantle the apartheid system at a time of economic prosperity than at a time of unemployment, poverty and financial disaster, which the sanctions policy will bring? Will she reject the Barclays bank way of walking away from the problem and support BP's policy for far greater investment and prosperity for those of all races in South Africa?

Mrs. Chalker: The decision by Barclays bank was an entirely commercial decision for it. It is true that any weakening of the economy brings enormous suffering, particularly to the black South Africans. I must say that BP's ideas, and its intention to spend £30 million on community projects, represent a welcome initiative. There should be more. However, it should be realised that the South African Government have fenced themselves into a corner. Although they have changed some of the restrictive laws, they have sought to introduce new restrictions, such as defining the parameters for black settlement in urban areas. Until the apartheid system in South Africa is replaced by a system with which all South Africans can agree, we shall not see, in South Africa, further investment strength or, indeed, the peace for which we all long.

Rate Support Grant

3.31 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his latest proposals for the rate support grant settlement for 1987-88.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): In response to the representations that I have received on the proposals that I made on 3 October, and in the light of new information affecting the data upon which grant is distributed, I have today announced revised proposals on which I am consulting local authorities afresh.

Dr. Cunningham: Is not this situation quite unprecedented? No previous Secretary of State has needed three consultation documents between July and December in order to make up his mind. Is that not an indictment of the Secretary of State's incompetence? Was not his attempt to try to sneak the information out by way of a written answer an act of political cowardice and a disgrace? Is not his reply an indictment of the appalling mess to which this Government have reduced local government finance?

As the right hon. Gentleman only put forward his second proposals in October, and gave local authorities barely three weeks in which to reply, why has he now changed his mind yet again? What is the purpose of the proposed changes? Which authorities will benefit? Is not the reality that the majority of authorities will lose under his new proposals? Are not the reasons really a combination of his own ineptitude and a political pay-off to his Tory friends in marginal seats?

Will the Secretary of State tell the House when we shall now learn of his final decisions? Does he still intend, for example, to abolish grant recycling which, according to the treasurer of Somerset county council, will reduce the extra grant that he is purporting to give local authorities by at least £400 million next year, and will result in higher rates for many millions of families? Does not this whole sorry story make nonsense of all the bluster and bravado that we had from the right hon. Gentleman in July?

Mr. Ridley: It is rich of the hon. Gentleman to quote precedent when sitting one away from him is the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) who, whenever he had proposals on a rate support grant settlement, came once to the House, in December, to answer a written parliamentary question stating what the Government's decision was. By contrast, this Government have consulted and we put forward a consultative paper on 3 October. We have listened to the results of that consultation and I now come forward with further proposals which, by precedent, have always been outlined by way of written parliamentary question. I shall listen to the results of further representations on these consultations. What an extraordinary example the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) wishes me to follow—of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney's practice to slap it down on the table in December—take it or leave it and no consultation. I cannot accept that.

I shall make up my mind as to the final settlement when I have listened to consultations that may be received on the proposals that I am announcing this afternoon. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to study the document, copies are now in the Vote Office as well as in the Library, and I have written to him giving him details. The Government are proceeding with their plans to end the recycling of grant, as I announced on 22 July. I think that he will find that this is fairer, for this reason. The latest data on populations, capital allocations and expenditure in 1986-87 and on rateable values of authorities make it clear that the basis of the 3 October settlement which I proposed has been altered by the fact that the data have changed, making those authorities that did badly in October do even worse. It seemed necessary to me to correct that imbalance.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the consultation that he has had with hon. Members over the past months have been appreciated? Will he confirm that the outcome of his consultations will be that those underspending, prudent authorities will be able to spend more money, which is their due reward?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, as I am to all hon. Gentlemen who came to see me to discuss the last proposals. I hope that the House will acknowledge that I have tried, as far as possible, to listen to what hon. Members have said, and to make the necessary changes. Again, we shall be ready to hear any hon. Member who wishes to make representations on behalf of his authority in the light of the new proposals.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Was the announcement that the Secretary of State made in July not one of relative principle compared with that of today, as he said then that it would not be possible to change the system in favour of the home counties without depriving the inner cities of moneys to which, under the Act, they were entitled? Are we not about to see, next month, a new form of gerrymander, the "Ridleymander", which is buying votes in the places where the right hon. Gentleman knows that his friends would otherwise lose seats because of the system set up under statute in 1980? Is not the real reason that the Secretary of State wants to know the outcome of the teachers' dispute settlement before he knows what local authorities will require to have in their budgets to spend in the forthcoming year?

Mr. Ridley: I had not intended to refer to the effects of the new proposals on the individual authorities. The hon. Gentleman accuses me of gerrymandering, but I can think of no reason, on that argument, why I should have provided extra money for the borough of Southwark, which is represented by the hon. Gentleman, and run by the Labour party. I do not see how one can gerrymander in favour of one's political opponents. The effect of the data is what the hon. Gentleman should study, and he will find that there are good reasons for the changes that I have suggested.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): First, may I welcome the sensitive and flexible approach which my right hon. Friend has adopted in this matter? I hope that the further consultations that he and his Department will be having will produce a result whereby inner-city areas will be aided and prudent shire authorities will be rewarded for their prudence. Secondly, may I disabuse him of the notion, if any of his officials care to press it upon him, that any delay will take the heat out of the argument, because I assure him that it will not?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It has not been a matter of seeking to reward certain authorities and penalise others. I have to operate within the 1980 Act and ensure that I distribute the grant in accordance with the formula on a basis which is best defensible. What makes the difference between October and now is the different information on the grant likely to be received, due to changes in rateable values and other such matters which have to be taken into account, and the result is different from that which I thought was fair.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must take account of the fact that this is an Opposition day. There is an important debate to follow and I shall take two more questions from either side of the Chamber.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): May I offer the Secretary of State some sympathy for having inherited an entirely unworkable rate support grant system from the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) and having to make a statement which he hoped would give extra money to the local authorities in some of his hon. Friend's marginal constituencies? He has had to face a rebellion that has been led by his right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford, who is campaigning against the difficulties which the Secretary of State faced in a system which he inherited. Is it not true that the system that was honed by previous Tory Secretaries of State cannot be made to give Tory authorities extra moneys and to take moneys away from Labour authorities in the way that was hoped? There has been a Back-Bench rebellion——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Roberts —by his hon. Friends which has resulted in the Secretary of State rethinking how he can fiddle the system to enable him to take moneys away from Labour authorities to give them to authorities in Tory marginal seats.

Mr. Ridley: If the hon. Gentleman feels as he says he does, I look forward to his presence in the Government Lobby after we have introduced legislation to abolish the rating system and replace it with a fairer system.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): In considering alterations to the original proposals, may I express the hope to my right hon. Friend that what is now proposed will help alleviate some of the problems that Bedfordshire has had over rates for some time?

Mr. Ridley: I think it best that my hon. Friend studies the document that is now in the Vote Office. It is too difficult to memorise the details of every authority, but I think that he will find that there is some help for Bedfordshire. Some counties that are run impeccably well by the finest Conservative councillors do not benefit from the proposals that I am putting forward.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): As this is the season of consultation, will the Secretary of State have consultations with the Secretary of State for Transport to sort out the problem which they have caused for the West Yorkshire transport authority? The Department of Transport is saying that its expenditure should be £58 million and the Department of the Environment is saying that it should be £37 million, thereby making the authority an overspender. There is a grant from the Department of less than £8 million, which is unfair to the ratepayers and travellers of west Yorkshire. Will the right hon. Gentleman have consultaions with the transport authority to sort out the mess in which west Yorkshire has been placed, because of this misunderstanding?

Mr. Ridley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and I are in total accord about all matters. We think exactly the same. There is no need to consult each other because we always agree about everything. The hon. Gentleman has mentioned sums for transport in west Yorkshire which seem enormous in relation to need in that area.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Is my right hon. Friend aware that because of the bizarre, complicated and almost byzantine nature of the calculations involved in the rate support grant system, he is to be congratulated on introducing a consultative phase, which we have never had before? That is entirely to his credit. As a result of consultation, how has Hampshire done?

Mr. Ridley: I must agree entirely with my hon. Friend about the bizarre and complex nature of the system that we seek to operate.

Hon. Members: It's your system.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ridley: The House seems to agree about the bizarreness and complexity of the system. I am sure that all hon. Members would wish to change to a new system that takes away rateable value as one of the bases from which the rate support grant settlement is derived. I ask my hon. Friend to examine the paper in relation to Hampshire. He will find that there is some benefit for Hampshire ratepayers in what is proposed.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take one at a time.

Points of Order

3.45 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that, at this time yesterday, a resolution of the House remitted to the Scottish Grand Committee the subject of agriculture and fisheries. That subject is long overdue for discussion by the Scottish Grand Committee. It is, of course, necessary, under Standing Order No. 94, for a further resolution of the House to be passed before the matter can be debated in Edinburgh at 10.30 on a Monday morning. The Government proposed to debate this matter next Monday morning, although the motion to that effect was objected to last night by my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party, on the ground that insufficient notice had been given to hon. Members of this meeting next week. Last night, a card was sent to Scottish Members advising them of the meeting next Monday, before a motion had been passed by the House. We know that the Government have a large majority, but surely it is presumptuous for the business of the House to be assumed before it comes to pass.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for having given me notice of this matter. It has enabled me to examine it. A mistake was made in the Committee Office. Cards were sent out, warning Members. It was the intention to put on those cards the words, "dependent upon the House passing the necessary resolution." I apologise to the House.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Bearing in mind the importance of the subject that has just been raised in a private notice question and the fact that it should have been the Government's duty to come to the House with a statement and not rest on the back of a private notice question, and bearing in mind the fact that that £800 million—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I am on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is not. He is trying to raise a question——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Not at all.

Mr. Speaker: Order.—that he might have asked if I had called him. The House knows that a private notice question is an extension of Question Time. We have spent the best part of 15 minutes on it.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Yes, but Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but I cannot allow any further time.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: You gave 12 minutes to——

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: You have given half a minute——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Deakins.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to note that, for my point of order, which is a genuine one, the Chief Whips, the Leader of the House, and my right hon. Friend the shadow Leader of the House are present.

My point of order relates to the form of Foreign Office questions. As you will know, Mr. Speaker, for the past year, there has been an experiment whereby the separate slot for Common Market questions was merged into Foreign Office questions. The decision to have that experiment was controversial, and a number of hon. Members disagreed with it. The experiment was confirmed to me and others, very courteously, in writing by the Leader of the House at the end of last Session and in a written answer. We note from today's Foreign Office questions that not a single question about the Common Market was reached. The confirmation of the experiment, which is now to be made permanent, means that we shall no longer have any separate slot in the proceedings of the House for any questions whatever on the Common Market. They will be merged with all other questions. That is a matter of controversy for all hon. Members. That decision was arranged by the usual channels.

The usual channels on this occasion—I cannot speak for other occasions—consisted solely of the Government and the official Opposition. The Liberal party, the Official Ulster Unionists and, I think, the Scottish National party, were not consulted. Therefore, I believe that the other minority parties were not consulted. So far as your duty to Back-Benchers is concerned Mr. Speaker, should you not ensure that, in future, when such decisions are made on matters of interest to all hon. Members, all parties are consulted through the usual channels?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are not matters for me, as the hon. Member knows. They are traditionally matters for discussion between the usual channels. What the usual channels change they can change again. The hon. Member has made his point.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): On a point of order which arises out of questions, Mr. Speaker. I apologise for the fact that I was not here earlier when the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) —I apologise for reading— mentioned my name and that of my former research assistant. May I inform you, Sir, that the hon. Gentleman's question was out of order because that man——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It was not out of order.

Mr. Carlisle: May I ask for your opinion, Sir?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member should ask my opinion on a matter on which I can rule.

Mr. Carlisle: I crave your indulgence, Sir, and ask for your opinion whether the hon. Gentleman's question was in order, because that man, Mr. David Hoile, is not now in my employ as my research assistant.

Mr. Speaker: The question was in order.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On Monday you gave a substantive reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and me about possible interference with the telephones of Members of Parliament. Have you been able to make any progress?

Mr. Speaker: I am looking into the matter. I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Word has reached me that, not unusually, the Labour party feels that it is unable to vote on the motions on today's Order Paper. Is it possible——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is patently not a matter for me.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not a matter for me.

Opposition Day

[3RD ALLOTED DAY]

Security Services (Commission)

Mr. Speaker: We now move to the important debate on the motion in the names of the leaders of the alliance parties. I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.51 pm

Mr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): I beg to move,

That this House believes that it is desirable that a Joint Committee of both Houses, to be known as the Special Commission on the Security Services, be appointed, and that the Committee have power to send for persons, papers and records.

We all know that debates on the security services involve issues that are not easy to handle. It might help the House if I try to spell out what may well be common ground on some of the issues. At a time when there is intense terrorist activity worldwide, let alone the problems of East-West relations, we need our security services, and they have to operate with a high degree of secrecy.

It has hitherto always been accepted in the House that it is an inappropriate mechanism to call the security services to account by a systematic question and answer exchange on the Floor of the House. I believe that that is still the position. However, there has been growing concern that it is no longer possible, in view of the revelations concerning the security services, for Parliament to remain the only forum in the nation that is not discussing some of these questions. It is bizarre when the newspapers, television and radio are frequently discussing these issues in considerable detail but there is no mechanism for parliamentary scrutiny.

I am sorry that the Prime Minister is not in her place, because I wish to raise certain issues. It is fair to say that it was the Prime Minister who, for understandable reasons, in 1979 broke with the precedent of not revealing information about the security services. The situation is exceptional. The Blunt case was, by any standard, an issue on which the nation would not have accepted that there should be no discussion in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister keeps quoting precedent and saying that she is abiding by it, but she must face the fact that she was the first Prime Minister to come to the Floor of the House of Commons to reveal so much information. The Prime and Bettaney cases followed and, again, more information was revealed than was previously the practice.

As in the United States and in most democratic countries, in this country more and more people have realised that the old system of totally trusting the Ministers concerned will not satisfy Parliament or the wider public. There is a strong case for us devising a mechanism whereby the House can feel confident that the security services are scrutinised and at the same time it can protect the essential confidentiality and secrecy of much of their activity. It is because of that that we have tabled this motion.

The motion is deliberately designed to involve Members of both Houses. Given the range of experience, there is positive merit in such a commission having its

[Mr. David Owen]

membership drawn from this House as well as from the House of Lords. That would also allow this House, if we thought it prudent, to have a commission chairman who was not a party political figure, or perhaps to appoint somebody who was obviously no longer in the front line of party politics—a former Prime Minister, for example.

It is also a virtue to have the potential to involve senior service men from the House of Lords or senior civil servants. A similar thought must have passed through the mind of the Government when somewhat reluctantly they accepted during the Falklands crisis the principle of having an examination to see what had gone wrong. They did that by establishing the Franks committee. The membership of that committee was drawn from the House of Commons and the House of Lords and also contained somebody from outside who at the time of appointment was not a member of the Privy Council but was made a member. That committee had available to it all forms of intelligence, security reports and internal working documents of Government, and for that reason it was thought right that its members should be Privy Councillors.

We strongly believe that the members of the commission we propose should be Privy Councillors. That is because it has hitherto been accepted that Members of Parliament are not positively vetted and that membership of the Privy Council enables one to have access to confidential information. That has been accepted by our friends and allies. We do not specifically mention that in the motion because we think it sensible that the House should be able to appoint to such a body someone who is not a Privy Councillor but who, with the agreement of the Prime Minister, may become one on appointment to this commission. That would follow precedent. That may go some way towards avoiding the charge that people who would serve would only be former Ministers or people who, if you like, are "part of the club" or "in the know". If the Leader of the Opposition or the leader of any of the other parties wished to nominate somebody who had not served in government or was not a Privy Councillor, they would be free to do so, provided there was some understanding of the nominee's overall acceptability.

Such a structure would command a good deal of support in all parts of the House, although I do not expect that to be reflected in the Lobbies at the end of this debate. Such a commission will come; the only question is when. The sooner it comes, the less will some quite serious information be divulged that is damaging to the security services. That happens because of the way we presently conduct our proceedings. Under such a system, we will not abuse the Order Paper by naming individuals in the way that has been done in recent weeks. Judging from the amendment that has been tabled, the Home Secretary does not accept this motion, but I hope that he will ponder hard on the questions that I have posed.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): The right hon. Gentleman mentioned Bettaney. How would the mechanism that he proposes prevent the recruitment of someone like Bettaney?

Dr. Owen: It would not have prevented his recruitment; the mere fact of having a scrutinising committee will not prevent some people from indulging in treachery. The recruitment procedures to MI5 were seriously defective and successive Prime Ministers, including the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), to his great credit, considerably tightened the procedures. MI5 and its recruitment has been causing worry for some time, but I believe that it is now substantially better. Although we hear all about the problems associated with the security services, it is worth reminding the House that it has had some outstanding successes, including not only Penkovsky but the recent defection of somebody very high up in the KGB who was in London for a long time. Those were considerable successes.

I would like to consider the reasons for the present anxiety, which of course prompts this pressure, although I have been advocating this course now for several years. I do not advocate the appointment of this commission purely and simply because of recent incidents. I do not believe that some of the questions that have been raised publicly would be answered by such a Select Committee. They will have to be answered in another forum.

It is common ground that Mr. Peter Wright has betrayed the trust of his employers and the trust of this country. I believe that any Government would have been extremely disturbed by Mr. Peter Wright briefing Mr. Chapman Pincher for his book in 1981 and should have been considerably concerned about the television programme broadcast by Granada in July 1984. That was a flagrant breach of Mr. Peter Wright's obligations and agreements and led him to write his own book. Nothing that I say or have said is meant in any way to underwrite the conduct of Mr. Peter Wright. His conduct has been utterly disgraceful.

The Government were under considerable pressure to take the court action they have taken in Sydney. Those of us who would support the action are entitled to ask the Government why they did not take action against Mr. Peter Wright when they knew that he was the prime source of Mr. Chapman Pincher's book in 1981. This is not an easy matter for the Home Secretary. However, I put this point to him directly, as allegations have now been made in many newspapers, and most recently and clearly in the *Sunday Times*.

It is claimed that MI5 gained possession of the book six weeks in advance of its publication by the use of illegal methods. That raises a number of questions. First, were illegal methods used? If the Home Secretary refuses to answer that, can he tell the House what ministerial approval has to take place before MI5 can act illegally? We have asked for assurances about ministerial control over telephone tapping and interceptions. We recognise that such action must be taken and that sometimes extraordinary actions are necessary to protect the state. However, we want to know, and are entitled to know, whether any such actions are given the specific authorisation, in this case, of the Home Secretary. We are entitled to know that procedure.

A Select Committee would, in my view, be a valuable scrutiniser of those issues to examine what is happening and exercise democratic control. Can the Home Secretary tell us why, in 1981, the Attorney-General was not involved in the decision whether to take action against Mr. Peter Wright and Mr. Chapman Pincher? Quite bluntly, the distinction between a civil and criminal offence does not stand up. Procedures for Ministers are quite clear on this matter, and they have applied for successive Governments.

If an issue of law is involved which has considerable repercussions through the governmental machine—and

no one can doubt that the decision not to prosecute Mr. Chapman Pincher and Mr. Peter Wright has had very, considerable repercussions — the Attorney-General should have been involved. Of course, the Attorney-General is right to make the distinction that in a criminal charge he, and he alone, is responsible for the decision. He is the principal Law Officer of the Government and as principal Law Officer he should have been involved in 1981. Was his exclusion deliberate? If so, did that happen because illegal action had taken place? It would not be the first time that the Attorney-General has heard of illegal action. I cannot really understand why that should be the reason. Or did the Government feel that he was likely to ask for prosecution and the then Prime Minister and the Home Secretary did not wish to face a conflict of advice from the Attorney-General. These are serious and legitimate points to raise.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): The right hon. Gentleman told the House that in his view action should have been taken against Mr. Wright five years ago in 1981. As Mr. Wright was then living outside this jurisdiction, how could any action have been taken to prevent publication of Mr. Chapman Pincher's book and how could a prosecution have been effective as Mr. Wright was living outside our jurisdiction?

Dr. Owen: I linked Mr. Chapman Pincher and Mr. Peter Wright. For the reasons that the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) has described, it might have been difficult to take an immediate action against Peter Wright. However, Mr. Wright has been to this country since 1981. Indeed, in 1984 he appeared in a television programme which will be repeated by Granada tonight. Having read the transcript of that programme, I am amazed that it will be broadcast again — Granada states — without the Government making any formal challenge or representation against it. — [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Tebbit?"] What the chairman of the Conservative party should do is immaterial to the question.

Why did the then Home Secretary or the Prime Minister not take action? I consider that the Granada programme is more devastating because there is no doubt that Mr. Peter Wright was in this country.

I have already raised the specific points that I wished to raise about MI5. However, other allegations are in circulation about what may or may not emerge from the Sydney case. I shall not deal with the question of the former Prime Minister, Lord Wilson of Rievaulx. That will be dealt with by my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) — if he catches your eye, Mr. Speaker — who was Home Secretary during some of the period to which these matters relate.

I would like to raise one or two points about the case in Sydney. A reporter asked me whether I would have taken action. I suspect that I would have taken action. I was responsible for acquiescing in the decision of the then Attorney-General over the ABC trial. In retrospect, that was a mistake. Far more information came out as a result of that litigation than any of us thought possible.

We must learn from those cases and from some of the problems that have resulted from legal action. We should still be learning. "Farce" is the word most often used to describe what is happening in Sydney. The case has already damaged the reputation of a very senior and hitherto well-respected civil servant, the Cabinet Secretary. It has done a great deal of harm to the standing of the Attorney-General, although I think that many people admire the way in which he was determined that the truth should come out; when he discovered that his name had been called in aid over the original decision not to prosecute, he must have insisted that his name was cleared. All credit to him for that.

The case has not done the Government any good. However, to be honest, I do not believe that the great British public will take it out on the Government in party politics. I think that they are rather enjoying this running farce. The atmosphere is helped because we are doing well against the Australians in cricket. Indeed, the judge's florid turn of phrase may mean that the Government will have some legal redress on appeal.

How long will this rolling farce go on? How many more facts are likely to be revealed? One of the skills of politics is to know when to cut one's losses—*[Interruption.]* We are all sorry that the Leader of the Opposition is not with us today. We understand that he is heavily engaged with speaking engagements—that is, if people are prepared to turn up at them—on the other side of the Atlantic.

We also regret the absence of the Prime Minister, which is very revealing.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Where is the Attorney-General?

Dr. Owen: The Prime Minister gave the impression yesterday that she intended to withdraw the normal rights of consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. Since then, there have been periodic briefings from No. 10 about the position. I find it bizarre that the Leader of the Opposition should have telephoned defence counsel in a case involving the Crown, but I take the view that he is more a fool than a knave. To pretend that that is a major issue which justifies breaking the conventions on security issues—*[Interruption.]* It is sad that the Leader of the Opposition is not present to justify his own actions and make a six-page personal statement. Nevertheless, I ask the Home Secretary to make it clear that the Government have no intention of acting in such a naive and juvenile way. It would be ludicrous to break the conventions on such scant grounds. It is for the Leader of the Opposition to justify his own actions, but it is in all our interests that security matters should not become an issue of party conflict and division — as, sadly, defence matters have become in recent times.

My final plea is to the Home Secretary and to all in the House who value the bipartisan tradition on security services. Let us all learn from what has happened in the greater openness and democracy of the past few years. It is not sustainable for the House of Commons to have no role in scrutinising the Executive on these matters. The Prime Minister must be told by the few members of the Conservative party—I suspect that they are very few—to whom she is prepared to listen that she must come off it and allow Parliament to exercise its proper function of scrutinising the security services. I believe that the form of inquiry that we have outlined, involving both Houses of Parliament and the maintenance of the bipartisan concept, is the right way forward, and the sooner it is achieved, the better.

4.11 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'has full confidence in the present arrangements whereby the Security Service is responsible to Ministers.'

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) has called for a special commission to oversee what he has described as the security services. Although we do not accept his proposal, it is entirely reasonable that it should be made, as it has been in the past and no doubt will be in the future. Having listened to the right hon. Gentleman, I cannot say that I am much clearer as to what he envisages the proposed body doing and what it might actually achieve, but there may be other occasions on which that can be discussed in greater detail.

The right hon. Gentleman acknowledged that the timing of his motion had a lot to do with the present case in Australia. I wish to deal seriously with the underlying points that he made because they deserve to be taken seriously, but the House will appreciate that I cannot enter into argument about the progress of the case in Australia. Every Home Secretary, like every Prime Minister, works under the general constraint that we do not answer questions, however important, about the work of the Security Service. That is not new — it reflects the accepted practice of successive Governments. More particularly, we cannot answer questions currently being discussed in the court case in Australia.

You, Mr. Speaker, have ruled that these proceedings do not rate as sub judice in terms of the rules of the House, but it is absolutely clear that the Government are sub judice in that we are under the judge in Australia as plaintiff in his court. There can thus be no doubt that any answers or observations given in the House could be seen by the Australian court as an attempt to influence it or to interfere with the judicial process there.

My reply to the right hon. Gentleman's questions about that case, therefore, must be that so long as the case remains before the Australian court—despite the right hon. Gentleman's comments, it may be for some time yet —the Government must deny themselves the opportunity to deal faithfully with the extraordinary mass of stories to which the case has given rise. Faced with such a high proportion of nonsense, there are many comments that we should dearly like to make—comments which we may be free to make one day, but because of the continuing case in Australia that day is emphatically not today.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Even if I do not agree with the Home Secretary's comments about the case in Australia, the case in Ireland is certainly no longer sub judice. What purpose was served by trying to ban a book explaining events which took place during the last war, more than 40 years ago? Do not the Home Secretary and the Attorney-General realise how farcical it seemed to many people in Britain? Personally, I am very pleased at the decision reached by the Dublin court.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has made clear the basis on which that injunction was sought, which was exactly the same basis —the principle of confidentiality—as led to the action in Australia.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): What national interest is served by concealing from Parliament and the public the knowledge that the Prime Minister of the day, then Harold Wilson, had his offices and telephones intercepted and his homes burgled by the security services which were supposed to be accountable to him? What public interest makes it necessary to conceal that fact, which emerges in Mr. Wright's book and bears on the central question of whether the security services are under ministerial control?

Mr. Hurd: That was directly dealt with by the Prime Minister of the day, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), and I understand that further comments are to be made by the former Home Secretary, the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins).

If my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has anything to add he will be able to do so when he winds up. [HON. MEMBERS: "That is passing the buck."] The matter was thoroughly dealt with by those responsible at the time.

The right hon. Member for Devonport accepts, as all serious people must accept, the need for a Security Service to help protect Britain. I sometimes become a little weary of those worldly-wise but ignorant people who argue that Britain no longer has any secrets to protect and therefore no longer needs a Security Service. There remains a considerable risk of espionage. Moreover — this must always be in the mind of any Home Secretary — the threat of domestic and international terrorism is greater than ever before. The Security Service is an essential part of the means whereby we seek to protect the British people from terrorism. Through force of circumstances, far from declining, that role has substantially increased.

Still following the right hon. Gentleman's argument, the Security Service must be secretive to be effective. We shall not prevent arms going to the IRA or identify terrorists in this country, and, crucially, our friends and allies around the world will not give us secret information of their own which may be necessary for our protection, if the Security Service is not properly and effectively secretive about operational matters. The Security Service is not an ornament—it is a crucial means of protecting and defending our citizens and their freedom.

If it is necessary, legitimate and, indeed, fundamental for the Security Service to preserve a proper secrecy about its methods of operation or about the procedures and people from whom it obtains information, something else that is important follows from that. There must be a binding obligation on members of the Security Service— not just for the period when they are in the service but for the rest of their lives — not to disclose what was entrusted to them on a confidential basis. We are talking here not about some narrow concept of the employer's interest but about something wider—the interests of the nation as a whole, which may be damaged if a person breaks the confidentiality by which he knew that the was bound for ever when he took up the employment.

This principle, of course, as the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General made clear, lies at the heart of our proceedings against Mr. Wright. That is the only comment I can make today about the case. In real life and in common sense, there is a distinction between books written entirely by outsiders and books written by members or former members of the Security Service who, by overtly providing their own information, give it an appearance of authenticity that no

outsider can pretend to do. Thus, the secrecy of operations and, in particular, the requirement of confidentiality from members of the service, are crucial to its effectiveness.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): As it is clear that, over the years, Mr. Pincher has been fed classified information on the Security Service by a series of MI5 officers, will the Home Secretary tell us whether he believes the relationship that exists between Mr. Pincher and officers in the security services is defendable in every possible way?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman says, from information given by his contacts, things that he believes are clear. I cannot go beyond what I have said—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] Of course I cannot go beyond what I have already said about the Australian case and the proceedings in it.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it a healthy relationship?

Mr. Hurd: I must get on to the thesis of the right hon. Member for Devonport.

As I said, the secrecy of operations, and in particular the requirement of confidentiality, are thus crucial to the effectiveness of the Security Service. Yet we live in a democratic society where Parliament is sovereign. It would not be accepted — and it is not my argument — that secrecy should mean the total isolation of the Security Service from all our democratic institutions. There must be some means of ensuring oversight and responsibility. There must be some way of ensuring that the resources and opportunities provided for the Security Service are used for the national good. That is why the responsibility for those matters mainly lies with the Home Secretary of the day, and there are several of my predecessors in the Chamber at the moment. I know something about how they and others have approached that responsibility, and I want to explain what it means to me, in 1986.

Of course, I cannot always respond with evidence about the discharge of this responsibility for the Security Service, and some regard that as blunting that responsibility. But, in practice — as my predecessors would confirm — the Home Secretary must take that responsibility very seriously as it involves the highest trust for the protection and safety of our country.

The Security Service operates under the published directive issued in 1952 to the director general by the then Home Secretary, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe. That can be found in Lord Denning's report and it still applies today. The directive makes the director general personally responsible to the Home Secretary for the proper and efficient implementation of the tasks set out in the directive. It is mainly through that relationship that ministerial control is exercised. The director-general is expected to seek direction and guidance from the Home Secretary as to the way the service goes about its business.

There is one particular area in which the Home Secretary exercises detailed control. That is when an interception warrant is sought, when of course the Home Secretary must be given sufficient supporting information for him to judge whether the application comes within the statutory criteria. But in general, the Home Secretary is not concerned with particular cases, as paragraph 6 of the directive makes clear:

"Ministers do not concern themselves with detailed information which may be obtained by the Security Service in particular cases, but are furnished with such information only as may be necessary for the determination of any issue on which guidance is sought."

There are good reasons for that policy. The Security Service is not—contrary to what is sometimes alleged—in the business of obtaining information on behalf of the Government. It is there to protect the state against external and internal dangers, and must, as the directive makes clear, do that in a way that avoids any suggestion that it is concerned with any matter other than the defence of the realm as a whole. There must be no political bias or influence in its work. That is why the detailed control of Security Service work must be for the director general. If his judgment is wrong, he must answer to the Home Secretary.

I believe that it is right that the Home Secretary should have no role in that detailed control of the service, but it is part of his job to be well informed about what that service is doing, its priorities, how it is deploying its resources and the overall effectiveness and efficiency of its operations. It is part of the responsibility of the Home Secretary — here again, I think that I shall carry my predecessors with me—to receive reports, ask questions, meet the director-general, visit the Security Service and meet members of its staff. My regard for the dedicated and skilful work of that service I am glad that the right hon. Member for Devonport referred to its successes—and my confidence in the care with which its members respect the terms of the published directive are thus based on personal knowledge and scrutiny.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): If it is part of the Home Secretary's business to ask questions, does he think it is his business to ask why Lord Rothschild should send an air fare to someone to come from Australia to see him? Is that the kind of question that the Home Secretary would think it proper to ask?

Mr. Hurd: It is a question that would occur to the Home Secretary of the day to ask, but it is certanly not a question that can be answered in the House this afternoon.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The right hon. Gentleman never answers.

Mr. Hurd: It is also well established that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister signally concerns herself, as have her predecessors, with major security service matters. The Maxwell Fyfe directive provides that the director-general may approach the Prime Minister on matters of supreme importance and delicacy. My right hon. Friend spelt out that role, in her statement on the Blunt case on 21 November 1979, by stressing the Home Secretary's responsibility to inform the Prime Minister, or make sure that the Prime Minister is informed, in that type of case. She added that, in practice, both the Home Secretary and she make a point of keeping in close touch with the director-general.

It is inevitable that in restless times those arrangements should be questioned. The Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and the director-general of the Security Service sit inside the barrier of secrecy that is essential for the work of that service.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Along with Mr. Pincher.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is out of his depth when the argument reaches the kind of level to which the right hon. Member for Devonport has moved it.

[Mr. Hurd]

The Prime Minister, the Home Secretary — I must repeat this to avoid losing the train of the argument — and the director-general sit inside the necessary barrier of secrecy. Of course, there are some who want to destroy the barrier and the Security Service with it, and no concessions will satisfy them. But there are others, like the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport, who accept the need for the barrier, as he specifically did today, but want in some way to send their own representatives, or the representatives of Parliament, to take up positions inside the barrier alongside the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary. That is the dilemma. I think that we must be a little wary of supposing that foreign models will automatically provide a satisfactory way of doing that.

For example, our system would simply not be feasible in the United States because there is no way in the United States in which a member of the Administration could be responsible to Congress in the same way as the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary are responsible to this House, as this debate shows. The Americans have devised their own system to suit their own constitutional circumstances and we should not suppose that those can be successfully transplanted. So it is with each of the democracies that are in a comparable position. I have to say that there are at present particular difficulties here with our political system, to which I must return before I sit down.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I must get on, as I have given way quite freely and this is a short debate.

Different models have been suggested for some form of external review body and the right hon. Member for Devonport skated quickly over several of them. No doubt other right hon. and hon. Members will also make such suggestions.

It is not easy to discuss these matters in a sensible way under the shadow of a particular case, and it may well be that the House will want to return to the same subject in a calmer atmosphere. Sometimes it is suggested that there should be a Select Committee of senior Privy Councillors who would form this body. Sometimes it is suggested that a judicial body is needed, perhaps on the lines that we have already established under the Interception of Communications Act 1985, for that aspect of security work. Sometimes it is suggested that the role of the existing Security Commission should be expanded.

The Security Commission has been in existence for more than 20 years. Under its terms of reference, it can investigate and report upon any failures of security arrangements and advise whether any changes in those arrangements are necessary or desirable. But the Security Commission is a panel of people who are called upon ad hoc to report. They do not attempt to provide a continuous monitoring of the Security Service, nor does their role touch upon the central issue in today's debate —the relationship between Ministers and Parliament on Security Service matters. Any change in their role in that direction would be fairly fundamental and would call into question the present membership and procedures of the Security Commission.

It seems to me that, before agreeing to any such external review body, the Government and the House would need to satisfy themselves that the body would pass three tests. First, it would need to preserve effectively the necessary secrecy — and confidence among our allies in that secrecy — of the operations of the Security Service. Secondly, it would need to increase the confidence felt by this House and by the public in the Security Service; Otherwise there would be no point in making the change. Thirdly, I would need to avoid blunting or diminishing the personal and clear responsibilities of the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary to this House.

It is perhaps natural that I should feel it necessary to stress this last point. The difficulties of running a Security Service in a democratic society are sufficiently great without installing at the heart of that service a constitutional contradiction. I have spoken about the way in which the Home Secretary has to approach this question of the detailed control of the Security Service. It is not easy to see how an external review boy could become involved in that detailed control. But if it did not, its credibility among its strongest partisans would quickly weaken.

The main problem is that there is bound to be a barrier of secrecy between the Security Service and the general public. That is inevitable if the Security Service is to be any good at all. A review body has to be on one side of that barrier or the other. If it is inside the barrier, it can certainly probe and monitor, although there remains the difficulty of clashes between its responsibility and that of the Home Secretary. But if it is inside the barrier, it cannot communicate its findings convincingly to those who remain outside.

If, on the other hand, the review body is outside the barrier looking in, it will of course have great difficulty in satisfying itself that it is able to carry out its task, because it will not have access to the material that most people would judge to be necessary if it was to carry out that task successfully.

Dr. Owen: The right hon. Gentleman has used the phrase "constitutional contradiction", and I have great difficulty following that aspect of his argument. However, the House of Commons has already gone across one of the barriers in relation to defence, when it was fiercely held that there could not be a Defence Select Committee. I know that is not such a sensitive issue, but we have gone across that barrier very well and that Select Committee has been given classified information. We have also gone across the barrier in relation to the Foreign Office and diplomacy, even though it was argued that that barrier could not be crossed. Surely those two precedents establish the momentum to cross this rather more difficult barrier in a specifically devised way.

Mr. Hurd: It is a much more difficult barrier. I also believe that the kind of role that the right hon. Gentleman is advocating is different from that of the other bodies that he mentioned. That is the crucial question to which, because of time, he has been unable to address himself, and the House would need to address itself very clearly to it before it made any change.

From what I have said, I hope that the House will recognise that I do not see the present arrangements as static. Indeed, there has been greater movement on this matter and greater openness under this Government than probably at any time ever before. On 21 November 1979, as has already been pointed out, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made a statement about the Blunt case

—a fact of which previous Governments had been aware but had not informed Parliament. During the debate, the Prime Minister spelt out more clearly the arrangements under which the Director General of the security service reported to and consulted the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister.

Again, on 26 March 1981, during the debate on the security implications of the Chapman Pincher book "Their Trade is Treachery", my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister commented on the positive vetting arrangements and indicated that she had asked the Security Commission to review the security procedures and practices followed in the public service and to consider what, if any, changes were required.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: No, I must get on.

In 1983 the Security Commission, in connection with this and other inquiries — particularly the case of Geoffrey Prime — made a number of suggestions for improving the positive vetting procedures. The Government came to Parliament and secured approval for the Interception of Communications Act 1985. For the first time this provided a statutory and public framework for authorising practices of interception of communications carried out under the authority of Ministers of successive Governments for many years. That Act made unauthorised interception a criminal offence and for the first time gave people a statutory remedy by appeal to a tribunal.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister then reported to Parliament on the results of the inquiry by the Security Commission into Bettaney, and in her statement gave an account of the Security Commission's criticisms and recommendations on management of the security service. She announced acceptance of the Security Commission's recommendations for changes in the positive vetting procedures in the service. She said that she and the Home Secretary were determined to see that action was taken to remedy management weaknesses within the Security Service. The present director-general has, with my encouragement, devoted a major part of his time to that management task, especially the personnel arrangements.

As a result, the director-general earlier this year put forward to me and the Prime Minister a report on changes in the organisation and management of the Security Service. The Prime Minister made that report available to the Security Commission. All concerned have been impressed with the considerable amount of thought and effort which the Security Service has devoted to dealing with the problems identified by the Security Commission during its inquiry into the Bettaney case. The Security Commission has informed my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister of its approval of the more open style of management which the director-general has introduced throughout the service and the changes in procedure affecting the appraisal, posting and promotion of staff. That is an important point in which several hon. Members have been interested.

The Security Commission also noted with approval that the vetting procedures were being improved following the recruitment of more investigating officers and that the division of responsibility between line management and the specialist personnel managers had been tackled and clarified. The Security Commission considers that the director-general is to be congratulated on the way that he has tackled the problems identified in its report following its inquiry into the case of Mr. Bettaney.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): In the statement to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, the Prime Minister indicated that, along with the director-general, she would be looking into ways in which internal outlets could be found for the expression of grievances and anxieties by individual members of the service. As that was the source of some of the problems, will the Home Secretary say whether he believes that that problem has been dealt with?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is entirely accurate in what he says. Discussions on that important point are still going on.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I have been quite generous in giving way, and I am coming to a close.

I hope that I have said enough to show that the principle of ministerial responsibility, which under this Government has been adapting itself to particular events and situations, continues to provide a sound model—the best model — for the Security Service. We are not at present persuaded that any of the alternative models on offer would provide marked advantages.

There is a particular reason for that which I must mention. In most of the countries which face a similar problem there is a wide consensus across the political spectrum about the essentials of national defence and national security. This is, of course, true in the United States. It is absolutely compatible with periods such as the present when there is very sharp criticism of the Administration on particular issues, as we see in Washington at the moment. But there is no questioning of the fundamentals of United States defence and security policy any more than there is questioning among the parties of the fundamentals in Canada, Australia or the principal countries in Europe. Unfortunately, that is not the position in the United Kingdom today.

As the right hon. Member for Devonport said, the Leader of the Opposition is at present in the United States, and he is there in the middle of a parliamentary Session because he feels the need to explain to Republicans and Democrats alike why he has led the Labour party outside the consensus. He is finding it hard going, just as everyone would expect, because most people can see the overwhelming advantage of preserving a common understanding among all the principal political figures in a country about the fundamentals—not the details—of defence and security.

For our part we have tried to preserve that understanding. I refer again, as has been done several times, to the support that we gave in Opposition to the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) when he decided to deport Mr. Agee and Mr. Hosenball.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The Home Secretary is right. On that occasion those two men left the country under the requirement of Immigration Act 1971, not the Official Secrets Act. My 37 colleagues who expressed anxiety about the matter were concerned about the procedures that I used, not about the details of the matter.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman became involved in a major row. As Home Secretary, he pleaded national security as the reason for his action. The Opposition supported him because of that but several of his own supporters failed to support him. That is in vivid contrast to the Opposition's handling of the Wright case.

I do not wish to discuss the matter further. I have read carefully the long statement issued, to my surprise, by the Leader of the Opposition on Friday. I have also read what Mr. Turnbull is reported to have said about their exchanges. For two years, I was in charge of the Leader of the Opposition's office when the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) led the Conservative party. It is inconceivable that my right hon. Friend would have authorised or allowed me to enter into that sort of alliance or liaison with a lawyer in an overseas court in a case involving national security where the British Government was the plaintiff. It would have been, and it should be, inconceivable. There is an amazing mixture of inexperience and irresponsibility in the Leader of the Opposition's conduct in this matter.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: No, I shall not give way. I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman.

No doubt there will be opportunities — I certainly hope so—when the case is over to look back at this and other aspects of it. The case provides the latest of a long line of regrettable examples of the breakdown of the consensus which would be necessary if any of the models which I described earlier were to be acceptable in this country.

The record shows that, compared with their predecessors, including the Government in which the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) served—although he may have had ideas of his own at that time — this Government have been open and receptive to fresh ideas in security. The discussion will continue, as it is bound to do. I am glad to have the opportunity to set out for the first time my view on how those arrangements work. We shall listen carefully to the debate and to suggestions which may be made when the Australian case is over. The public has a clear view of these matters. The public understands and — the right hon. Member for Devonport acknowledged this — they are not taken in by all this scavenging. They understand the need for a Security Service. They are becoming somewhat impatient with those who wish to undermine that service by removing the confidentiality which must lie at its core.

This is an area in which fair-sounding compromises must be carefully examined because they can be especially dangerous. The Prime Minister and I, as the points of contact between the Security Service and the House, will maintain to the full our responsibilities. In a dangerous world we shall continue to do all that we can to preserve the integrity and necessary confidentiality of that service.

4.43 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The Home Secretary has just enunciated to the House an extraordinary doctrine, whereby a national consensus on security matters is available from the Government provided that the House accepts that consensus as being that laid down by the Government's defence policy. As the latest opinion polls show that 13 per cent. of the electorate support the Government's defence policy, that seems extraordinary arrogance, even by the Government's standards.

This debate arises from the Government's action in the New South Wales High Court to prevent the publication of Mr. Peter Wright's book "Spycatcher." The Home Secretary said that he would dearly like to make a comment on the Australian case, but that he cannot. Instead, those comments are being made by Mr. Bernard Ingham and Mr. James Coe outside the House. They are paid by the taxpayer but they are not responsible to the House.

The mystery at the heart of the affair is why the Government decided to bring their action in Sydney. The confused and conflicting explanations have led to the miserable predicament of the Secretary to the Cabinet wriggling in the witness box as the Government chief witness and to the controversy in which the matter is now engulfed. One explanation is that the book contains material so secret that our national security would be endangered if it were to be published and become widely available. If national security was to be endangered by the book's propagation, no one could argue with the Government's action in seeking to prevent its circulation.

Reports show that the book deals principally with two matters. The first is the allegation that elements in MI5 were engaged in a conspiracy against the 1974-1976 Government of Lord Wilson. Those suspicions have been aired before. Secondly, in case by any chance they are true, it is surely right that they should be confirmed or disposed of. I would have thought that anyone, regardless of party, would have wished someone seeking to undermine a legitimately elected Government to be exposed and brought to book.

After all, such people would be involved in subversion, and the function of MI5 is to combat subversion, not to indulge in it. Any such possibility sustains demands for some form of parliamentary accountability for the security services. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), when he was leader of the Labour party, advocated such accountability at the time of the Prime affair, as did my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition at the time of the Bettaney affair. In 1983, the Labour party manifesto advocated a statutory basis for the security services founded upon a security Act and involving a Select Committee.

It is said that Mr. Peter Wright goes into detail about the possibility that Sir Roger Hollis, the former head of MI5, was a Soviet agent. Those two issues have been frequently aired, first in Mr. Chapman Pincher's book "Their Trade is Treachery" and since then almost ad nauseam. The latest example is Mr. Phillip Knightley's book "The Second Oldest Profession". That was published only last month and, as far as I can tell, without objection or interference from the Government.

In any case, if security requires sensitive matters to be kept secret from a potential adversary, it is difficult to understand how the suspicions about Hollis fall into that category. It is certain that the only people who know for certain whether Hollis was a Russian agent are the Russians. It appears that the Government wish to conceal from the British people what is already known to the KGB. Perhaps that is what the Prime Minister defines as national security, but an alternative explanation has been

offered in connection with the book "One Girl's War", which the Government were unsuccessful in trying to suppress yesterday in the court in Dublin.

A statement from the Attorney-General's chambers said that the Government's action was

"based on the general principle that any publication of memoirs by a former member of the secret service, drawing on information acquired in that capacity, impaired the effective functioning of the service, unless it had been authorised. The claim is not based on any allegation that publication of material contained in the book will cause further and specific damage to national security."

On Monday this week, the Attorney-General said at Question Time:

"The principle concerning the book of the late Mrs. Miller is exactly the same principle in which we have started the proceedings in the Australian courts . . . The idea that we can allow officers or ex-officers of the security services to write books would probably end with us not having any important secrets which should be preserved." — [*Official Report*, 1 December 1986; Vol. 106, c. 620.]

Speaking in Sydney, Mr. Theo Simos QC, for the Crown, said that disclosure by an insider, irrespective of content, could be detrimental to the Crown. Questioned by Mr. Justice Powell, Mr. Simos said that this would be so even if it concerned a cookbook in Whitehall.

It would appear that the Government are concerned only with direct publication by someone who is serving or who has served in the security services. That point was made by the Home Secretary today. It is a curious approach. It shows that MI5 men and women are perfectly free to reveal secrets provided that they do not do so in their own names. That would open a lucrative market for members or ex-members of the security services to sell their secrets, perhaps at a high price, for others to publish. For them to do so would be a flagrant breach of the Official Secrets Act, but the attitudes of the Attorney-General and the Prime Minister to the Official Secrets Act are curiously selective.

If this approach is the one adopted by the Government, it would explain why Mr. Arthur Martin, who has been an MI5 and an MI6 officer, was not prosecuted for providing secret information for publication by Mr. Nigel West, alias Mr. Rupert Allason, who is the prospective Conservative candidate for Torbay. In the witness box in Sydney, Sir Robert Armstrong said this about Mr. Martin providing that information to Mr. West:

"He has not observed his obligation."

That approach would also explain why Mr. Peter Wright was not prosecuted for selling secrets to Mr. Chapman Pincher. It might also explain why Mr. West, alias Allason, and Mr. Pincher have not been prosecuted. They are certainly liable for prosecution for breach of the Official Secrets Act by receiving information from ex-members of the security services.

Mr. Justice Powell said of Mr. West-Allason's book that he had read it and it

"is replete with instances of agents, informers and defectors being named, and operations being disclosed."

When questioned in court, Sir Robert Armstrong said:

"I can't say as a matter of fact whether the book contains such information but I believe it to be likely. If it does contain that information, then it was obtained by a breach of confidentiality by those concerned."

So it was a breach of confidentiality, and therefore a breach of the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. West has stated frankly that he was provided by sources within MI5 with what he calls "relevant extracts" of two reports written by a senior MI5 officer, Mr. Ronnie Symonds. The report identified five possible Soviet spies in MI5. Mr. West says that those documents are in his solicitor's safe because his sources in MI5 forgot to ask for them back. Still there was no prosecution. No wonder that Sir Robert Armstrong said in Sydney:

"The policy is consistent. Only its practice varies."

That goes in spades for the Government's approach to Mr. Chapman Pincher's book, "Their Trade is Treachery". Let me make it clear that I have no criticism of Mr. West-Allason or Mr. Pincher. They did no deals with anyone to get their books published. If those books were in breach of the law, it is not their fault that no action was taken against them. It is the fault of the Government. That is why it is completely bogus for the Government to claim that the issues here are of national security. The issues relate to corrupt decision-making in government. That is why the charges that we make are charges against the Government and especially against the Prime Minister.

What do we know about Mr. Pincher's book? Mr. Pincher said that he had given up any intentions of writing more about security until he was approached by Mr. Wright. That approach is said to have come through Lord Rothschild. Questions must be asked about Lord Rothschild's role as claimed by Mr. Wright. Is it true that Lord Rothschild initiated Mr. Wright's connection with the book? Did Lord Rothschild send Mr. Wright a first-class ticket for him to fly from Tasmania to Britain? Did Lord Rothschild suggest to Mr. Wright that he should collaborate with Mr. Pincher on a book about Sir Roger Hollis? Did Lord Rothschild bring Mr. Wright and Mr. Pincher together? Did Lord Rothschild arrange for Mr. Wright's substantial pay-off to be laundered through a Swiss bank account? Was Lord Rothschild acting on his own initiative or was he acting as agent for someone else? If so, for whom? Mr. Wright says that, before sending for him, Lord Rothschild had been discussing intelligence matters with the Prime Minister. Is that true? Until those questions are answered, the issue will not go away.

Mr. Dalyell: In view of the Home Secretary's answer to an earlier intervention, are we not justified in asking that, at least in the reply to the debate, there should be an explanation of the Prime Minister's meeting with Lord Rothschild in his flat? Prime Ministers do not normally go to the flats of citizens, however distinguished, without a purpose. May we know what that purpose was?

Mr. Kaufman: I have put several questions to the Home Secretary and the Leader of the House, and before I sit down I shall put a good many more. We must ask why no action was taken to stop publication of Mr. Chapman Pincher's book. There are different versions of how the book came into the possession of Government officials. One is that the manuscript or the proofs of the book were in the Government's hands by February 1981 — about six weeks before its publication. Some suggest that MI6 got hold of a copy of the book even earlier than that. In any case, it is alleged that, by February 1981, the book had been obtained illicitly — stolen — on behalf of the Government. If that is so, did the Ministers and officials who considered it know it to have been stolen?

As Sir Robert Armstrong said in the witness box in Sydney, a meeting was held involving the Prime Minister, the former Home Secretary, Lord Whitelaw, the director-general of MI5, Sir Howard Smith, and possibly Sir Robert Armstrong. Sir Robert was not clear on that point. One claim is that MI5 argued that an injunction to stop

[Mr. Kaufman]

the book should not be sought since a court action would involve the admission that the book was obtained illicitly. Another version is that the Prime Minister was told that it was too late to stop the book. That is a curious argument, because the Government were perfectly ready to have Joan Miller's book withdrawn from circulation in Dublin, even after it was published and put on sale in London.

Sir Robert Armstrong says that the Prime Minister was not at all in favour of publishing Mr. Pincher's book. Mr. Pincher provides a different account. In a letter to Mr. Wright, which was read in open court in Sydney and accepted as accurate by Mr. Pincher in an article which he wrote in the *Sunday Express*, Mr. Pincher wrote as follows on 27 January 1983:

"On New Year's Day I was shooting with Havers, the Attorney-General, who is very friendly and told me about West's book. It is an extraordinary story and I urge you to have nothing whatever to do with West or with anything associated with him. For reasons I do not understand Martin"—

that is Mr. Arthur Martin, a former MI5 and MI6 agent—

"agreed to see West. Havers told me that they met six times and on each occasion Martin told West secret information. In addition he showed him secret documents which should not have been in his possession. West then wrote his book and in it not only quoted Martin by name but quoted from the documents saying that they were secret! West is so stupid and naive"—

that is the gentleman who is seeking entry to the House of Commons on the Conservative side, and there are other words about him in this letter which you would not permit me to quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

"that he then sent Martin a copy of the script for his comments. Martin was terrified and immediately took the book to the office in an effort to get himself out of the mess. The office informed Havers who then issued an injunction to have the offending parts removed for had the book been published, the Government would have had no option but to prosecute both Martin and West . . . Havers told me that he is still considering whether to prosecute Martin but says he cannot do that without prosecuting West, who has been adopted as a Tory candidate. Mrs. T is furious with him (West). . . .

I can assure you that there is no intention whatever of taking action against me"—

that is, Mr. Chapman Pincher—

"which means you too"—

that is, Mr. Peter Wright.

"I lunched with Dickie Franks"—

that is, Sir Arthur Franks, the former head of MI6—

"recently and he told me that they had my book weeks in advance and came to the conclusion that they would rather I did it than anyone else. They had heard that West, Duncan Campell Penrose etc. were on the trail and preferred my authorship".

Therefore, Mr. Pincher's book was welcomed by the authorities. Does that mean that its publication was authorised? That argument has been put forward by Mr. Justice Powell in Sydney and explains why no action was taken against it.

In a curious episode, Sir Robert Armstrong made the Government's attitude explicit. On 23 March 1981, when the *Daily Mail* began serialising Mr. Pincher's book, Sir Robert Armstrong telephoned Mr. William Armstrong, the managing director of the publishers Sidgwick and Jackson, asking for copies of the book, which Sidgwick and Jackson were to publish on the 26th of that month, in case the Prime Minister wished to make a statement about it.

Mr. William Armstrong refused to provide the book without a guarantee that the Government would not take action against it. Sir Robert Armstrong agreed to that and a letter was negotiated in a telephone conversation. Sir Robert went to the publishers, collected two copies of the book and left the letter there. Its key paragraph stated:

"The request (for copies of the book) is not made with a view to seeking to prevent or delay publication and I can assure you that we shall not do so."

That commitment was confirmed on the telephone to me today by Mr. William Armstrong of Sidgwick and Jackson. He read to me the full letter agreed between himself and the Secretary to the Cabinet. Mr. Jackson told me of the full circumstances surrounding that extraordinary guarantee not to proceed against "Their Trade is Treachery".

The House requires clear answers to certain important questions. I would have put my first question directly to the Attorney-General, and it is deplorable that he has not come to the House today—but no doubt my questions will be conveyed to him. First, did the Attorney-General go shooting with Mr. Pincher on new year's day 1983 and tell him that it was impossible to prosecute Mr. Arthur Martin without also prosecuting Mr. Nigel West, and that Mr. West was a Conservative candidate? Is that why the Attorney-General prosecuted neither Mr. Martin nor Mr. West?

Was the Attorney-General consulted about the letter to Mr. William Armstrong, promising not to prevent publication of Mr. Pincher's book? If so, did he assent to the guarantee? If so, why? If not, was the Attorney-General overridden? If so, did he know that he was being overridden, or was he just ignored as he had been six weeks before when the group of Ministers, under the Prime Minister, decided to take no action against Mr. Pincher?

The Attorney-General must also answer questions about his attitude to other unauthorised revelations by ex-MI5 officers. The Attorney-General has prosecuted people under the Official Secrets Act before now. He prosecuted Miss Sarah Tisdall and Mr. Clive Ponting, although neither of those civil servants had been a member of the security services. Therefore, the Attorney-General knows how to use the Act.

However, he did not prosecute Miss Cathy Massiter, although she looked tailormade for prosecution. She was a relatively recent ex-MI5 officer who had served in MI5 for about 14 years. Last year, she provided a good deal of information, on camera, in a programme on Channel 4. It was very sensitive information, and included details of warrants signed by the then Home Secretary for telephone taps. She also provided information about other covert activities. Mr. Justice Taylor confirmed the accuracy of that information in the High Court only three months ago.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The right hon. Gentleman was discussing the subject of telephones. I wonder whether he could tell the House whether there have been any further calls between the office of the Leader of the Opposition and Mr. Turnbull in Australia since the 26th of last month? Is that liaison still continuing?

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Gentleman's last intervention on this matter to come to my attention was when he referred to Miss Patricia Hewitt as a lickspittle. When I heard him use that epithet, I decided that it takes one to know one. As usual, the hon. Gentleman's interventions are beneath contempt.

We are discussing the failure to prosecute an ex-MI5 agent who has clearly given information away, outwith the Official Secrets Act. When Miss Massiter did that, the Independent Broadcasting Authority was so scared that it might be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act that, at first, it banned the programme. However, on 18 March last year, the Attorney-General told the House that he would not prosecute. Why? After all, Miss Massiter met in full the criteria that the Attorney-General stated in this House two days ago in relation to the need to prevent officers and ex-officers of the security services from revealing secrets. Why is Mr. Wright not allowed to publish secrets, when Miss Massiter was allowed to do so?

The question goes farther than that. In 1984, Granada Television screened a "World in Action" programme called "The Spy Who Never Was", in which a former MI5 officer spilled the beans. Secrets simply tumbled from his lips in a programme specifically built around his revelations. He talked about Mr. Symonds' investigation into Russian infiltration of our security services, the fluency exercise, the existence of the mole code-named Elli, the GRU agent code-named Sonia, a man named Watson who was alleged to have passed naval secrets to the Russians, and much more.

No action whatever was taken against that programme, or against that ex-MI5 officer, although the Government had had advance knowledge of the disclosures in the programme. Why was that programme, which was damaging to national security according to the Government's own definition of it, permitted to go out without any interference, especially when that ex-MI5 officer was none other than Mr. Peter Wright? Why is Mr. Wright not allowed to publish secrets to thousands of Australian book buyers, when he was allowed to publish secrets to millions of British television viewers? There must be some reason for that manipulation of the law, and the Attorney-General is bound to give it.

The Prime Minister has questions to answer, too. In her maiden speech, she said that the public had the right, in the first instance, to know what its elected representatives were doing. Under this Government, the only way in which we find out what our elected representatives are doing is through paid civil servants who are briefed by the Prime Minister to smear the Leader of the Opposition while he is away from the Floor of the House.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: During the past days, the Prime Minister has made much of the traditional bipartisanship on security matters. Her campaign has been aided by hon. Members who have either obtained their knighthoods, or who are hoping to do so in the reasonably near future. If the Prime Minister is so committed to bipartisanship on security matters, why did she not take the initiative and brief my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition on the background to the action against Mr. Wright, before that action was brought? Is the Prime Minister's definition of bipartisanship one-sided, to be observed by the Opposition, but not by the Government?

Why did the Prime Minister not make available to my right hon. Friend details of the proceedings in court in Sydney, so that he and the House in general could be properly informed? *[Interruption.]* Previous security briefings, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), a former Prime Minister—I only wish that he were Prime Minister now—will know, have always been made on the initiative of the Prime Minister of the day. Why did the Prime Minister not provide such a briefing for my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock)? I hope that Conservative Members, whether or not their party is in government, will accept that my right hon. Friend and other hon. Members in all parties have the right to full information about an action which the taxpayers whom we represent are financing to the tune of £1 million or more.

In those circumstances, if the Government were not proffering the information, how else was my right hon. Friend to obtain the information? Was he to rely on a leak from MI5? After all, we know that the Prime Minister authorises those leaks on a selective basis only, so he could not be sure of having access to one. Or did the Prime Minister not brief my right hon. Friend on these matters because there were matters which, even under a bipartisan policy, she did not want him to know? The House has the right to know.

The House expects the Prime Minister to tell us why she sent poor Sir Robert Armstrong to make a fool of himself in the witness box in Sydney and to leave in public tatters the previously prestigious and important office of Secretary to the Cabinet.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: No.

Will the Prime Minister say why, after Sir Robert Armstrong failed to tell the truth about the Attorney-General's role in relation to "Their Trade is Treachery", she allowed that untruth to remain on the record for 11 days, although she knew that it was an untruth? She knew it was an untruth because she was present at the meeting that decided not to proceed against Mr. Pincher's book and the Attorney-General was not. Therefore, she knew that Sir Robert had not told the truth when he said that the Attorney-General was involved in that decision. Why did the Prime Minister not take the tiniest step to put that untruth right? Would she ever have put it right, if the Attorney-General had not gone to her and told her that he had had enough? Would she have allowed that untruth to remain on the record?

Why did the Prime Minister exclude the Attorney-General from the meeting that made the decision not to proceed against Mr. Pincher? On Monday, the Attorney-General told the House:

> "When I am wearing my hat as Attorney-General and prosecutor, nobody can influence me and I would not accept any attempt to influence me from anybody." — [*Official Report*, 1 December 1986; Vol. 106, c. 619.]

Is that why the Prime Minister excluded him? Was she afraid that he would not give her the advice she wanted? Did she remember the Westland affair in which the Attorney-General warned that he would bring the police into No. 10 unless there was an inquiry? Was she afraid of her own Attorney-General?

That brings us to the key question. Why did that meeting, at which the Prime Minister was present and at which, as Prime Minister, she presumably presided, decide not to proceed against Mr. Pincher's book? Was the Prime Minister a party to Sir Robert Armstrong's guarantee to Sidgwick and Jackson not to prevent the book's publication? If neither the Prime Minister nor the Attorney-General were a party to that guarantee, what

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authority did Sir Robert Armstrong have to make that guarantee? If he had the Prime Minister's authority, why did she give him that authority? We have the right to know the answers to all those questions.

The security services also want to know the answers to those questions. Far from safeguarding them, the Prime Minister has exposed the country's security services to international ridicule by the court action in Sydney. When she took action against trade unionists at GCHQ, she focused more attention on the activities at GCHQ than ever before in its history. Now this court action, purporting to safeguard state secrets and the integrity of our security services, has exposed to the gaze of the world more state secrets of the British security services than ever before in its history.

The nation has the right to ask why the Prime Minister has done that, and the nation is waiting for the answers.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When the late Sir Reginald Manningham-Buller and the late Sir John Hobson were Law Officers in difficult circumstances, they sat on the Government Front Bench. Could——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. This is a short debate and many right hon. and hon. Members are waiting to catch my eye——

Mr. Dalyell: We ask for better things——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that the presence of individual hon. Members in the House is not a matter for me.

5.15 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): These are deep waters and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has prudently chosen only to paddle in them. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) raised a serious issue—whether there should be a parliamentary Committee to supervise the secret services. but the right hon. Member for Gorton did not address himself for one minute to that. He raised only two questions about possible mistakes made by the secret services. First, was Sir Roger Hollis a Soviet agent and, secondly, was the Prime Minister of the day bugged by the secret services? He did not tell us whether he thought a Committee would assist in finding that out. He merely paraded his rather journalistic opinions about a trial that is going on in Australia and provided a second-rate supplementary brief to that of Mr. Turnbull, who is a cleverer lawyer than the right hon. Gentleman.

I have never served in either the counter-espionage or the secret services. For 45 years I have had close associations with both of them—during the war, later when I was in office, and otherwise. I have been tremendously impressed by their development over the years. At first they comprised venturesome amateurs who were recruited during the war from universities, businesses and elsewhere. They have grown into highly professional organisations. Indeed, they have had to, because they have had to face both the most professional secret services that the world has ever seen and the threat of terrorism.

Public opinion tends to focus on the arms race. People tend to forget the escalation in the competition of espionage and counter-espionage forced on the West by the fantastic effort which the Soviet Union and its satellites have put into this type of war. The weapons have piled up — thank God they have not been used — but underground warfare has been continuous for the past 45 years.

It is difficult to assess whether the secret services are working successfully. So long as they do their job, nothing becomes news. Their work should remain secret. When a Colonel Penkovsky is caught and shot in Moscow it may seem to be a triumph for the secret services, but it is a disaster, because it is a line of information that has been cut. Mr. Gordievsky had to take refuge with us, and that is another line of information cut. When my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary — or, in bygone days Lord Home—repatriates Soviet diplomats or near-diplomats, that, too, is a disaster, because we are probably watching them to note their contacts, and so on. The successes that we know about are rare, and we must hope that there are not too many that become obvious.

If the head of the Security Service goes to see the Prime Minister and, rubbing his hands, says, "Oh, is it not marvellous, we have caught a spy, one of our men, in one of our high Government offices," the Prime Minister's heart must sink.

He or she must say, "Do you know what you have done? There will be a charge, a trial and an appeal, and it will be all over the press. It is a disaster." I think that it was Harold Macmillan who used the analogy that when his gamekeeper shot a fox he buried it and did not hang it up for the hunt to see. Unfortunately, our democratic institutions do not allow us to bury the people whom we catch in the same way. I sometimes wish that they did.

The right hon. Member for Devonport proposed a Committee of both Houses. The question is who is to serve on it, and who is to appoint its members? There are some difficulties in that regard. The right hon. Gentleman suggested that it should be made up of Privy Councillors. I am a great admirer of Privy Councillors; they are a very fine body of men. If the right hon. Member for Devonport and I were the only members of that Committee it might do very well, but I amused myself in my bath this morning thinking of Privy Councillors who might be selected from this House and the other place. Some of them are rather old, and some have dubious pasts. The shadow Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) would qualify because of his experience as Secretary of State for Defence and because, as a young man, he was watched by the security services. We could find other Privy Councillors with interesting backgrounds. Some would obviously be no good at all. Consequently, I wonder whether such a Committee would be a good idea.

When I was younger, I often hoped to see the revival of the Committee of Imperial Defence. That was a great organisation. The leaders of the political parties met to receive information on defence policy. They were briefed on it, and it gave them an opportunity to exchange opinions. What would this proposed Committee do? Would it send for people and so identify the principal figures in our counter-intelligence and intelligence services? Would it send for papers? I hope to goodness that there are not too many papers about, as it might be very dangerous if they were distributed.

What would be the object of the exercise? How to cope with defectors? I do not think that the Committee would be likely to pinpoint weaknesses in the service. Would it consider how to advise on co-operation with the CIA or

the French and German intelligence services, or how to advise on the telephone tapping and surveillance of potential enemies? I cannot see a Committee of Privy Councillors—let alone a Committee diluted by others who are not Privy Councillors—doing that. Could the Committee avoid blunders? Could it settle the problem of whether Hollis was a Russian agent? Could it have avoided, if there was such a thing, the bugging of the Prime Minister's room? I have been able to identify only one major blunder, and that involved Commander Crabbe. Mr. Gough Whitlam has told us that Anthony Eden wanted to have Nasser and Grivas assassinated. Good thing too if he had done it; but I cannot see a Committee of Privy Councillors endorsing such an operation.

The most that it could do would be to carry out a post-mortem on what had happened, but that is dangerous, and that is why we have the 30-year rule. I remember—if I may be anecdotal in my old age—that when I was in Albania during the war, an Albanian chief told me that he had a friend in a particular area who could help us. He said that he would send a message to him. I asked who he was and where his house was. He said, "I won't tell you as I might need him again, and he helped me 30 years ago."

I have some doubt about whether any committee, however distinguished, could be leakproof. Along with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, I have had the advantage of serving on the Committee of Privileges. In the short time that we worked together I was astonished to discover how many leaks there had been from different Committees.

The right hon. Member for Devonport may say that the Americans have a committee that invigilates the CIA. However, I wonder whether it works well. It is certainly time-consuming. When the committee is sitting, 40 members of the CIA sit on Capitol Hill all day, the next day, and the day after, tendering advice. We could hardly afford that, given the shoestring on which our secret services operate. As far as I know, the CIA regard that committee as being castrating.

Let us look at what has been happening. This morning's edition of the *Herald Tribune* tells us that Mr. Casey, the head of the CIA, admitted in cross-examination that the CIA gave some marginal help in the operation with Iran that led to funds being paid to the Contras in Nicaragua. If the CIA had not been subject to congressional control, I wonder whether Mr. McFarlane and Colonel North would have gone off on their own. If the secret services are muzzled too much, Governments may well be pushed into less reputable means of proceeding.

In every aspect of political life there is, of course, a strong case to be made for democratic control, but there is also a strong case to be made against it. There is certainly a strong case to be made for democratic control in internal affairs. The tendency is to delay, to call for public inquiries, and so on. It does not matter much. Even if the Government make a mistake they can amend it later. However, if mistakes are made abroad one does not always get the chance to rectify them. If I have any criticism of our secret services, it is that they are too cautious and restrained. That may be a fault on the right side, but we do not want to make them even more cautious then they already are.

We would do well to stick to our present methods of control. The Home Secretary supervises the Security Service, and the Foreign Secretary supervises the intelligence service. They have their links to the Cabinet Office and No. 10 Downing street. Political control should be strengthened only informally, so that it does not become the subject of yet more questioning in the House. It is for the Secretaries of State of those Departments to delegate a little more to their Ministers of State and to ask them to concentrate more on those services. Lord Home did that to me when I was at the Foreign Office, but it was an entirely informal arrangement. It would be a great mistake to make such an arrangement formal. That would only weaken services which, by their very nature, have to be secret if they are to fulfil their duties and functions.

5.28 pm

Mr. Roy Jenkins (Glasgow, Hillhead): In my experience, most security eruptions have been short-term affairs, convulsing the House and dominating the headlines for a short time, and then going away as quickly as they came, but I have a strong and growing feeling that this one is rather different. About 15 days ago, when I used the phrase "this foolish mission" about the excursion on which the Prime Minister had sent Sir Robert Armstrong, I had hardly begun to comprehend the enormity of the foolishness involved, or the vast capacity for damage, both private and public, which a combination of exceptional ill-judgment and exceptional stubbornness at the head of the Government—a unique and deadly mix—was capable of inflicting.

Recent events are, for once, unlikely to be a summer storm, quickly coming and going, first, because of the light that has been shone, cumulatively with the Westland affair, on the Prime Minister's methods of Government, and, secondly, because of the destructive blows, partly self-inflicted, partly inflicted by the misjudgments of the Government, to which the Security Service has been subjected, and which means that it will no longer be able to operate in the old shape. It is to these two aspects of the matter—the Prime Minister's habits of government, as revealed, and the blows to the Security Service—that I shall devote my speech.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives) *rose*——

Mr. Jenkins: I have hardly started my speech. I must make my first point.

The Prime Minister's habits as head of Government are my first subject. I shall refer to her a good deal, but I shall also refer to the Attorney-General. I am bound to reiterate a view previously expressed, in good temper, that it is extraordinary that neither of them has come to the Chamber. The Government treat this House with a discourtesy that I have never seen paralleled in 39 years in the House. They are responsible, and should be here. I hope that the Leader of the House will take note of this, because it is an unnecessary pattern of behaviour that does not reflect credit on the Government or help the proceedings of the House.

The Prime Minister has shown herself wholly incapable of applying consistent standards by which she judges herself as she judges other people. This inconsistency is the core of the weakness of the Government's case in Australia, and that has already been touched on by my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). A particular example has been the Prime Minister's inability in the past two weeks or so to stick to a clear line about what she will or will not

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discuss about security matters. She was far more explicit about the Blunt case in 1979 than any Prime Minister had been before about security matters. On the whole, she was right to be so in the circumstances. However, by doing so, she inevitably created a new climate, but within that climate she showed inconsistency.

In the past two weeks, since the Prime Minister was driven off the sub judice point, which she took in an extraordinarily ill-briefed way to begin with, she has fallen back to saying that she cannot discuss anything to do with the issue. That is her right, as it is the right of any Minister, not only on security matters, but in answer to any question, to judge what to say and to say no more. However, the Prime Minister has not been able to stick to that. Whenever a good point has come into her mind she has chased off after it, like somebody chasing a butterfly, but immediately, in the next breath, she has said that she cannot discuss security matters or anything to do with the case. That has not prevented her from denouncing Mr. Wright, who is very much a point at issue, and the Leader of the Opposition. I happen to believe that, in differing ways, they both rather deserve it, but that is not the point about her inconsistent treatment of the matter.

This habit of the Prime Minister is venial compared with a number of others that have emerged. First among these is her extraordinary capacity to expose to danger, and perhaps even to mutilation beyond hope of recovery, those who are closely associated with her. To some extent this applies to Ministers, as we can see from the case of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorkshire (Mr. Brittan), but I am concerned, not with Ministers, but with civil servants. Sir Robert Armstrong, as the Prime Minister must now know well, should never have been sent to Australia, but it is not only he. Private secretaries and press officers are treated like junior officers, constantly called upon to go over the top in desperate partisan assaults not made more attractive by the fact that the primary orders are to safeguard the political life of their colonel-in-chief, the Prime Minister. My advice to the substantial number of notable civil servants who worked with or for me is, "Do not get too close to this Prime Minister. She is a upas tree — the branches may look splendid, but contact can be deadly."

The conduct of the Attorney-General does not always suggest wisdom or foresight. Leaving aside for the moment the conduct of the case in Australia, his belief that it was sensible to go to the Dublin courts about a book relating to the last war seems to show a sad deficiency of both geographical and historical knowledge. He is the senior Law Officer of the Crown, carrying all the traditions, responsibilities and powers of that office, which, with our unique mixing up of Executive, legislative and judicial arrangements, is an office of peculiar delicacy. As has been shown both here and in the Westland case, the Prime Minister does not begin to comprehend these nuances. She sees the Law Officers as junior Ministers who are in danger of getting too big for their boots, and who should be available to be wheeled out when they are useful to her, and to shut up when they are not.

This conflict of view has produced two remarkable performances from the Attorney-General during this year alone. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is not generally thought of as a Savonarola come among us. His reputation for agreeable indiscretion is perhaps greater than that for the fearsome austerity of his pronouncements. However, twice, once when he threatened to call the police into No. 10 Downing street, and last week when he telephoned or sent some message to Australia, he has felt constrained to blow a whistle. When he has done so, on both occasions everybody has stood transfixed, as though the last trump has been sounded in some allegorical painting by Blake and, for the moment, stopped doing the apparently dreadful things that they had been doing a moment before. It casts an interesting and extraordinary light on the home life of our own dear Government that a rather unshockable Attorney-General should twice be so deeply and effectively shocked. It also makes me wonder what happens about which he does not yet know.

Lessons are to be learnt from the recent events and their effect on the future of the Security Service. The first is that it becomes increasingly clear that security can rarely be maintained through the courts. It can sometimes be done by mutual trust, and it is desirable that it is done in that way, perhaps fortified by better pensions. Occasionally it can be done in British courts, particularly if one finds a reasonably Executive-minded judge. The Government are certainly unlikely to find such a judge in Sydney or Dublin. That might be a reasonable precaution to think of and to take beforehand.

Secondly, the British Government try to keep far too many secrets. They are the most secretive Government in the Western world, but as a result they are certainly not the most efficient. By trying to keep back too many secrets they devalue the few which, in my view, they try legitimately to safeguard. This secrecy obsession demonstrates itslf under this Government in the peculiarly unacceptable hypocrisy of a Prime Minister whose stock-in-trade is leaks from the top accompanied by prosecutions lower down.

Thirdly, the security services, and MI5 especially, have suffered grave damage to their reputation and credibility. As I said in the House just over two weeks ago, I believe that there is a strong probability of Sir Roger Hollis's innocence. It is hardly ever possible, however, to prove a negative, and certainly not at this distance of time, and there are a number of MI5 ex-officers who believe the reverse. That hardly points to a coherent or convincing organisation.

We have Mr. Wright's allegation that a surveillance operation was mounted against Lord Wilson of Rievaulx when he was Prime Minister in the mid-1970s. As I understand it, Mr. Wright says that he was attracted by such an operation, but resiled from it. That hardly enhances his reputation. During most of the period at issue I was Home Secretary, and I need hardly say that I knew nothing of any such operation involving Lord Wilson. Therefore, if it took place it was wholly illegal. I would add that if it did take place, it could have been conceived and mounted only by people with dangerously unbalanced minds.

Many criticisms can be made of Lord Wilson's stewardship—I have made some in the past and I have no doubt that I may make some more in future — but the view that he, with his too persistent record of maintaining Britain's imperial commitments across the world, with his over-loyal lieutenancy to Lyndon Johnson, with his fervent royalism, and with his light ideological luggage, was a likely candidate to be a Russian or Communist agent is one that can be entertained only by someone with a mind diseased by partisanship or unhinged

by living for too long in an Alice-Through-the-Looking-glass world in which falsehood becomes truth, fact becomes fiction and fantasy becomes reality.

The result of the allegation has been substantially to fortify the view that I expressed in a letter to *The Times* 18 months ago, which is that MI5 should now be pulled totally out of its political surveillance role.

Mr. Hurd: In his analysis of the allegation that he has mentioned, the right hon. Gentleman has not referred to the statement which was made by the Prime Minister of the day, which appears in *Hansard* of 8 December 1977. The then Prime Minister reported the detailed inquiries which he had made into the allegation and his conclusion that he was satisfied that at no time had the Security Service, or any other agency, undertaken the sort of surveillance that had been suggested.

Mr. Jenkins: The Prime Minister of the day is here and he can speak for himself. I am sure that I would accept entirely what he said in December 1977. I would think it incredible that this was in any way an official operation, but there are possibilities of an unofficial operation, and I think that they should now be examined. The fact that people who held senior positions in MI5 talked about these matters cannot be dismissed as being of negligible importance.

I took the view before these recent events emerged that it was advisable that MI5 should be pulled out of its political surveillance role. I had been doubtful of the value of that role for some time. I am convinced now that an organisation of people who lived in the fevered world of espionage and counter-espionage, is entirely unfitted to judge between what is subversion and what is legitimate dissent.

Nor is the associated political intelligence role worth while, in my view. The object of this is presumably to help Ministers with useful information. In my experience, however, the organisation wastes a great deal of Ministers' time in dealing with its own peccadillos, which detracts from any benefit which it provides. The balance sheet is distinctly negative.

There remain other activities——

Mr. Amery: Will the right hon. Gentleman take into account the bringing to book of Mr. Hindawi recently in the El Al case, which was partly attributable to the good surveillance of the counter-espionage system?

Mr. Jenkins: That is not to do with political surveillance in this country. That is not to do with internal political surveillance. I was about to say, had the right hon. Gentleman not interrupted me—I make no complaint that he did so—that that leaves the other two main aspects of MI5's work, which are anti-terrorist activities and spy catching. Its anti-terrorism activities are clearly crucial and vital, but how much room is there for an organisation which is entirely separate from the special branch, and not always wholly co-operative with it? I do not express judgment on that, but I think that it might be useful to have some independent advice from some body of the sort that my right hon. and hon. Friends and I are suggesting.

I am sure that there is some need for a continuing specialised agency to deal with counter-espionage. Perhaps we can exaggerate the role of such an agency by saying that it should be given the highest national priority, but there should certainly be one in place that is efficient and trusted. That activity must now be subject to more political supervision. That is necessary because politicians want to get their hands on things, which is something of which I am not necessarily all that much in favour, and because of the desperate need to recover confidence in the Security Service. Anyone who indulges in bluster and says that there is no problem is really talking nonsense.

In my view, the present political command is not wholly satisfactory, for two reasons. First, there is a degree of split responsibility between the Home Secretary, who is responsible for MI5, and the Foreign Secretary, who is responsible for MI6. The two organisations are different, but there can be a crack where they join, where it is quite difficult for either the Home Secretary or the Foreign Secretary to see the whole picture.

Secondly, and of more importance, there is some complication of responsibility between the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister, which is symbolised by the role of the Cabinet Secretary as the chief official, though he is in no way the servant of the Home Secretary. Some people think he ought not to be the servant of the Prime Minister either, but that raises a wider issue which I do not propose to examine at this stage. Apart from those gaps—those lacunae—there is a need to move a little outside the Executive. The motion suggests a good form of supervision. It is not the only form, but it is a sensible one.

My attention was drawn today to a matter of which I was not previously aware. I do not know whether the Home Secretary is aware of it. In 1955 the Prime Minister of the day set up a public service security conference of Privy Councillors, with three members of the Government, three members of the Opposition and the permanent secretary to the Treasury. The exact terms of reference were to examine the security procedures that applied in the public service and to consider whether any further precautions were called for and should be taken. That was after the Burgess and Maclean affair.

Certainly, therefore, a group of this sort is not without precedent. I do not suggest that this is the only solution. It is a good one, and it should hold the ground in the absence of any other. It will come. The essential question is whether this Government or another Government accept it freely and constructively, or whether it is dragged out reluctantly.

I return to the Prime Minister's style of government. The Prime Minister, with the possible exception of Anthony Eden for a few unfortunate weeks exactly 30 years ago, is undoubtedly the most self-righteous Prime Minister since Neville Chamberlain in the wholly relevant sense of despising her opponents, whoever they may be, and being convinced of her own moral superiority. In these circumstances, it is peculiarly unfortunate that, whenever attention is focused on some activity in which she has been involved, as in Westland, as here, there should be a trail of dissimulation left behind.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You may not have had the opportunity to see this, but there is a serious allegation in today's evening paper that the Leader of the Opposition has had a mole, a Mr. Greengrass, in the case in Australia——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order.

Mr. Marlow: I am asking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there is any way in which we can——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must find some other time to raise this matter. We must proceed with the amendment.

Mr. Marlow: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is there any way that the Opposition can ask for a suspension of this debate until such time as the Leader of the Opposition is here to answer those allegations?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Of course there is a way. The hon. Gentleman can proceed on such a matter only by putting down a substantive motion.

5.52 pm

Sir Edward Gardner (Fylde): I wish to refer to something mentioned by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) when he opened the debate. He spoke about the way in which Mr. Peter Wright had betrayed the secrets that he was sworn to keep.

A member of the Security Service, who is sworn to keep secrets, as Mr. Wright was, does more than bring himself into disrepute. He undermines the working of the service, which is one of the most sensitive, most important and, so it seems, one of the most vulnerable of our defences against such dangers as espionage and subversion. It exposes us to these dangers. I can see no difference between a member of the Security Service who breaks his oath and sells his secret to a publisher, and a member of the Security Service who sells his secrets to the Russians. The effect and the damage are the same in both cases. To say that it is wholly reprehensible is to put it as modestly as one can.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Sir Edward Gardner: May I continue?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Just briefly?

Sir Edward Gardner: Yes.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that those who purchase—that is to say, authors and journalists—should be prosecuted?

Sir Edward Gardner: I have not considered that question. My opinion on it would have no influence, and I shall certainly not give one to the House now.

The difficulties that are being faced by the Government have been faced in the past by successive Governments, and, no doubt, will be faced by Governments in future unless something is done to prevent them. There are two prime causes of these difficulties. One difficulty is section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 and the other is the fact that there is no oversight of the workings of the Security Service. As we all know, section 2 is perhaps the best example of an appalling piece of legislation. The Franks committee described it as a mess, and a mess it is. It said that people cannot be sure what it means, how it operates or what action under it is likely to bring a prosecution. The Franks committee also said that this piece of legislation ought to be repealed as soon as possible by the Government. With some comfort, I heard my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary say that, when the Australian case is completed, the Government will listen to suggestions. I hope that he will consider the repeal of this legislation.

The Security Commission, which looked at the Bettaney case, concluded that the Security Service was highly efficient, but the committee had heard evidence and was critical of the internal working of the Security Service. It has been said that it is doubtful that Michael Bettaney would have tried to turn to the KGB had he had the opportunity to consult somebody such as a complaints commissioner in the Security Service. It is unlikely—this must be a charitable view, if nothing else—that Miss Massiter would have used the media if she had been able to make her complaints to someone inside the Security Service. What is more, if there had been a complaints commissioner, the suspicions that had been aroused about Sir Roger Hollis—however cogent or mistaken they may have been—could have been investigated earlier and more convincingly if there had been a complaints commissioner.

Mr. Beith: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, however much we might deplore the more recent actions of Mr. Peter Wright, at an earlier stage he sought to get attention to a memorandum from the Prime Minister and others in the Government, in an apparently desperate attempt to have some attention given to a problem which, clearly at that stage, was his main motivation, namely his suspicions about Sir Roger Hollis?

Sir Edward Gardner: I do not accept for a moment that that was his main motivation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It was originally.

Sir Edward Gardner: It may have been earlier, but I do not accept now that that is his main motivation. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). A person who has a genuine and serious complaint would have a better chance of resolving his difficulties and alleviating his anxieties if there was someone—say, a complaints commissioner—to help him.

I return to the heart of the debate. Should we have, as has been suggested, a joint committee, comprising Privy Councillors, with the power, ability and reliability to look at the Security Service? In 1985, in Committee on the Interception of Communications Bill, I submitted that there should be a complaints commissioner who would be a person who had held high office and on whom everyone could rely. I was grateful, and was given greater confidence in submitting that point, because I had the support of the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), a former Home Secretary, and the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), a former Home Secretary and former Prime Minister.

The idea of using a committee of Privy Councillors or a Committee of both Houses to oversee—if that is the objective—the activities and internal workings of the Security Service does not commend itself to me. The fewer people, no matter how distinguished, who know secrets, the better. I suppose that the natural way of dealing with this matter would be for the Select Committee on Home Affairs to consider it. I hope that no one makes that suggestion, because it certainly would not bring forward an enthusiastic response from me. I submit that there is a possibility of using a committee of Privy Councillors.

There is oversight of the security services in the United States and Canada and I believe that it is beneficial. I suggest—the idea is not mine, but I wish that it were—that the committee of Privy Councillors could be sent to the United States, Canada and perhaps West Germany to

see how the oversight systems work there. I hope that that idea commends itself to the Government, at the end of the Australian proceedings, as one that could be of assistance in deciding whether the principle of oversight by an ombudsman or complaints commissioner — I do not mind what he is called—is a good one or is flawed.

Mr. Winnick: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman remember—we are on the same Select Committee—that when we decided to look into the activities of the special branch, critics made it known inside and, no doubt, outside the House that we were in some way undermining the security of the state? Although we differed in our conclusions, as shown in the majority and minority reports, does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that, following the first parliamentary scrutiny of the special branch, which worked closely with the intelligence service, no one has yet accused us of undermining the security of the state. Does that not prove that some kind of parliamentary accountability of the intelligence service would do no harm and would safeguard our democracy?

Sir Edward Gardner: The hon. Gentleman knows, because we have considered this matter many times, that I approach that view with great caution. The difficulty associated with disclosing any such information to Parliament is formidable, to say the least. The proposition that we should discuss in open debate in the Parliament what goes on in the security services is totally unacceptable.

I hope that, after the Australian case is completed, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will consider the suggestions which have been brought forward. I put it to him that he should consider how oversight works in Canada and the United States, ascertain whether we can benefit from such a system in this country and stop these endless difficulties and anxieties which must be disastrous for the morale of the security services.

6.5 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I should like to follow the remarks of the hon. and learned Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) on his concept of a complaints commissioner. I believe that there is something that can be done in the short term without waiting for long-term solutions. In evidence to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) suggested that there was a powerful case for separating the posts of Cabinet Secretary and head of the Civil Service. It so happens that in oral question No. 6 tomorrow to the Prime Minister there is a substantial question on the Order Paper, which should be reached, asking her to do precisely that.

If the post of head of the Civil Service was separate from that of Cabinet Secretary, the head of the Civil Service would be a person to whom civil servants with their grievances — call them "deep throats" or whatever — could go. Had there been such a separation, the history of the Ponting episode might have been very different, because there would have been someone to whom Clive Ponting could legitimately have gone. He felt that he could not go to Sir Robert Armstrong. Sir Robert, in his evidence to the Select Committee on Defence, said that Clive Ponting should have gone to him, but, in the circumstances, that was a bit unrealistic.

If the rumours and signs are true that Sir Robert Armstrong is likely on his return from Australia, whenever that is, to resign of his own volition — simply because that might be an opportunity to do so and because of circumstances — there would be an opportunity to split the offices of Cabinet Secretary and head of the Civil Service for precisely the reasons given by the hon. and learned Member for Fylde.

I am glad that my party will not vote on the motion. Had it done so, I should have felt unable to support it in the Lobby. A Select Committee to consider this matter could be an absurdity and unworkable. Who is to be on the Select Committee? I should like to be on it, but I might not be the first choice of my colleagues! There would be endless grousing and grumbling and we would be in danger of having first-class and second-class Members of Parliament. My hon. Friends the Members for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and I might be deemed by others to be second-class Members of Parliament, but I do not think that any of us sees himself exactly in that light.

There are difficulties as to who is to be on the Select Committee and whether they should sign a declaration under the Official Secrets Act 1911. It might involve raking up their pasts. It is a serious issue.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Of course it is.

Mr. Dalyell: The Leader of the House agrees that it is a serious issue. I am afraid that I am very conventional in these matters and believe that the proper way to control the security services is, for MI5, through the Home Office. For intelligence gathering — intelligence assessment is a different matter—MI6 should be controlled through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The real way to operate an effective control is to have powerful permanent secretaries of the calibre of Sir Charles Cunningham and Sir Philip Allen, now Lord Allen of Abbeydale, and to have number twos either in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office or in the Home Office who have a certain continuity in these matters. I do not have first-hand knowledge, but I suspect that there is no chance of controlling MI5 and MI6 unless there is a certain continuity. As ephemeral politicians how can we expect to have that control?

I should like to go back to the legitimate questions asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). My point relates to Lord Rothschild. There is no question of a witch hunt against Lord Rothschild. Let me make it perfectly clear that I do not think he is the fourth, fifth, or sixth man or anything of that kind. He has a reputation in Cambridge and elsewhere for great kindness to personal friends, a man for whom friendship is most important. But it has to be asked, because rich men do not normally behave lightly in these things, why on earth did Lord Rothschild think it necessary to send a first-class fare to bring Mr. Peter Wright to Britain?

A lot of people ask if Mr. Wright has in any way a hold on Lord Rothschild and that question must be asked. Further, one must ask, what precisely is the relationship in these matters between Lord Rothschild and the Prime Minister? Here we have over the public print that she went to him to ask for his advice or whatever. It does not bear directly on the Australian case, but it deserves to be cleared up. It happened rather before the Australian case, and the

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questions that my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton thought right to put deserve to be answered either tonight, or this week by letter.

The next issue I should like to raise is the Government policy of state burglary. It is accepted that five weeks before "There Trade is Treachery" was published there was a break-in at the office of Sidgwick and Jackson, the publishers of the book.

It is also accepted that a draft proof was stolen or purloined and that two or three days before publication there was a request from 10 Downing street for a copy of the book.

It is accepted that the publishers and Mr. Pincher said, "If we give you a copy of the book how can we be certain that you will not slap an injunction on it?" They were told, "We will give you a written guarantee within two hours that there will be no injunction." The publishers and Mr. Chapman asked, "How on earth can you give a guarantee if you have not read it?" They were told, "We have read it."

How did they get hold of the copy? Of course they could not go and tell the Attorney-General because he would have the sense to ask where they got the copy and would be an accessory after burglary. We are talking about state burglary and my hon. Friends and I and a number of other people want to know the exact Government policy on state burglary. If it was carried out without ministerial authority it raises the most acute questions of control. Are we saying that MI5, MI6 or whoever can go, for whatever reasons and pinch draft copies of books, however awkward they may be, without ministerial authority? Was there ministerial authority?

My next question is about the Attorney-General. I tried to raise a point of order and I think it was a substantial one. I remember that as a new Member of Parliament I saw the Law Officers Sir Reginald Manningham-Buller and Sir John Hobson being on the Front Bench the whole time when they had to face the music. I had a high regard for Sir John Hobson. He was an honourable man and, as the Leader of the House will remember, he thought it his duty to be present in the House for awkward matters.

Mr. Biffen: I do not wish to prolong the hon. Gentleman's speech, but in fairness to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General I must say that this motion is about the establishment of a commission and it is appropriate that the Home Secretary should respond to the debate and that I, as Leader of the House, should wind up. Of course my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will take a keen interest in what has been said in the debate, but the hon. Gentleman is quite incorrect to say that the Attorney-General should assume that every hon. Member would speak as widely on the terms of the motion as he is doing.

Mr. Dalyell: If the Attorney-General takes such a keen interest, what better does he have to do than to be present for three hours in the House? This matter is a bit more than the amour propre of hon. Members. The Attorney-General is an honourable man and I believe that he would have wished to be here. Frankly, the conclusion that some of us draw is that he has been told to keep out of the light —[AN HON. MEMBER: "That is a silly point."]—It is not a silly point. It is a re-run of something else spoken about by my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton about what has happened over Westland. We must see these things in context.

I have repeatedly tried to ask the Prime Minister and others how the heck it comes about that the Attorney-General, our senior Law Officer, finds it necessary to go to the lengths of threatening Sir Robert Armstrong with action by the Director of Public Prosecutions or the police unless an inquiry into the Law Officer's letter was authorised.

It is not every day of the week that the constabulary threaten to go to 10 Downing street, and that at least deserves some explanation. My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) and other hon. Members smile at that, but the Law Officers threatened to go to 10 Downing street. This is not some fantasy of a fevered conspiratorial MP. Truth is stranger than fiction.

I listened to the speech by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins). It may be within his recollection that I went to see him during the period of office of the first Wilson Government at a time when I was asking awkward questions about variable geometry aircraft on Aldabra atoll. I was being the proverbial bloody nuisance to my own Government. [HON. MEMBERS: "Never."] I asked why I thought that my lines of communication were being interfered with. He gave me a civil hearing but I should like to come back to his point. There is a difference between subversion and genuine political dissent.

As one of the regular dissenters in the House, I am in favour of a charter for proper dissenters. Dissension is very different from subversion. That is why some of us hope that if this Government do not, at least my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton and some of his colleagues will make jolly sure that the security services, which have a legitimate job to do, are brought under control in respect of political dissenters like me who are not a whit less patriotic than anyone else.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the next speaker, may I remind the House that a large number of other hon. Gentlemen wish to take part in this debate, and I appeal for short contributions.

6.18 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I shall certainly endeavour to follow your injunction, Mr. Speaker.

In many areas the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is unconventional, but in this area he is conventional. I welcome that and his support, in essence, for the existing arrangements and his opposition to the motion. There is widespread agreement about the need for effective and efficient security services, although that agreement is not universal and, as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said, outside this House it has become conventional at a certain sophisticated level of commentators to ask why we need security services at all.

The reaction of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), with his sniggering and shallow quips, suggests that sympathy for the existence and objectives of the security services is questionable. However, I accept that basically there is widespread agreement on the need for effective security services, and the problem is therefore one of control. That is the long-standing problem in this as in every other democracy, and it is not one with which we can deal comfortably.

However, it is important to recognise that the problem that faced our predecessors in 1945 is not the same as that which faces us now. Today's problem is very much more difficult.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) suggested that the arrangements are not sustainable, and have not been sustainable for years. I suggest that he is looking in the wrong direction. The arrangements of 1945 and 1952 are very much more necessary today. The nature of today's threat is infinitely more sophisticated and more damaging. The challenges of subversion and political warfare represent a wider range of threats to our society. That is much more significant than the simple stealing of the odd secret and dropping it in a dead-letter box, as John Le Carré describes.

We must consider the mechanism involved. The mechanism has been investigated from the time of Attlee onwards. The Maxwell Fyfe rules were established, and as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary reminded us, these have been followed by successive Governments. We have heard today from four previous Home Secretaries and from the right hon. Member for Devonport, who moved the motion, who was a Foreign Secretary. At no time during their tenures of office did they suggest any significant changes to the arrangements.

As we have learnt, Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, as he now is, after he left office, made extraordinary complaints about what had happened during the first tenure of Home Secretaryship of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins). The right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), the then Prime Minister, completely failed to react, and told Lord Wilson that there were no problems at all. More light has now been thrown on that subject by the right hon. Member for Hillhead, who said that the action may not have been official, but perhaps it was unofficial.

There were certainly problems in the 1970s and they were problems for the Labour party. They are not today's problems. There are problems facing the administration of the security services and problems of recruitment. However, the right hon. Member for Devonport accepted that the problems with Prime and Bettaney would not have been avoided had a Security Commission existed. What on earth do the right hon. and hon. Members who have proposed the motion think that the commission will achieve? What mechanisms will be available? Those are the problems that face all security services from time to time.

Mr. Beith: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that such a Committee, perhaps before, at the same time as, or at least after these events might have found out whether MI5 positively vetted its recruits?

Mr. Whitney: Great progress has been made in security and positive vetting. It was not necessary to have an all-party Committee to achieve those aims. The improvements are in train, and I believe there are other areas where improvements can be made. The important point is that they could not have been achieved through a parliamentary Committee.

I believe that the importance of this subject is such that we must recognise that any dangers at this juncture of exposing our security services, through parliamentary scrutiny, are far greater than the dangers of the services getting out of control. I suggest that the House should take cognisance of the fact that nothing of significance in terms of a security threat to this country has actually happened. We are experiencing a re-run of the mistakes of 20, 30 and 40 years ago.

I invite the House to consider where the threat originates. To whose advantage is it to run and re-run, and run yet again, these tired old stories? It is not to this country's advantage or to the advantage of our security services. We must take account of that. We must also take account of what has been achieved by the appointment of the new director-general and consider what internal administrative improvements might be made to aid him. The very last thing that we wish to do is to make the mistake made by other countries and open up our security services. That would destroy them.

6.25 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours: I had not meant to intervene in the debate, because I feel feverish. However, I must tell the House that, as I have been successful in the ballot for notices of motions, I intend to raise these matters again in my debate a week on Monday and put in context the reasons why I have been campaigning so vigorously in a way which may have unsettled many hon. Members by putting so many names on the Order Paper. I will continue to do that in future.

There is one hon. Member in the Chamber today, who has not yet caught your eye, Mr. Speaker, who I believe can tell us much about this affair. He is the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), and he knows the truth. He knows what happened in 1980 and he knows about the involvement of Rothschild.

The hon. Member for Thanet, South wrote a letter to the Prime Minister in early 1980 of which I have seen a copy. That letter set out his reservations about the suggestions that had been made about Sir Roger Hollis, and called upon the Prime Minister to hold some inquiry, or at least to set out the position in the public domain. If I am mistaken about that, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will intervene and correct me. I believe that the Prime Minister recognised the difficulties that arose about Sir Roger Hollis by mid-1980. I believe that at that time she thought that it was in the best interests of the public that certain information should be available in the public domain.

At that time, it was not known that it would be Mr. Chapman Pincher's book that set out the nature of the accusation. I believe that the Prime Minister conspired to secure the publication of that book. I accept that many hon. Members will say that there is no evidence of that, but it is interesting that in a speech on 26 March 1981 the right hon. Lady said:

> "With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement about the security implications of the book published today that purports to give a detailed account of the investigations into the penetration of the Security Service." — [*Official Report*, 26 March 1981; Vol. 1, c. 1079.]

I believe that the Prime Minister knew that the book was coming out. She waited for it and the moment that it was published, she came to Parliament to make a statement. She incriminated herself in that statement, which is only relevant today—some five and a half years later—when we are faced with the crisis in the court in New South Wales.

I would like to consider what really happened. Why was no action brought in the courts to prevent publication of that book? As I understand it, two options were open to

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the Government. They could have brought an action by way of civil proceedings in the courts to secure an injunction to prevent the publication of the book. My hon. Friends have argued that because it was in the public interest to take such a decision, that decision should have been taken by the Attorney-General. In that respect, he failed. However, he had another responsibility, irrespective of any views expressed by members of the Cabinet in 1981. He was able to bring a criminal prosecution in the courts. Even if all the British Cabinet felt that no action should be taken to stop publication of that book, if he believed—wearing his hat as Attorney-General—that the book broke the law because it included statements clearly drawn in default of section 1 of the Official Secrets Act 1911, he had an obligation to bring criminal proceedings in the courts. I do not understand how the Attorney-General can come to the Dispatch Box——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I must draw his attention to the motion before the House. I should have thought that his comments would be more appropriate to his own motion at a later date.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: You are absolutely right, Mr. Speaker. I will go into the matter in more detail on that occasion.

The thrust of today's motion is that a parliamentary Committee of both Houses should be established to oversee these matters. That is an excellent proposition and there is a precedent for it in the Committee of Privileges. That Committee is composed of senior Members of the House, many but not all of whom are Privy Councillors, who are bound by an unwritten loyalty whereby they never produce minority reports. On leaving the Committee, they never dissent from the majority view taken by the Committee and the deliberations of the Committee are never known, apart from those published in the evidence attached to its reports. In my view, that Committee shows the way in which a group of Members of Parliament of all political persuasions, working together in what they believe to be the wider interests of Parliament, could seek to secure the fullest possible consideration of these matters.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not believe it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend and I do not agree on this. A similar system operates in the German Parliament and in Canada. As the hon. and learned Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) said, some Members — not particularly myself — may wish to visit other countries to see how the system works there.

Mr. Dalyell: The difference between my hon. Friend and me is that I have been before the Committee of Privileges and he has not.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend may not be satisfied with the treatment that he received, but he will not know what other matters were dealt with or what other statements were given to the Committee when he was the subject of its inquiries. Some of us have confidence in that Committee's ability to take a view and I believe that it points the way forward in dealing with these matters. We cannot continue on the basis of accountability to the Home Secretary because we know from Mr. Wright, who was directly involved in a campaign to destabilise the office of the Prime Minister in the mid-1970s, that actions can be taken which are against the national interest. I wish to ensure a system whereby parliamentary control and scrutiny are exercised, because the present system of accountability clearly does not work.

6.32 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), but I shall not be led into some of the highways and byways that he seemed to suggest—although we all look forward to his debate in a few days' time to discuss those points which are perhaps more appropriate to a different motion. I simply say this by way of correction. My letter to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, to which the hon. Gentleman referred and which has been in the public domain since publication of Mr. Chapman Pincher's book, refers neither to Lord Rothschild nor to Mr. Peter Wright—at that time I had no knowledge of the roles that they played—although it refers to certain suggestions in relation to Sir Roger Hollis.

The hon. Gentleman's speech highlighted a difficulty which has bedevilled this debate. It is a pity that the idea of some form of oversight of the security services, which is sensible in principle, should be introduced on the Floor of the House at a time when there is so much hysterical and highly politicised froth about on the subject of the Wright case. I was, however, encouraged by one comment made by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, when he said that the House might wish to return to these issues in a calmer atmosphere. In some circumstances, a nod is as good as a wink in this place and I believe that the deeper subject of oversight should indeed be the subject of our attention.

There is no getting away from the fact that we are dealing with two issues which have become jumbled together. One is the short-term issue of concern about the Australian court case. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary was clearly right not to answer detailed questions about that today, as the Government are still a party to the case. The other is the long-term question—so long-term that it has been around for centuries—of who will guard the guards.

With regard to the Wright case, I believe that the Government were entirely correct in seeking to restrain security services personnel from publishing secrets in memoirs or giving them to journalists. That was an honourable and desirable objective and I support the Government in it. I fully understand their intention in principle in seeking to do that. Unfortunately, however, the tactics to secure that objective have gone badly wrong, due to a series of misjudgments and human errors. Frankly, they have created a shambles. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) called it a "farce" and I do not disagree with that description.

The Government's tactics, of which I have already been critical, remind me of an old strip cartoon in *Punch*. It begins with a rather unpleasant wasp invading a family picnic. The next picture shows the father seizing an umbrella and striking out in all directions. With a hail of inaccurate blows, he breaks the china, tramples the food, smashes the bottles and injures his children. As the wasp buzzes away, he stands among the mayhem and destruction that he has created saying, "At least that will teach the wasp a lesson."

That view of the Government's tactics is not entirely unfair. As a result of perfectly honourable but misguided tactics, far more damage has been done to the morale and reputation of our security services and to the keeping of their secrets than publication of Mr. Wright's odious book could ever have done, especially if cuts could have been agreed with the publishers Heinemann, in the national interest on grounds of current security.

The principle for which Britain has been fighting in the Australian courts is a good one, but that simple theoretical principle has been undermined in practice by Murphy's law, which I suspect will shortly be renamed "Armstrong's law" in Australian legal circles—that anything that can go wrong will go wrong. Indeed, so much has gone wrong that there is really only one question left for the Government. How will it all end? How can the Government get off the hook?

Even if Britain wins the Australian case—I venture to suggest that the chances of winning on appeal in the High Court of Canberra are better than many journalistic observers seem to think—the stable door will still not be shut. The Wright case has become such a worldwide cause celebre that the book will almost certainly be published, perhaps in Ireland where there seems still to be a loophole, or in some pirate version using back-street printers in any one of a dozen locations in the world which go in for black and untraceable publishing.

My advice to the Government, therefore, is to cut their losses even though it hurts and to get into damage limitation and damage control. We should draw a line around the historical revelations relating to Sir Roger Hollis and look to the future to do what we can to secure the confidentiality of security services personnel by instituting new contracts of employment which are binding in all courts and jurisdictions and possibly retrospective agreements about the terms on which retired members of the security services receive their pensions. It means a political climbdown, but it is a step up in terms of preserving future security arrangements for the security services, the operations of which are so crucial and vital to us all.

I am sympathetic to the motion before the House. Indeed, I could hardly be otherwise, as I believe that I was the first Member to argue in the House for such a proposal during the Blunt debate in 1979.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): When did the hon. Gentleman last speak to Mr. Turnbull?

Mr. Aitken: I am glad to have the opportunity to answer that question because it has been posed several times during the debate from sedentary positions, especially by the hon. Member for Workington.

The facts of the matter need be of no mystery, and they are as follows. Mr. Turnbull has had three telephone conversations with me in the last year. All three calls were placed at his instigation and the last call, which was made the day before yesterday, concerned a simple apology about something Mr. Turnbull had said in court about me, which was totally inaccurate. The other two conversations were, in effect, what is now well known—offers of terms of a possible deal for settling this case. I passed on those facts, in detail, to the Attorney-General.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Interference in the court.

Mr. Aitken: All that I can say—as I am neither a Privy Councillor nor a Leader of the Opposition, and have been a friend of Mr. Turnbull's family for over 20 years—is that, granted that I did put everything down on paper about the two vital conversations in the memorandum to the Attorney-General, I cannot see that I have anything with which to reproach myself.

The timing of the motion is wrong, and some of the detailed arrangements—and in the speech of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) they were left pretty blurred—are wrong. Leaving aside the method of oversight, it is right to introduce the principle of oversight of our Security Service. That welcome move would be likely to make our Security Service more, rather than less, effective.

An oversight body would be a confidential institutional replacement for what are, at present, highly personalised and individual oversight arrangements that basically rely on the personal chemistry and working methods between the Cabinet Secretary, the director-general of the Security Service and the Home Secretary. I have some confidence that those personal arrangements work well at present and that the present director-general is an exceptionally good appointment, but those arrangements have not worked so well in the past, especially in the recent past, and there is no guarantee that they will work well in the future.

The House should reflect on two episodes in recent security history and question whether they would have been better handled if an oversight body had existed. The first episode related to the long-running Hollis saga. That threw up deep divisions within MI5. A group of security officers known as the young Turks—a rather silvery-haired collection of old gentlemen these days—became deeply concerned about Soviet penetration, or alleged penetration, of MI5 at the highest level. They very much wished to bring those matters to the attention of the highest levels of the Security Service, but they had great difficulty in doing so because they believed those high levels had been penetrated.

It is wrong to portray the young Turks as obsessional old crackpots, even though one or two, especially Mr. Peter Wright, may merit that description. Some of the members of that group are deeply patriotic, highly professional security specialists who have never gone public. All they ever wanted was the chance to go to some authoritative body, other than the upper echelons of MI5, which would consider their complaint. The young Turks felt that they could not get that fair hearing because the upper echelons were, in their view, contaminated.

An extraordinary anecdote has now been published about a Mr. De Mowbray who was so burning to get his case across, that he knocked on the door of No. 10, saw a relative of his by marriage, and as a result of that was given a chance of a hearing by the Cabinet Secretary. The result of that meeting was that the Trend report eventually emerged.

If there had been a confidential outfit and forum to which those men could have gone and which would have listened to their troubles, we would never had had any of the breaches and leaks that we have had from the young Turks.

The more recent episode, the Bettaney case, preoccupied the minds of the Security Commission in May 1985. That case revealed a truly horrifying saga of personnel mismanagement in MI5. The story of how Mr. Bettaney was recruited—despite an appalling history of instability, repeated drunkenness—on one occasion he set fire to his own clothes—minor

[Mr. Aitken]

criminal offences and in the middle of his service an idealogical conversion to Communism — approved, positively vetted, positively vetted again, promoted and eventually sent to one of MI5's most sensitive outstations dealing with Soviet subversion is a mind-boggling tale. All those defects occurred at a time when top civil servants and Ministers were supposed to be exercising vigilant oversight and tight control of MI5. Obviously, they missed something. Who on earth could say that control was adequate at the time of the Bettaney case, which was only a couple of years ago?

The Bettaney case was not just a failure of individuals, but a failure of systems, procedures, and basic man management. In the restrained prose style of the May 1985 report of the Security Commission, those failings were savagely criticised. Paragraph 8.3 states:

"If it is true that the Service tends to be inflexible and resistant to change in management matters this will no doubt take time to eradicate. The necessary changes will take time to have the full effect and will be achieved only by a determined effort at the top."

I believe that that determined effort at the top has taken place with the appointment of an excellent man from outside the Security Service to become director-general.

My basic concern is that, once the impetus derived from the Security Commission report has receded and after the present director-general has retired, the old ethos, the old introspective bad habits and the self-interest of the Security Service will reassert itself. That cannot be avoided unless some new institutionalised safeguard is created. The safeguard for which I hope is that this country will, sooner or later, follow the example of all other major western democracies, especially West Germany and Canada, and set up a small, secure, oversight body to monitor the work of the intelligence community in a far more thorough way than busy Ministers have time to do.

Even if the idea is not especially well defined or crystallised in the alliance motion, the time for oversight of the security services has come. I urge the House and the Home Secretary to give it serious consideration, perhaps at a more appropriate time than today.

6.46 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) must be congratulated on being the only Conservative Member to have shown less complacency than either the Government Front Bench or other Conservative Back Benchers. The hon. Gentleman is known to favour — he has previously stated this — there being some parliamentary accountability of the Security Service. Although I have many reservations about the motion that has been tabled by the Liberal and Social Democratic parties, I have no time for the Government's amendment, which simply reiterates their confidence in the Security Service and its responsibility to Ministers.

I do not believe that the Security Service is as politically neutral as it should be. It is interesting to remember the remarks of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), who was Home Secretary during part of the 1970s, concerning the possibility of the Security Service acting in a way that was totally irresponsible and, indeed, criminal. I would think that that was of some relevance.

I became interested in the subject mainly because of the case of Mrs. Haigh, who lives in the west midlands, though not in my constituency. She makes no secret of the fact that she is active in CND. She writes frequent letters to the local press, to the Ministry of Defence, and so on. It came out that Mrs. Haigh was lied to by the special branch of the police. It was a disgraceful case. Her Member of Parliament is the Secretary of State for Social Services, and it must be said to his credit that he did take up the case with the police. His initial reply from the previous chief constable of west midlands was along the lines that Mrs. Haigh was wrong. It was only as a result of that lady's persistence and the fact that the case was taken up again by the right hon. Gentleman that the chief constable admitted that the police had lied to Mrs. Haigh. Some kind of apology, for what it was worth, was given to her.

I believe that the Mrs. Haighs of this world, whether one agrees with their politics or not, are the mainstay of our democratic system. It is those who lied to her and those who put up the special branch to do so who are undermining our democratic system. That point should be borne in mind.

Inevitably, there has been a great deal of comment in the press and within the House concerning the case in Australia, but I wish also to comment on the case in Dublin. The lady who wrote the book "One Girl's War" died, I believe, two years ago. I understand that there is little in the book that has not been public knowledge for some time. It does that lady's reputation no good to give the impression that, having served her country and carried out her duties during the war years, she has betrayed her country by writing that book.

I repeat what I said during te Home Secretary's speech, that I am very pleased by the decision of the Dublin court. I certainly find it difficult to believe that the publication of that book in Ireland—I hope it will be published in due course in Britain — in any way undermines our national security. Perhaps we can have some evidence that the publication of that book is harmful to Britain's national interests. What is harmful to that interest is the way in which that case was pursued in Ireland, not to mention the long-running farce in Australia.

There may be an argument, for what it is worth, that if we paid decent pensions to some MI5 officials they would not be so keen to spill the beans. I am certainly not the defender or apologist of Mr. Wright. I doubt whether his politics are the same as mine. His motive for writing the book is indeed questionable. However, the sense in pursuing him and undertaking what is now happening in Australia is a different matter.

It must also be asked why the Cabinet Secretary initially told the Australian court that the Attorney-General had been involved in the decision five years ago over the book "Their Trade is Treachery". Surely the Cabinet Secretary of all people would know what the position was. Therefore, one must inevitably ask whether the Prime Minister put the Cabinet Secretary up to say that and to use the Attorney-General in the same way as she undoubtedly used the Solicitor-General during the Westland affair. For a Prime Minister who has always emphasised the need to respect the rule of law, she has not shown much respect this year for her Law Officers.

I do not go along with the wording of the motion, but it would be churlish of me if I omitted to say that the subject is worth while. Clearly, the interest that has been shown today demonstrates that it is a worthwhile subject to pursue, and my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will in one way or another raise the matter again on Monday week.

It has been suggested that only Privy Councillors should sit on such a committee. I agree with the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) that some day such a committee will be formed. No one knows when, but that kind of reform will undoubtedly come. It would be unfortunate if the impression were given, however, that the only Members of the House whose patriotism could be totally relied on were Privy Councillors. I do not question their loyalty or patriotism, but what about the rest of us? Is it suggested that those of us who are proud to hold Left-wing views are somehow disloyal, that we have an affinity to a foreign state, or that we believe that the Soviet state is somehow superior to the British democratic system? Are we the likes of Burgess, Maclean, Philby and Blunt who served in the intelligence services and betrayed their country?

We must get away from the unfortunate notion that if such a committee is formed, only Privy Councillors should be members. The time will come when such a committee will be formed to oversee the security services, and in my view its membership should be widespread and representative of the House as a whole.

6.53 pm

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): I am delighted to be called and shall be as brief as possible. I was delighted to hear my right hon. Friend say that there will be a move—I hope not in the far distant future—to follow up the commitment in the 1970 Conservative election manifesto to reform the Official Secrets Act. I also remind the House that in his report Franks said that the OSA catches people who have no thought of harming their country. When we talk of traitors we should also think of the many men and women who throughout their lives have served their country quietly and in secrecy, and whose loyalty is often the only defence of their own lives.

A real problem in relation to our security services is in the control of those services. The management standards that have been practised over the last 40 years are not sufficient for the protection of the country, and under the present system we have the seepage of people such as Peter Wright who blandly and blithely destroy obligations that they incurred and for which they have a responsibility, not only to themselves but to others who served with them.

During the past 40 years there have been incidents such as the defection of Gouzenko and the failure of Hollis to identify who Elli was. There was the failure of Hollis to discover why the man he sent to Istanbul to interview a prime Soviet defector—that man was Philby—did not do his job properly. There is also the question of why Hollis stopped investigations into who was the top Soviet spy in his own Department. All these things should have been picked up by some form of oversight, and given such repeated incidents over the past 30 or 40 years, surely this Parliament would want a control of management standards that did not allow such events to arise again.

We are repeatedly assured that it will not happen again, but it does. In the 1970s there was the case of Mr. Jock Kane of GCHQ. I was assured that with all his patriotism, which practically cost him his job, he would be looked after and that there would be no more problems. But out of the woodwork popped Mr. Prime. He was followed by Mr. Bettaney, on whom the second positive vetting was not even completed. Repeatedly, none of the management standards are sufficient for the ordinary rank and file of the security services to believe that they are there for their protection.

There seems to be a confusion in the security services about what is secrecy and what is security. It is absolutely essential that secrecy is maintained for things that are secret, but it must not be used to protect failings in management standards. Without doubt there is no merit in a Security Commission that has no teeth. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said, it does not monitor the Security Services. There is a need for audit, and I hope that it will not be long delayed.

6.56 pm

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): The real problem of parliamentary or some other form of oversight is that it might impinge on the operational capacity of the security services. I for one agree that we cannot underestimate the importance of the work of the Security Service. We live in deeply troubled times, and its work is crucial.

At the same time it is true that we as Members of Parliament put a great burden of trust for the safeguarding of national security upon the Prime Minister and Home Secretary of the day, but all previous Administrations have resisted the prospect of oversight for the security services. In my view that has proved to have been a mistake, and on re-reading the report of the Security Commission, I really believe that certain areas should be far more closely supervised. As the Security Commission said:

> "The very fact of the services comparative isolation makes it the more important that those responsible at the higher levels for management should maintain a self-critical attitude and be constantly alert to the need to keep the services organisation, practices and procedures under review."

Who is to audit to our satisfaction and the satisfaction of this House the progress or otherwise of the security services? No other institution of the state is subject to so little accountability. History and some recent events have proved that we have an unsatisfactory state of affairs.

In the last few days I have become convinced that a Parliamentary Select Committee is not the right answer. That is the fault of this House because of the absolute incapacity of hon. Members to maintain discretion and secrecy. We require a major effort of political will to devise a system that will provide proper accountability without damaging the operational effectiveness of the intelligence services. I believe that we should reconstitute the Security Commission from a body of hindsight to a body of oversight.

That would have a number of important advantages for the employees of the security services. First, the Security Commission is a body of impeccable standing with which the services are already familiar. Secondly, by having some measure of oversight the Security Commission would be able to look at the terms and conditions of employment and would quite probably recommend improvements and changes that would certainly have dealt with Wright. Thirdly, greater political control and more openness would mean fewer leaks and the better stewardship of those secrets that really matter. The most important point is that the Government must decide which of our secrets must be kept and then ensure that they are guarded like a tiger's cubs.

The integrity of our voice abroad and the relationships sustained by the quality of some of our intelligence is of great value to Britain. The emotional security and political

[Mr. Nicholas Soames]

stability of the United Kingdom entitle us to an intelligence service in which we can repose great trust. That trust has recently been wounded seriously several times to the great detriment of the service and the nation. For that reason, we should consider extending and redefining the brief of the Security Commission. Is it really satisfactory, in the age of electronic intelligence, that a directive issued in 1952 is seen to be the best way of running the security services in the 1980s?

The entire process of Government in Britain is shrouded in far too much secrecy. Reforms such as those proposed today would be an important step forward. The Government should ponder this matter. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have been encouraged by what the Home Secretary has said. The Government should consider how they can best ensure the genuine accountability of this crucial service. The morale and efficiency of the Security Service of the late 1980s and onwards will depend on how we in the House reconcile accountability with security. I shall support the Government on this matter, but with some reluctance. I have confidence, but not full confidence, in the present arrangements.

7.1 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Since my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) opened the debate, we have had ample demonstration of the interest in the subject and of the genuine concern about proper accountability for our security services. The motion has received some welcome support among Conservative Members, from the hon. and learned Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner), from the hon. Members for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren), and qualified support from the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), and from Labour Members such as the hon. Members for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), but of course the debate has taken place against the background of events unfolded day by day in an Australian courtroom with scenes reminiscent of "Yes, Minister", which were the subject of contributions from many hon. and right hon. Members.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), in his best Perry Mason style, went into all this at some length. He seemed to fancy himself in the Australian courtroom for some of the time. Unfortunately, he did not address himself sufficiently to the issue in the motion. Where do we go from here? How do we ensure that there is adequate oversight of our security services?

The right hon. Gentleman was followed in debating the issues of the Australian court case by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), the hon. Members for Workington and for Walsall, North and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), who drew wider lessons and pointed to the unwelcome absence of the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General. I stand by the view that although the motion is not primarily directed at them, they should have been here, because they must have known to what extent matters concerning them would be raised in the debate.

In a thoughtful speech at the beginning of the debate the Home Secretary said that the issue was one to which we could return in quieter times. That was seized upon and welcomed by some of his hon. Friends. The trouble with quieter times is that they usually do not provide the impetus for reform. They provide reassurance, which is often shattered again as soon as another case comes forward.

In 1979 I argued the case for oversight of the security services, as did the hon. Member for Thanet, South. The Liberal party has argued for that since then and has published documents on the subject, and other hon. Members have shown increasing interest in it, but it usually takes some case—some cause celebre—to raise the level of interest to the point at which people can be persuaded to re-examine it. We must carry forward the impetus that arises in troubled times if any reforms are to be achieved in quiet times.

I hope that it has been common ground in the debate that we need security services and that the work that they do is vital, especially, for example, in the prevention of terrorism and the prevention of attacks upon innocent citizens in this country. I hope that it has been common ground among most hon. Members who have spoken that the Government have reason to be worried about leaking, book publishing and the supply of material for books by ex-officers of the security services. The Government have great legal difficulty in establishing a proper basis on which to protect themselves against those breaches of confidentiality, as the recent cases have proved. It is a problem, and the Government are right to be worried about it.

However, the Government have weakened their argument on the matter, first, by excessive secrecy, to which many Members on both sides of the House referred. We keep too many things secret. It remains an absurdity that the Home Secretary should open this debate and deliberately avoid any reference to MI6, the intelligence service, and to the Foreign Secretary's responsibility for it. He studiously avoided any reference at all to it, although other hon. Members referred to it several times during the debate. Why should we pretend for a moment that we do not have, and do not need, reputable intelligence services doing a proper job and responsible to the Foreign Secretary? That is an absurd pretence. To seek to maintain it makes nonsense of the case that the Government advance for the things that we must keep secret, as they have sought to do in various court cases.

The Government weakened their case also by selective prosecution, as was argued earlier in the debate, and by seeking to distinguish between officers who write books and those who supply material for other people's books, even with payment. That distinction does not stand up and it has weakened the Government's case. Most germane to the motion, the Government have weakened their case by their failure to provide an alternative route for grievances. That was the burden of the comments made by the hon. and learned Member for Fylde, and it was echoed by other hon. Members.

I questioned the Home Secretary on the internal mechanism for officers who have a grievance and a sense that something is going wrong. It appeared that even that problem has not yet been resolved and is still under discussion. But we need more than that. We need some external mechanism by which we can be satisfied with the operation of the security services. The present arrangements are a source of real frustration and they have allowed incompetence to operate. They have allowed

treachery and penetration of the services and left wide open the possibility for illegal and unauthorised operations to take place.

Many long-serving, loyal officers in the security services are as frustrated by this position as is anyone who makes such comments from outside the service. The anxiety to do something about those matters is as great among people who know and are experienced in the services as it is among outside critics. There are needs which must be satisfied. There is a need for greater confidence and public support for the work that the security services are doing, a legitimate avenue for grievances and a chance for the security services to get their problems understood. As the Liaison Committee said when it argued that Select Committees of the House have a right to enter that area, if they exercise that right, they give the security services an opportunity to put the record straight.

The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) and the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) asked what a commission such as we propose could do. It should not, of course, exercise operational control of the security services, any more than Ministers are supposed to do. That would be quite wrong. However, it could exercise oversight. I am sure that both those Members understand the distinction between oversight and operational control. It can carry on the work of the Security Commission, in which there is now no continuity, as the Home Secretary pointed out. There is no follow-on from a recommendation of the Security Commission in terms of a continuing interest by the same body in those issues, unless it is referred to again in a subsequent case.

There is plenty of scope; and the Select Committees of the House provide illustrations of the areas where the commission can operate, although they do not provide a model. The existing work of the Select Committees clearly cannot be the exact model for a body that must operate in a much more restricted way. In his speech the Home Secretary proposed three tests: that the machinery should be able to maintain secrecy, that it should be able to maintain public confidence, and that it should not blunt the responsibility of Ministers. The procedure that we are suggesting can pass all those tests. The Home Secretary asked whether such a body should go inside the boundary line of secrecy. Of course it should, as the special Franks Commission on the Falklands did. It had to go inside that boundary line. It was allowed to do so and it was essential to its work.

It cannot conceivably be claimed that our allies would be unable to co-operate with our security services if they had such a mechanism. Our allies have analogous mechanisms to these. Congress is used to such a system. The Canadians are developing their own system. Oversight is accepted as a part of life by our allies.

We have tabled a motion, and there is a Government amendment. It is a pity that the Labour party did not come out in full support or indeed give a clear sign of what it will do. If Labour Members have been recommended to abstain, as I believe they have, that is a mistake. They should come out in support of a proposition which several Labour Members have said they would like to see be put into operation.

I am concerned with the amendment, which states:

"That this House has full confidence in the present arrangements whereby the Security Service is responsible to Ministers."

Those are very complacent words. They might have been feasible in a world in which we had never had Burgess, Maclean, Philby, Blunt, Long, Bettaney or Prime. They might have been reasonable in a world in which Prime Ministers had not been set before the Dispatch Box and briefed to make statements which they subsequently found to be false or misleading through no fault of their own. That happened not only to the Earl of Stockton, but to the present Prime Minister.

There is now wide recognition that the arrangements currently in operation are insufficient. The crucial point is that accountability to Ministers depends on the accountability of Ministers to Parliament. Whether Ministers ask questions about a matter for which they are responsible is frequently related to the extent to which they will themselves be asked questions about it, and the extent to which they are aware that the matters will be probed by someone else. In security matters, it cannot be the case that those questions will flow in detail day after day on the Floor of the House. We must provide another mechanism by which we give a parliamentary buttress to ministerial responsibility. That is the purpose of the commission that we have proposed.

The Prime Minister has as good a reason as anyone to know the need for change. She has been placed before the Dispatch Box with a misleading brief and been invited to put it before the House. She should have been here to listen to the debate. Now is the time to abandon her extraordinary and cherished doctrine that one should never learn from experience. That is one of the most mistaken doctrines upon which her activities are based. She has had enough experience of these matters to know that change is necessary. We have put before the House a motion designed to secure that change, and I invite hon. Members to support it.

7.11 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): It is only on rare occasions that the House discusses security matters, as will be well understood. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) reminded us of the reasons why we should be reticent in these affairs. However, at the outset, although I have no wish to diminish party controversy, I should say that the House should appreciate the way in which the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) introduced the debate and the terms of the motion. It suggests that we should concentrate upon an important, but restricted view of the organisation of our defence services and that we should avoid some of the more exotic distractions that come from Sydney, New South Wales.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who has explained why he cannot be here for my reply—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] He has explained with total courtesy why he cannot be here. I can best characterise his speech in as Delphic a fashion as possible, by saying that it was characteristic.

The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), in a totally different manner—indeed, a most elegant manner—tried to widen the debate by talking not merely about the organisation of the security services but about whether their terms of reference were appropriate in contemporary circumstances.

I shall confine myself more narrowly to a consideration of the proposition that a joint Committee of both Houses,

[Mr. John Biffen]

to be known as the Special Commission on the Security Services, should be appointed. In doing so, I must follow the course of the debate, which has revealed twin principles and the challenge that they represent. The first was elaborated by the right hon. Member for Devonport. He said that we must have effective security services and that, in so doing, we should realise that it necesitates secrecy.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary elaborated on that point, when he talked of the barrier of secrecy which must cocoon those who lie at the centre of and are responsible for the direction of this activity of utmost national importance. Parallel with that principle is the desire for parliamentary accountability which will be exercised in such a way as not to impair the [illegible]g efficiency of security services.

Those two broad principles, which will be entertained throughout the House, cannot be held easily in parallel application. Indeed, much of the debate has concerned the challenge of reconciling those propositions.

Several hon. Members were not slow to identify the difficulties with the membership of the proposed body. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) observed trenchantly that it would be unwise to place too great a premium upon Privy Councillors in these affairs, and he was joined in that agnosticism by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) thought that the proposed commission was inappropriate, but that we should have a complaints commission. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion, (Mr. Amery), in a most impressive and formidable speech, elaborated on the difficulties of proliferating committees and bodies in this area and, above all, on the importance of those who must carry out the work of the security services believing that there would not be an excess of ill-determined oversight.

Mr. Dalyell: Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves the question of agnosticism, may I remind him of the specific question that was asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and me, about why Lord Rothschild should invite Mr. Peter Wright to write a book, and specifically about dealings between the Prime Minister and Lord Rothschild. Would the right hon. Gentleman care to answer that question?

Mr. Biffen: I heard the question from the Front Bench and from the Back Bench and I quite understood it. It bore a clear relationship to the proceedings in Sydney, New South Wales, and on that basis I am not prepared to make any further observations.

May I return to the debate? I have elaborated, I hope reasonably fairly, on the support for and the reservations that have been expressed about the membership of the commission. I ask the House to share with me some philosophic considerations of how such a body might operate. First, would the proposed commission share the inhibitions of secrecy that restrict the Government in such matters? I understand from the right hon. Member for Devonport that that is the intention. In that case, the commission would lie within the cocoon of secrecy, which would cast some doubts on whether it could reassure the House and, more importantly, the general political processes more effectively than they are reassured under the present system. That is the first practical consideration. Of course, there is the reverse consideration, that the commission would not share with the Government the advantages and the inhibitions of secrecy. In that case, we would be anxious about the extent to which it could judge and monitor the execution of policy in this area.

Those are some philosophic doubts about the proposition contained in the motion. I shall put to the House one practical consideration. Although the motion carefully does not mention departmental Select Committees, the concept of such Committees has been mentioned during the debate. The right hon. Member for Devonport used the concept of the Select Committees on Foreign Affairs and Defence when he intervened to say how we might fashion our security arrangements.

What I say about the operation of Committees that rely for their authority on their ability to send for persons and papers is that we have a long-established practice that civil servants who appear before those Committees do not divulge advice given to Ministers. Are we to believe that this committee, given its unique responsibility, will proceed with that long-established function? Or, do we think that the Committee will want it modified? If it wants the function modified, it will be entering into the field of directly sharing that function with those who currently have the executive responsibility for those services. Far from bringing clarity to the situation, that runs the danger of bringing confusion.

The House has had a good chance to listen to the debate and I am the only speaker to lie between the House and the denouement of Liberal defence policy that is to follow.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made a fair and measured speech — *[Interruption.]* — in which he gave the compelling exposition that has so discomfited the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). We know perfectly well that he will adopt the heroic stance of abstention.

This is a serious and challenging problem and we have debated it in a mature fashion this afternoon, but we are correct to believe that it will be a continuing debate.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 24, Noes 232.

Division No. 18] **[7.20 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Paddy	Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Beith, A. J.	Penhaligon, David
Bruce, Malcolm	Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*	Steel, Rt Hon David
Freud, Clement	Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Hancock, Michael	Wainwright, R.
Howells, Geraint	Wallace, James
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	Wigley, Dafydd
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*	Wrigglesworth, Ian
Kennedy, Charles	
Kirkwood, Archy	Tellers for the Ayes:
Livsey, Richard	Mr. David Alton and
Meadowcroft, Michael	Mr. John Cartwright.

NOES

Adley, Robert	Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Aitken, Jonathan	Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Alexander, Richard	Baldry, Tony
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Batiste, Spencer
Amery, Rt Hon Julian	Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Ancram, Michael	Bellingham, Henry
Ashby, David	Best, Keith
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Bevan, David Gilroy
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Biffen, Rt Hon John

Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Staml'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Mellor, David
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Patrick *(N'lch N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Question on amendments):—*

The House proceeded to a Division:—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Will the Serjeant at Arms please find out the reason for the delay in the Lobby, and report back?

The House having divided: Ayes 203, Noes 45.

Division No. 19] **[7.32 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*

Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Macfarlane, Neil
McLoughlin, Patrick
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Gerald Malone.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bruce, Malcolm
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clay, Robert
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Freud, Clement
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Heffer, Eric S.
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
Loyden, Edward
McKelvey, William
Madden, Max
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Nellist, David
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Wainwright, R.
Wareing, Robert
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Simon Hughes and
Mr. James Wallace.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House has full confidence in the present arrangements whereby the Security Service is responsible to Ministers.

Defence

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I should inform the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment standing in the Prime Minister's name.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance, as do many other Conservative Members, on what procedures are available for there to be an emergency suspension of this sitting for a few minutes. I understand that the Labour party abstained on the last vote, and will abstain on the next vote, and it may wish to have some time to ring Mr. Turnbull in Australia to obtain some instructions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for argument, but it is not a matter for the Chair.

7.47 pm

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I beg to move,

That this House reaffirms its support for Britain's continued membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; and believes that membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the security of Britain are incompatible with a policy which combines the unilateral abandonment of Britain's nuclear deterrent, the expulsion from Britain of the United States nuclear contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the rejection of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's long-standing policy of maintaining both conventional and nuclear deterrence whilst pursuing negotiated disarmament.

Incidentally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have just seen your admirable use of the deterrent theory applied to Labour Members, and I congratulate you on using it so effectively. It is interesting that Labour Members should be so frightened of debating their policy in the House that they have sought to limit this debate to the shortest possible time.

But I begin by tackling the amendment tabled by the Prime Minister. If the words are changed around, they are broadly in line with the words in our motion, except for the sentence that seeks to criticise, and

"rejects . . . the policies of the Liberal and Social Democratic Parties, which advocate the maintenance of a British nuclear capability below the minimum required to provide effective deterrence beyond the mid 1990s".

That sentence apparently makes two claims: first that our policy of deterrence would be ineffective and, secondly, that the Government have some knowledge about the state of the world beyond the mid-1990s which, I must confess, is certainly denied to me.

But it is worth concentrating for a moment on the Government's amendment. I start with what I hope is an agreed and obvious statement. One of the first obligations of Government is to provide effectively for the defence of the country. There is no question about that. We have never doubted that that is the Government's motivation and purpose, although we may disagree with them about particular decisions that they make within that framework and about particular weapons systems to which they seem attached.

I hope that the Government would also agree that there is a second obligation on any Government in this country, and that is to use their best endeavours to turn down the ratchet of the arms race and, in particular, of the nuclear arms race. It is on the second part of that heavy obligation to the public that I believe that the Government can be faulted.

The concern about the increased development of nuclear weapons, both in their capacity and quantity, on both sides of the iron curtain is not a concern limited to a few pressure groups or a few people who march on wet Saturday afternoons. There is a genuine public concern, which is even greater now in the wake of the Chernobyl accident. It is born of anxiety not that militaristic Governments, whether here, in the Soviet Union or in the United States, will suddenly unleash nuclear war on the world, but that the more of these weapons that there are about, and the more sophisticated they are, the greater is the risk of some terrible accident befalling us.

Any responsible Government must be heavily motivated towards tackling this problem in a coherent and effective manner. As a firm believer in multilateral disarmament, I have to say that those of us who are multilateralists do not have much to show for our long-standing faith. That is why it is important, whether we look as far forward as the mid-1990s or just to the next two years, for the electorate to know that there will be a Government that are prepared to make a constructive and positive contribution to a reduction in the nuclear arms race. Instead, they find themselves faced with a British Government that are committed unilaterally to increasing the nuclear arms race through the escalation of the Trident programme.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North) *rose*——

Mr. Steel: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not giving way, but the debate was late in starting, and I have not even finished my first point.

I read the speech made by the Secretary of State for Defence in the debate that we had two or three weeks ago, and I noticed his reaction to interjections and interventions about the two-stage disarmament programme on which the super-power leaders have set themselves. The theory is that, over the next decade, in two stages, Mr. Gorbachev and Mr. Reagan might succeed between them in moving towards a completely non-nuclear world. That theory is greeted by the Secretary of State for Defence with a certain amount of understandable scepticism, but when asked what contribution Britain would make to this, he said that if the super-powers made a great deal of headway, we would consider joining them. There was no sense of initiative or direction from the British Government to make this process become a reality. I strongly object to that.

This attitude was shown most clearly not by the speech made by the Secretary of State for Defence but by the action of the Prime Minister. She rushed off to Washington to try to protect the Trident programme, even at the cost of coming to a foolish political deal with her friend the President of the United States, and agreeing to support his stance on arms shipments to Iran in return for a guarantee that the Trident programme would still be about in years to come. In other words, there is a nervousness that there might somehow be a super-power success that would result in the cancellation of the Trident programme, a prospect that terrifies the British Government. I noticed the other day a report in the *Daily Telegraph*, which can hardly be accused of being a subversive, Left-wing newspaper, that the Government are actively looking at non-Trident alternatives to maintaining a deterrent, in case that event should come about. In the

[Mr. Steel]

meantime, the Prime Minister's attitude is that we must hang on to the Trident programme, come what may and regardless of the criticisms that have been made of it.

I criticised the phrase "the mid 1990s" because we must proceed on the basis that the world is not necessarily going to be the same in the mid-1990s as it is now. We must hope, and the alliance is not ashamed to hope, for a change in the American Administration. Even now, looking at the remainder of this American Administration, it is possible to see, out of the wreckage of Reykjavik, some new initiative which may yet lead to major reductions on both sides, and which would be the first major breakthrough in global nuclear arms reduction.

For all these reasons, we started from an important point of disagreement with the Government. We have always advocated the case that Europe as a whole, and Britain in particular, should maintain a minimum deterrent capacity. The Secretary of State and I have argued this point in broadcasts on many occasions, and no doubt we shall continue to do so. The basis of our argument is that he believes that it is essential that in the future Britain will maintain a deterrent capability equivalent almost to that of the United States, to be able to take out Moscow if need be.

We do not share that analysis. Because of the superiority of conventional weapons on the Warsaw pact side, it is necessary to have some deterrent capacity in Western Europe that is independent of the United States, although linked with it. A deterrent that is capable of inflicting unacceptable damage on a potential aggressor, and thereby deterring that aggression from taking place, is different from the Trident programme, which is designed to be equal to something that the United States can deliver and to duplicate an ability that it already has to attack Moscow. That is not necessary.

As long as superior Warsaw pact forces face us and as long as there is a question mark over whether the United States guarantee in Western Europe will remain indefinitely—a question mark that has been raised by many sources from Henry Kissinger to Sam Nunn most recently—it is prudent for Britain, in her present state of non-success of arms reduction talks, to maintain its capacity at a minimal level. That is clearly our policy.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that perhaps the needs of the United States and ourselves may not be the same, and it is essential that we keep the Trident programme, which protects us, but not so much the Americans?

Mr. Steel: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. the only point in maintaining a deterrent capacity is the threat of a superior conventional force that we wish to deter. That is the only reason for maintaining any independence; otherwise why do we bother to have a NATO alliance? The motion is about the effectiveness of the NATO alliance.

As long as the Polaris system exists, and continues with its modernisations, there is little problem in maintaining this position, but it becomes more difficult as Polaris comes to the end of its useful life. It is no secret that that has caused us some little problem in recent weeks and month, and there has been a serious debate. I put it to the Secretary of State that the more that I discuss this, whether with academics in the defence sector or with ex-defence chiefs or others who have strong views on this subject, the more I find that there are zealous advocates of particular post-Polaris solutions for a minimum deterrent. They all have one thing in common. They are all so zealous for their own solution that they reject all others.

It is for that reason that I, as leader of the Liberal party, and my colleague the leader of the SDP, feel that Admiral Lewin, whatever the value of his other criticisms, is right to say that the precise weapon systems are the ones that should be made and chosen by the Government in office at the right time. It is not for Opposition parties to decide, clouded as they are with conflicting advice and denied information available to Government. I am glad to see the Secretary of State nod agreement.

Mr. Patrick Thompson *rose*——

Mr. Steel: I have given way once, and I wish to make a short speech.

As the Secretary of State for Defence has, on previous occasions, challenged me to say what the options are, I propose to do so. I do so with the safeguard of saying that I frequently criticise some of my colleagues for making speeches on the options, because it is extremely difficult to do so without giving the appearance of being an ardent salesman for one or the other. I am not a salesman for any of them. I hope that the political and international conditions will be such, looking forward to the mid-1990s, that none of these options will be necessary. Nevertheless, we must prepare them and trawl through them.

There are six options. The first is extending the life of the existing Polaris submarines and missiles to allow continuation well into the next century. This has its drawbacks, but it is possible and has strong advocates. The second is the fitting of M4 French missiles into Vickers submarine hulls. Again this has been discussed on many occasions. The third is that British Aerospace has the capability to produce a new British ballistic missile if the Government so choose. The fourth is the purchase of American cruise missiles to be fitted either into penetration aircraft such as Tornado or to a large standoff aircraft such as a converted Airbus. The fifth is that American cruise missiles could be fitted either into Vickers submarines or into SSNs. The sixth is that British Aerospace has the capability to develop a Euro-cruise missile. It has been studying that possibility for some time, and joint co-operation with the French on that project could be feasible. I have been through these discussions on enough occasions to understand that each one of these options can be taken and dissected, and that its advocates, even within the Ministry of Defence—I have no doubt that the Secretary of State has sat through as many meetings on these options as I have—can pursue the case in favour of it to its logical conclusion.

I am saying that we do not have to take the decision now, and that there should be no pressure on the Government to take it. It is a decision, however, that may face the next Government or the one after that. That is the position on which I rest, and that is the basic disagreement between myself and the Government on the phrase "a minimum effective deterrent".

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Steel: No, I shall not give way. I want to make progress and to make some other points.

I turn to the motion itself——

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Before the right hon. Gentleman does so, will he allow me to intervene?

Mr. Steel: I shall give way to the chairman of the Back-Bench committee on defence.

Sir Antony Buck: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be kind enough to indicate his preferred solution before he addresses the motion.

Mr. Steel: I shall be frank with the hon. Gentleman. I have a preferred option, as I am sure most people have who take an interest in these matters, but I do not intend to tell him which one it is. I believe that it is not a decision that should be taken by politicians who are in opposition. I cite in support of that belief the article which Admiral Lewin wrote which appeared in *The Guardian* only the other day. I agree with Admiral Lewin on that score.

I wish now to address the motion, having dealt with——

Mr. Powley: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way now?

Mr. Steel: No, I am not giving way. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman has made it clear on more than one occasion that he does not intend to give way again.

Mr. Steel: The motion refers to the future of NATO policy, and that is the subject of the debate. It is proper that in this place the different political parties should bring forward different proposals for changing the policy on NATO, but it is unacceptable to abandon unilaterally the British nuclear deterrent capacity and to expel the United States nuclear bases from within the United Kingdom. It is the combination of the two acts that renders the continued cohesion of NATO impossible, in my view.

I have some good authorities for that proposition, of which I shall quote two. The first is as follows:

"Whether we like it or not, it is the stability of the military balance between NATO and the Warsaw powers which has kept Europe at peace for over 30 years when 20 million people have been killed in wars outside Europe. NATO's nuclear strategy is an essential part of that balance. To threaten to upset that balance by refusing to let America base any of her nuclear weapons in Britain would make war more likely, not less, by tempting America into other and more dangerous strategies in which she was less dependent on the co-operation of her European allies."

That is part of a speech which was delivered by the right hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Healey) to the Labour party's policy school in 1981.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Did my right hon. Friend intend to refer to the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey)?

Mr. Steel: Yes. I am sure that my hon. Friend subscribes to the right hon. Gentleman's view as well.

The simple question is what has changed over the past six years to make that analysis wrong. If it was right in 1981, why is it not right now? I shall refer in part to the statements made by the deputy leader of the Labour party in 1983 when he, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), was analysing what went wrong with his party's policy in the general election. The first part of his statement has been quoted frequently but the second part is equally important. He said:

"We said that NATO remained our protection. But we refused to accept our NATO obligations."

That is it in a nutshell. If we believe that NATO should be our protection, it is necessary to maintain our NATO obligations.

Why is it that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East, who has served in a Labour Government as Secretary for Defence, and the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, who has served as a Foreign Office Minister, allowed the present leader of the Labour party to go on such an extraordinary tour around the United States, which could be subtitled "Death of a Salesman"? The right hon. Members for Leeds, East and for Sparkbrook know perfectly well the policy that Britain requires if it is to remain a member of NATO. They know that it is impossible to square the circle. It is possible to adopt a policy of abandoning entirely all nuclear weapons, or all weapons, if that is what one wishes——

Mr. Patrick Thompson *rose*——

Mr. Steel: No, I am not giving way.

It is possible to opt for that abandonment, but it would not then be possible to remain a loyal member of NATO.

Over the past four months I have talked to seven Foreign and Defence Ministers in Europe and not one of them believes that it is possible to pursue an abandonment policy and for NATO to remain intact as it is now. That is the view of our European allies across the political spectrum, across the divide.

There is nothing wrong with Members of this place and parties hoping to find political friends in the United States and hoping that the policies of one Government may change for another. Equally, there is no harm in hoping to enjoy a close relationship with those who may be in power in Washington. The Prime Minister had done precisely that with the present occupant of the White House. That has led us down strange avenues at times, with Libya, Iran, and an excessive worship of free market policies, but I do not criticise the basic strength of the political alliance.

Similarly, it is reasonable for Opposition parties to look for friends and allies in the United States. Over the past few months I have warmly welcomed the decision of the Democratic Institute to join Liberal International. Under that umbrella I have enjoyed conversations on these issues with people such as Walter Mondale and Senator Hart. They too have no time for the policy that is being advocated by the Opposition.

Congressman Solarz is a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and a regular friend and visitor to this Parliament. In a letter to me the other day he made it clear that the American people

"could hardly be expected to permit US forces to remain in Europe if we were stripped of our capacity to deter and, if necessary, defeat an attack against them".

That is it in a nutshell. If we do not allow the United States to have bases in Britain, why should we expect them to maintain forces in Europe to help to protect us? Let us remember that Senator Sam Munn's amendment was defeated only narrowly when it was put to the vote in the American Congress.

There is no serious body of United States political opinion which supports the Opposition's policy. The task of any future Government should be to seek to increase our influence in Washington and to strengthen the European pillar of NATO. The *Washington Post*, in a telling editorial that was printed on the day that the Leader of the Opposition arrived in the United States, said this:

[Mr. Steel]

"The strength of the Western alliance has never been purely or even primarily military. It has always depended on qualities of spirit and political conviction to which the European's contributions have been essential."

The reason for our motion is that we fear very much that if we are not careful there could be a future Government of this country that would not be prepared to make any such contribution.

8.8 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"rejects the non-nuclear defence policies of the Labour Party, based as they are on the abandonment of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent, the expulsion of United States nuclear forces and bases from Britain, and the withdrawal of Britain from the protection of the American nuclear umbrella, thus jeopardising the United Kingdom's security and the cohesion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; and the policies of the Liberal and Social Democratic Parties, which advocate the maintenance of a British nuclear capability below the minimum required to provide effective deterrence beyond the mid 1990s; and reaffirms its support for the Government's firm defence policies founded on the need to maintain credible nuclear and conventional forces for Britain within the NATO Alliance.".

I am nearer to being struck speechless at the beginning of contributing to a debate in this place than I have ever been before. That is the state in which I find myself after the truly extraordinary speech of the leader of the Liberal party, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Etterick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel). He appears to have embarked on an odd exercise. This is one of the rare occasions on which the right hon. Gentleman can choose a subject to be debated on the Floor of the House, and he has chosen a subject in the recognition that the country has been longing for weeks, indeed for months, to learn what, if anything, is the Liberal party's policy on defence. Against that background, he has tabled a motion in which the Liberal party's policies on defence are not mentioned. I did not think that the right hon. Gentleman could cap that extraordinary feat, but he has done so by the unusually extraordinary speech which he delivered in opening the debate, about which I shall make one or two brief comments.

The right hon. Gentleman complained that the Government should be criticised for there not being any drive towards increased emphasis on arms control and a reduction in weapons. Where has he been for the last few months? There is more discussion and more debate, and more effort is being made by the negotiators for arms reduction today than there has been for 25 or 30 years. That is entirely because the Government and their allies in the West, from a position of strength, have insisted on forcing the Soviet Union back to the negotiating table. If the right hon. Gentleman does not understand that, he simply cannot be giving any attention to the matters that face the country.

The right hon. Gentleman said that he was a firm believer in multinational disarmament. Jolly good. What did he say to the Liberal party assembly in Llandudno in 1981? He said:

"The Liberal Party in Parliament, especially in future, in government, must take heed of that mood and use its best efforts to promote unilateral disarmament."

He then went on to say that he was quite sure that a deterrent was needed for sound defence. The hon. Member for Leeds West (Mr. Meadowcroft) looked distinctly uncomfortable at that moment. He probably always does. I should like to know whether the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) agree with their leader's remark that a deterrent is needed. If they are of that view, I hope that they will say that clearly at the next CND rally that they attend.

The right hon. Gentleman went on to state—this is a remarkable passage, for which we are indebted to him—his alternatives to the Trident system. He started by saying that he had talked to so many academics that he did not know which system was best or worst. He thought that he would list them all. He had heard them paddling their own canoes and their own solutions. He said that he was convinced that the parties in opposition should not, and could not, make decisions until they were in government and able to know the facts. That is great, but he has made a decision, apparently with all the ignorance of opposition — that is his own description of it — to abandon the Trident system.

If the right hon. Gentleman does not know which system to buy or which system is the right system, how does he know that the Trident system is not right? Why is there not, in his list of six items, a seventh item? Why is there not a Trident system in the list for the right hon. Gentleman to tell us that he does not know either whether it should be abandoned or adopted? This part of what he said simply fell apart, and the attitude of the House reflected that in every way. The right hon. Gentleman failed lamentably in his one opportunity to put across some idea to the country of what the Liberals' defence policy is. If it is possible, we were far less clear about what it is or is not than we were before he spoke this evening, and that surely is a pity.

There are three options before us: there is the motion tabled by the right hon. Gentleman, an amendment tabled by my right hon. Friends and myself, and also an amendment tabled by the Leader of the Opposition. "Death of a Salesman" was the right hon. Gentleman's comment on the fortunes of the Leader of the Opposition in America at the moment. The Leader of the Opposition has great competition from the right hon. Gentleman himself, if it comes to unrealistic speeches on defence. After tonight's speech, he is in the top league.

The Labour party's amendment is a sad one. This is the first time that we have had an officially backed Labour party advocating the abandonment of Britain's independent nuclear strategy. Mr. Attlee, Mr. Bevan and Mr. Gaitskell must be turning in their graves this evening.

If we move from that aspect of the right hon. Gentleman's amendment and examine the words written in it, we see that the Opposition have the courage to put into their amendment a condemnation of Her Majesty's Government for cutting expenditure on non-nuclear defence. That is rich, coming from the right hon. Gentleman, whose party's last budget for defence was about £8 billion. Today, the budget for defence is nearly £19 billion. The budget is running at 20 per cent. higher in real terms than when the Labour party left office. Opposition Members have the cheek to state in their amendment that Her Majesty's Government are cutting expenditure on non-nuclear defence. If that is an example of the veracity and correctness of the drafting in the Labour party's department for doing these things, it calls into question the remainder of what it writes.

I do not have time to list yet again the threat that we in the West face from the superiority of conventional forces that face us in Europe. It is all in the White Paper. It has been repeated many times, so I shall not repeat it tonight. Nor is there any shortage of examples of places where the Soviet Union has used its military power, or threatened to use it, to achieve political aims. We should have to be blind indeed to forget the lessons of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan and Poland. It would be the height of folly for any British Government to follow the advice which the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale gave and which the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition is giving across the Atlantic with such a lack of success at the moment. It would be the height of folly for any British Government to gamble on the uncertain intentions of the Soviet Union by abandoning the policies that have secured our peace for over forty years.

Successive British Governments — Conservative and Labour — have pursued these policies by means of the collective security offered by membership of NATO. NATO exists solely to prevent war. Its whole strategy is defensive. For that strategy to work NATO must have —and be seen to have—sufficient forces to convince any potential aggressor that he has more to lose than to gain by an act of aggression. NATO requires for this purpose a range of forces—conventional and nuclear—to enable it to respond appropriately at whatever level aggression occurs. Of course, we cannot achieve parity with the Russians in every form of weaponry, but we must have sufficient forces to convince an aggressor that it would be in his interests to cease his attack and withdraw. The Labour party now tries to suggest that conventional forces alone can offer a credible deterrent. Even if a Labour Government spent every penny of the money that is being devoted to the Trident programme to increase conventional defence, that would do virtually nothing to alter the conventional imbalance in Europe.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Would it not also require national service to resume in this country?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend may be right. I would not be at all surprised if that were so. At the very most —being most generous to it—such a move might buy one or two extra armoured divisions, comprising an extra 300 tanks. What difference would 300 extra tanks make when the Soviet Union already has about 30,000 more tanks in Europe than NATO has? The Labour party is offering an uncertain protection against conventional attack, but no protection whatever against nuclear blackmail.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that that gap, as he sees it, can be bridged, or does he believe that it is unbridgeable?

Mr. Younger: By purely conventional means, the gap is definitely unbridgeable. It is unbridgeable even if we dig a ditch and put slurry into it—or whatever it is that the Leader of the Opposition has been trying to suggest. The concept of doubling or trebling the amount of all our hardware in Europe to try to match the vast amount of conventional hardware that meets it at present would not only be extremely difficult to achieve, and possibly involve national service, as my hon. Friend suggested, but would make life quite intolerable in those parts of western Europe where that hardware was supposed to be stationed.

Mr. Davies: In that case, why did the hon. Gentleman say to the IISS on 19 November that the gap was not unbridgeable in respect of the conventional gap?

Mr. Younger: The gap is bridged by the other means that NATO has to meet the threat. That is the point. That is not only what the right hon. Gentleman does not seem to understand, but it is the key factor in what the Leader of the Opposition patently does not understand and, as a result, is saying absurd things in America.

We yield to no one in our commitment to improve conventional defences. We have bought Tornado. We have bought new battle tanks and warships. We have bought new weapons, from small arms to artillery systems. We have made the pay of our forces fair and competitive. All these changes have made us safer, but, at the same time, we have faced the need to modernise our nuclear forces, recognising that nuclear weapons are absolutely central to NATO strategy. Britain's independent deterrent, which is committed to NATO, plays an important part in that strategy. It represents a second centre of nuclear decision-making within NATO. This complicates the ability of a potential aggressor to judge the likely response to any attack on NATO in Europe, and thereby reduces the chances of an attack.

Our deterrent is the ultimate guarantee of our security, but deterrence is a matter of perception. There can be no doubt about the commitment of the United States to the defence of Europe. The independent deterrent is our insurance policy against the risk of the Soviet Union miscalculating the strength of that commitment.

The Labour party would not just abandon our independent deterrent; it would forsake the protection of the United States nuclear shield as well. The right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) has some excuse, I suppose, for advocating such a dangerously naive policy. He has never had to shoulder the responsibilities of Government office. But there is no such excuse for the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey). I shall not repeat the apt quotation of the words of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East made by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale. It is a tragedy that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East does not stand up for what I think he still believes—the fact that NATO's nuclear strategy is an essential part of the balance that has kept the peace for more than 40 years. It is a pity that the right hon. Gentleman is no longer prepared to make such speeches.

The alarm felt in the United States at the Labour party's policies are not by any means confined to the present Administration. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale made a point on that. I shall quote the words of Mr. Stephen Solarz, a leading liberal Democratic Congressman, who said:

> "On this issue Mr. Weinberger speaks for most Americans. What Labour intends to do would bring the biggest crisis in the NATO Alliance since the Soviets built their wall in Berlin. The removal of our nuclear missiles would inevitably lead to the removal of all American troops from Britain. Our soldiers require the protection of the nuclear umbrella."

No wonder, with that background from a liberal Democrat, the Leader of the Opposition is having such a uniquely unsuccessful time in his efforts to sell this idea to the United States.

[Mr. Younger]

I hope the Labour party realises that, in effect, it is saying that if Britain were faced with the threat of aggression, a Labour Government would say to the Americans, "Stay out. We do not want the protection of your nuclear shield. We would prefer to surrender."

Not only does Britain need to retain its independent deterrent, but it needs to retain a deterrent that will work. If our capacity to deter is to remain unbroken well into the next century, we need to start modernising that deterrent now. I hope that the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale will note that point. We need to make this decision, not next week or next month, or in five or 10 years' time, but now. The right hon. Gentleman cannot put it off a day longer.

The life of our existing Polaris deterrent cannot be extended beyond the mid-1990s. By that time, Polaris will be 30 years old. The submarines will be nearing the end of their hull life, the ability of the boats to patrol undetected will be much less certain, and the ability of the missiles to penetrate strengthened anti-ballistic missile defences will be less assured than it is today. In 1980—not in 1986—this Government took the decision that Trident was the most cost-effective replacement for Polaris. It can be delivered in the time scale required and at a price we can afford. More important, it offers a deterrent with the minimum capacity necessary to remain effective in the face of improving Soviet capabilities.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the answer to the question, "What is the missile system that is needed to penetrate the increasingly sophisticated defences of Moscow?" might well be, "Trident"? If asked a slightly different question, "What do we need to deter in terms of inflicting unacceptable damage on the Soviet Union?", there is a different answer, because a range of other systems, including Polaris, open up. Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that on 12 October 1986, on "This Week, Next Week", he said that we need

"to have a larger number of warheads to be able to penetrate what will be very much more sophisticated defences. That is the whole reason why we need Trident. If we didn't have that we could carry on Polaris for a long time to come"?

Mr. Younger: I am mystified about the point that the hon. Gentleman is trying to make. What he says might carry some weight if we had some idea of his view on what we should do, but, as he has no idea, and as the leader of the Liberal party has made it clear that he has no idea and will not even try to get such an idea for years to come, the whole exercise of a defence policy in the Liberal party is a complete non-event from start to finish.

Over the life of the programme, Trident will take only 3 per cent. of the total defence budget, or 6 per cent. of the equipment budget. That is a smaller slice of the defence budget than some conventional programmes, such as Tornado. The Trident programme is well on course. It is six years since the decision was taken to purchase it. Nearly £3 billion of a total £10 billion has been spent or committed already. The first submarine keel has been laid.

Of course, there are those who suggest that this programme should be abandoned, and we heard something of that today. On that sort of logic, at this stage in the programme, in another context we should build half the Channel tunnel, then stop and start building a bridge instead. Such people suggest that Trident represents a massive escalation of our nuclear capability. Only the other day I read that the office of the Leader of the Opposition had produced an information paper claiming that Trident represented an increase in our firepower of between eight and 14 times. If that is an information paper, I think that a "misinformation paper" would be a far more accurate description.

It is no secret, and never has been, that Trident will carry more warheads than Polaris—but far less than the theoretical maximum. This means that the increase at most would be about two and a half times—nothing like the eight or 14 times that has been bandied about. I point out that, since 1970, Soviet strategic warhead numbers have increased fivefold. Even if current proposals for 50 per cent. cuts in strategic arsenals are agreed and go through, the number of Soviet warheads will be three times as high as in 1970.

This enhanced capability is essential if Britain is to continue to have a credible deterrent well into the next century. The replacement for Polaris will have to operate in a quite different environment from the one in which Polaris operates today. We have to plan for the improvements which the Soviets are making to their own defences.

Let us not forget that they possess the only deployed anti-ballistic missile system in the world. If our deterrent is to work, it must have an increased capability to penetrate increased defences. If Polaris represents the minimum deterrent in today's world, Trident is the equivalent of that minimum deterrent in tomorrow's world.

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that Trident permits far greater deployment of the submarines to avoid detection than any of the schemes suggested by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel)?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is right. Indeed, I was going to touch briefly on that aspect in a moment. The alternatives of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale were so incredible in all their aspects that we need not take them as seriously as that.

It would be perverse for any party to accept the need for Britain to have an independent deterrent and then to choose one that did not work, but that is exactly the compromise which the leader of the Liberal Party and his allies have come up with after months of wrangling—a policy to maintain a nuclear capability below the minimum required to provide an effective deterrent beyond the mid-1990s. I have explained why that is so. The latest flimsy attempt at a compromise — the so-called Liberal "defence initiative" — proposed the cancellation of Trident and the retention of a minimum nuclear capability with a capacity frozen at a level no greater than that of Polaris.

The Liberal party, as we have heard this evening, cannot even say what that capability will be. It does not know what system it will be, who will operate it, how big it will be or when it will be ready. In addition, the Liberal party wants a long time to think about it before it even decides any of these matters. It claims that a decision is not yet needed. That policy is nothing short of a policy for one-sided nuclear disarmament by the back door, and it is no wonder that the hon. Member for Leeds, West supports it and feels that he can live with it.

Mr. Steel: I have had a quick look at my 1981 speeches and find that there is no such quotation. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will get the Conservative central office to alter his briefing. Surely he accepts that if we go for a minimum deterrent capacity which does not seek to strike at Moscow we can have a level of safeguard on penetration and survivability and costs that are lower than those in the Trident programme. Let us admit that there is a difference of opinion between us, but let him not try to pretend that the system is unworkable. The right hon. Gentleman sets the ground rules, and if he wants to attack Moscow he must have Trident. We do not.

Mr. Younger: I have not mentioned attacking Moscow. We make no pretence about naming targets in our discussions on this. The problem is whether a missile system will get through the defences, never mind the target that is being attacked. It has to be realistic and credible, and the right hon. Gentleman's suggestion is not credible.

The Liberal party says that it has a number of alternatives, and in his speech the right hon. Gentleman listed some extraordinary ones. They are all a mirage. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said that to use French ballistic missiles would not even be cheaper than Trident. He admitted that they would be much more expensive. I shall go further by saying that such a system could not possibly be developed in time to replace Polaris in the mid-1990s, when Polaris will be at the end of its useful life. To run Polaris beyond then is neither a realistic nor a safe option. A deterrent based on cruise missiles is also unrealistic.

The range of submarine-launched cruise missiles is shorter than Trident, the sea room in which the submarines will be forced to operate is more limited and the missiles take longer to fire. For all these reasons, cruise missiles would be more vulnerable and their ability to penetrate Soviet defences, whatever they were trying to hit, by the year 2000 could certainly not be assured. To overcome the problem would require more missiles at even greater cost, and even then it would be inconceivable that any effective cruise missile alternative could be developed and deployed in time to replace Polaris.

There are signs in the alliance of back-tracking even on this. The right hon. Member for Devonport is at last beginning to realise the truth of this awkwardness, too. What other explanation could there be for the recent shift in his position when reviewing the options for a British minimum deterrent in a BBC TV programme on 18 November? In that programme he spoke about

"a very much reduced Trident missile, with reduced deployment—three submarines and less warheads".

That seems a most extraordinary volte-face by the right hon. Gentleman and completely conflicts with what his right hon. Friend said in this debate, which amounted to an outright rejection of Trident in any circumstances.

It seems unlikely that the Liberal party would endorse any option based on Trident, and to judge from what he said I am sure that the hon. Member for Leeds, West would not do so. The recent Liberal party conference at Eastbourne repeatedly voted in support of unilateralist views. Unless the alliance can make up its mind on an issue as important as the future of the British independent deterrent, it will have no right to be taken seriously.

Why are we having this debate? The right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Liberal party uses precious time for this matter, but he has been exposed as an emperor without clothes. In spite of that, he has come along today to flaunt his nakedness on this vital subject. His motion puts the Government in quite a difficulty. As far as it goes, I agree wholeheartedly with the right hon. Gentleman's motion, but as a motion on defence for Britain it is totally inadequate because it does not even mention any positive policy by the party which has tabled it. For that reason I ask my hon. Friends to vote against the motion and to add the sound and sensible policy outlined in our amendment.

8.36 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): This is not the only occasion on which we can debate the conventional balance or imbalance. It is a difficult subject and we shall have to come back to it on another occasion. Nobody denies that an imbalance exists, the question is how much and in what areas. The Secretary of State sought to give the impression that the gap was not bridgeable. He said that the only way it could be bridged—if that is the right word because one is in a different area—is by nuclear weapons.

As I understand it, that is not what the right hon. Gentleman said on 19 November when he spoke to the Institute of Strategic Studies. I have the report of that speech but I shall check it and come back to it. Quoting the right hon. Gentleman it says he said: "the gap is not unbridgeable". There is nothing there about bridging it with nuclear weapons. He also said:

"we do maintain a technological superiority in a number of key areas".

He also said something else that I was glad to read. He said:

"simple number crunching can be misleading".

That is what we have had from the Secretary of State and his predecessor in speech after speech on the Defence Estimates. They indulged in simple number crunching—how many tanks they have and how many we have. In his speech to the Institute of Strategic Studies he went on to say:

"IISS figures are broadly similar to the MoD's"

The IISS figures did not show an unbridgeable gap in conventional defence. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman should go back and check some of the things he has said in order to make sure that he is not saying one thing to a group of so-called experts and something else in this House.

The Secretary of State asked why we were having this debate. Having listened to the leader of the Liberal party it seems to be that the only reason is the right hon. Gentleman's desperate desire—although he was not very successful — to paper over the cracks in his party's defence policy and the policy of what is apparently described as the alliance. I am sorry to say that he did not make a serious contribution to these fundamental and difficult issues.

The right hon. Gentleman hardly addressed himself to the motion. The motion says nothing about Britain's independent nuclear deterrent. *[Interruption.]* The amendment was not tabled by the right hon. Gentleman. We are debating the motion and I shall try to stick more closely to it than did the right hon. Gentleman. Perhaps I shall get into trouble in this difficult area, but in these matters I am a masochist and I am quite happy to carry on.

The right hon. Gentleman got himself into terrible difficulties when he tried to pretend that somehow there

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

was some alternative to Trident. We agree with the Government about Trident and believe that decisions have to be taken, if not now, pretty soon, and as far as we can see Trident is the only option if one wants to go down the road of acquiring a third generation of British nuclear weaponry. We do not think that it is necessary to go down that road, and believe for all sorts of reasons that it is foolish. We have debated that in the House before and will be quite happy to debate it again. At least the Labour party has a clear view on that and so has the Government, but the Liberal leadership and the Social Democratic party are still wallowing in a hopeless and hypocritical fudge.

The motion is quite extraordinary. The leader of the Liberal party mentioned Reykjavik. I shall come back to that. He also spoke about disarmament and the need to cut strategic weapons. However, the motion says nothing about that.

Coming from the Liberal party, the motion is quite extraordinary. Conservative Members may agree with the motion, although I understand that the Secretary of State intends to vote against it. The confusion deepens in that respect. However, the motion gives complete and unquestioning support to the NATO strategy of what is described by its advocates as the "flexible response" and by its detractors as the "strategy of first use of nuclear weapons". The choice of phrase depends upon one's position in the argument. However, the motion gives total and uncritical support to the policy of first use.

The motion appears to me to have a whiff of arrogance and absolutism. We may have heard the voice of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) in the Chamber today, but I detect the hand of Esau in the motion. I certainly would not have expected this kind of motion to be tabled by the leader of the Liberal party.

There is overwhelming support for the first half-sentence of the alliance motion, which reads:

"That this House reaffirms its support for Britain's continued membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation".

At conference after conference, the Labour party has by massive majorities fully supported our membership of NATO. We have repeatedly made it clear—and I do so again now—that under the next Labour Government, 95 per cent.—as under this Government—of defence expenditure will be committed to NATO in terms of men and equipment.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Look what happened to New Zealand.

Mr. Davies: If the hon. Lady wishes to intervene, I suggest that she rises.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: I am delighted to do that. I did not think that the right hon. Gentleman would give way.

An American Senator made it clear at the weekend that if American nuclear weapons were chucked out of Britain — weapons which defend American troops in this country—there is no way in which the Americans would allow us to remain in NATO.

Mr. Davies: The hon. Lady's intervention was very interesting. She said

"There is no way in which the Americans would allow us to remain in NATO."

Is she suggesting that they would not let this country—which contributes £18 billion or £19 billion, which has 55,000 troops on the Rhine, with its Air Force on the central front, with its frigates, destroyers and submarines in the eastern Atlantic—remain in NATO? I am sorry that I gave way to the hon. Lady if that is the kind of point that she wants to make. No country can do more, and we will make a contribution of 95 per cent. of our defence expenditure to NATO.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): That is 95 per cent. of damn all.

Mr. Davies: I must say that 95 per cent. or £19 billion is quite a lot. The hon. Gentleman is being very insulting to the British troops in Germany.

Mr. Sayeed: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: Not yet. He is very insulting to the British Forces in Germany who are there to defend and work within NATO and who may have to give their lives. It is extremely insulting for the hon. Gentleman to say that that is "damn all".

Mr. Sayeed: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: No, I will not give way.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): We do not have time to give way to people like the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Davies: We will cancel Trident. As we have said before, we will use the money saved by the cancellation of Trident for non-nuclear defence, and in that way we shall strengthen the conventional balance—about which the Secretary of State is concerned — and especially in central Europe.

Mr. Sayeed: Give way.

Mr. Davies: There is no time for me to give way.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: The right hon. Gentleman attacked my hon. Friend and he should give way.

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman attacked me first.

Mr. Sayeed: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way very briefly?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is very clear to me that the right hon. Gentleman is not giving way.

Mr. Davies: We cannot support the remainder of the Liberal party motion and, it seems, neither can the Government. It gives almost total and uncritical support to the strategy of first use of nuclear weapons. Under that strategy, in the first few days of a conventional war NATO could well, and probably would, seek to fight a nuclear war in central Europe. That strategy would destroy the very territory that we would be seeking to defend and it would annihilate friend and foe alike.

Mr. Sayeed: Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm whether the Labour party intends to maintain defence spending — if it ever forms a Government — at the current rate in real terms?

Mr. Davies: Yes.

Mr. Wallace: I understand that it is Labour party policy to bring defence spending as a percentage of the gross national product in line with that of other European nations. Will he tell us the timescale involved as that would imply a reduction in defence spending?

Mr. Davies: That is not possible, and would not be possible within the lifetime of the first Labour Government. Our priority is to get rid of nuclear weapons. The corollary to that priority must be to spend on conventional forces the money saved by getting rid of nuclear weapons, thereby improving the conventional balance about which the Secretary of State is so concerned.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. Will he set out precisely what that money will be spent upon as an enhancement of conventional forces?

Mr. Davies: Indeed, if the hon. Gentleman wishes me to prolong my speech I shall do that. There are areas within the Royal Navy where money could be spent. The Secretary of State will not be able to maintain even 50 frigates and destroyers. Some of the money will be spent on that. So far, the Secretary of State has put no money into the budget for the European fighter aircraft. We are committed to the European fighter aircraft. Much could also be done in the Army—*[Interruption.]* I know that Conservative Members do not like this, and that it is difficult for them to accept. However, I will continue to repeat in the House and in the media that the next Labour Government will maintain defence spending at present levels in real terms taking account of inflation — or whatever the phrase is—and that money will be spent on conventional forces.

As I have said clearly, we are opposed to the strategy of first use of nuclear weapons. There is a strong implication in the motion that we cannot remain in NATO with our present policy. The motion implies that, apparently, the independent sovereign and democratic states that constitute the NATO Alliance have no rights to challenge any real aspect of NATO strategy, however foolish that might appear and despite the fact that their electorates have voted for such a challenge. That is not the NATO that most of the NATO states themselves recognise or desire.

NATO is not a monolithic grouping. It is not a tight federation in which states have a veto on the policies of other members and nations. It is not the Warsaw pact—although, from the speeches of some Conservative Members, it might appear to be the Warsaw pact. It is not. It is a collection of individual nation states that make a contribution to the defence of democracy and of the West.

Mr. Steel: Does the right hon. Gentleman seriously believe that other European members of NATO would be willing to maintain their share of the nuclear umbrella while allowing a British Government under his auspices to pull out of the responsibility?

Mr. Davies: I am intrigued at the idea of a "share of the nuclear umbrella" but I will come back to that. I shall not evade the right hon. Gentleman's question, although the nuclear umbrella was not mentioned in his motion or in his speech.

NATO is not the Warsaw pact. It is made up of independent sovereign states. The worst thing that could happen and which could lead to the break-up of NATO would be if the democratic peoples of the nation states of western Europe and the United States were not allowed to change or argue for change in NATO policy. Such fetters on democratic action would endanger NATO far more than any challenge to parts of its policy.

In January 1986 the Secretary-General of NATO, Lord Carrington, said that in NATO

"anything is possible; there are no hard and fast rules".

I think that he went too far there. He was too lax about it. I should not go so far as to say that anything goes in NATO and that there are no rules at all. Of course there are rules. The rules are that each member country makes a substantial contribution, according to its resources, to the collective defence of western Europe. That is the NATO that most member states recognise.

The rigidity of NATO implied in the motion does not accord with the actions of individual states in the past. Almost half the members of NATO will not have American nuclear weapons on their soil, but they are still members of NATO and still make their contributions according to their lights.

So far as I can see, the British Government take little account of the views of NATO in their defence cuts. I do not criticise the Secretary of State for his absence, as he told me why he had to leave, but it is extraordinary to pretend that there have been no cuts in defence expenditure. One has only to look at the public expenditure review for the next three years to know that. I do not recollect the Government seeking NATO approval for their cuts in defence expenditure. Sir John Nott, whose 1981 defence review would have decimated the surface fleet, paid little regard to our NATO commitments in the eastern Atlantic. He did not tell the House that he could not reduce the surface fleet because NATO would not allow it. He simply went ahead. He may have mumbled a few words about consultation, although I am not even sure about that.

As for the United States, when President Reagan made his famous star wars strategic defence initiative speech in 1983 he declared that nuclear weapons were immoral and should be made obsolete. In the first sentence of that speech he unilaterally turned on its head 40 years of NATO nuclear strategy. I do not recollect any consultation before that speech was made, and I do not criticise President Reagan on that account. I do not recall the Ministry of Defence having a forward draft of the speech. The President simply exercised his right as the head of a sovereign state to make that speech. If the Conservatives think that is all over now, they should realise that the consequences of that momentous unilateral action are only just becoming apparent. No British Prime Minister, Labour or Tory, no previous American President and perhaps even no general secretary of the Soviet Communist party had ever made such a statement, but the President of the United States unilaterally turned NATO strategy on its head.

President Reagan did the same thing at Reykjavik to such an extent that General Rogers rushed off to the Pentagon and General Metz, the German deputy supreme commander of NATO, almost had apoplexy, saying that Reagan had destroyed the whole of NATO strategy. I do not recall there being much consultation before that action, but again it was taken by a member of NATO. Perhaps Lord Carrington is right that there are no real rules.

The motion goes on to make the extraordinary claim that the abandonment of British nuclear missiles is incompatible with NATO membership.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): I apologise for missing the beginning of the right hon. Gentleman's

[Mr. Cecil Franks]

speech. He has referred to the Americans and others saying that nuclear weapons were immoral. I remind him that his own party regards nuclear energy as dangerous and is committed to phasing it out. I have asked him this several times before but have not received an answer. What would a Labour Government do about hunter-killer submarines, which are powered by nuclear energy? How does the right hon. Gentleman square his party's commitment to phasing out nuclear energy with the continuation of submarines which are, in effect, floating nuclear power stations?

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman asks what we would do about hunter-killer submarines. My answer is that we shall build more of them, and we shall build them at Barrow.

Mr. Franks: How does the right hon. Gentleman square that with closing Sellafield?

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman has had the answer before. If he reads his local newspapers and listens to his local radio station he will hear the answer time and again.

The motion implies that abandoning Britain's nuclear rockets, missiles, deterrent or whatever is incompatible with NATO membership.

Mr. Steel: The right hon. Gentleman is not reading it properly.

Mr. Davies: Let us see exactly what it says, as the right hon. Gentleman never touched on this although he spoke for 20 minutes. The motion states:

"That this House . . . believes that membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the security of Britain are incompatible with a policy which combines"—whatever that means—

"the unilateral abandonment of Britain's nuclear deterrent".

The implication is that if we did not abandon Britain's nuclear deterrent everything would be all right, but I will leave that point and move on.

Let us consider the next part of the motion, to which I gather the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale subscribes, which suggests that it is incompatible with membership of NATO to expel from Britain the United States nuclear contribution——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Expulsion.

Mr. Davies: I shall consider that word in a moment, but I wish to dwell on the word "incompatible".

I notice that the Government amendment—of course the Government draft these things a little more carefully than the Opposition — does not use the word incompatible. It is not as extreme, rigid or inflexible as the motion tabled by the leader of the Liberal party. It contains some rather vague phrases about gloom, doom and so on.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: There is nothing vague about it.

Mr. Davies: I ask you for your protection, Mr. Speaker. The Government's motion talks about cohesion and jeopardising in a rather vague way. The Government do not dare to say that not having nuclear weapons on the soil of a nation state is incompatible with membership of NATO, as they know that is not the case. The moment the Government say that it is incompatible with membership of NATO, that signifies that somewhere there are rules laid down, and presumably they have been broken by seven NATO countries including Norway and Denmark. The Government do not dare to use the word "incompatible" because they are concerned about the other countries of NATO. They, at least, have some regard for reality because they will not say—I challenge the Minister to do so—whether it is incompatible—I use that word because it is a clear word—with membership of NATO. Of course it is not, and the Government know that.

Let us consider the American nuclear contribution in Britain. We have Poseidon submarines at Holy loch, cruise missiles at Greenham common and hydrogen or nuclear bombs at Lakenheath and Upper Heyford. Our contention is that their removal from Britain would not militarily damage NATO in any way. Even the United States navy admits that Poseidon submarines at Holy loch are of rapidly diminishing importance. That navy is now in the process of being equipped with the newer Trident C4 system which, according to congressional statements can cover the potential targets on departure from their base in Kings Bay, Georgia without the need for a lengthy transit.

The cruise missiles at Greenham common should never have come here in the first place. They certainly were not placed here for military reasons. No sensible military man would put nuclear missiles on land in such a small and somewhat cramped island like Britain. Richard Perle put it clearly in the *Boston Globe* of 2 June 1983:

"cruise missiles never had much military utility because they are so vulnerable to attack."

In the same year, in an interview with Newsweek, Robert MacNamara said:

"There is no military requirement for NATO to deploy Pershing II and cruise missiles to maintain a stable deterrent."

Cruise missiles are at Greenham common mainly because Chancellor Schmidt, egged on by Henry Kissinger, started to have grave doubts about the American nuclear umbrella, but I gather that Dr. Kissinger does not think much about that umbrella these days.

Chancellor Schmidt thought that the rather shattered concept of a nuclear umbrella could be patched up by apparently scattering nuclear missiles all around Europe. If those missiles are in Europe, so the argument goes, an American President is more likely, or more certain, to risk the nuclear destruction of Washington in the defence of Hamburg, London or any other European city.

The presence of missiles in Britain does nothing to remove or diminish the dilemma that such a President would face. An American President, whose first duty, quite properly, is to his people, would properly make such a decision, at that time, in the interests of the American people—the people he represents.

Mr. Franks *rose*——

Mr. Davies: No, I must get on. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] I would be happy to give way, but others wish to speak so I must get on.

The F111 aircraft are described in the jargon of this business as being dual capable. Some are held back to drop nuclear bombs on the battlefields after the first few days of a war in Europe. It does not make any sense to drop hydrogen bombs all around the battlefields. It will not do much good for that part of Europe that we are trying to defend. It will not do much good for the 55,000 British

troops stationed on the Rhine or the 200,000 American troops in Germany. It does not make any sense and it is not a credible military policy.

At one time flexible response may have made total sense. It might have made sense when the United States had a nuclear monopoly or indeed a massive nuclear superiority. It might have made sense in 1964 when the Soviet Union had 65 nuclear warheads and when, according to Kissinger, the United States had about 1,000. But it makes no sense at all today when the United States has 11,000 nuclear warheads and the Soviet Union about the same.

What I find depressing about the debate, the Liberal motion and the Government's amendment is the fact there is no recognition at all of the changes that have taken place in Europe over the last 30 years. There is no real recognition of Chernobyl—Chernobyl might not have happened and Reykjavik might not have taken place. Ironically, the real debate on these matters is, surprisingly enough, taking place within the Republican Administration of the United States and between the Republican Administration and what I call the Henry Jackson tendency within the Democratic party.

I crave the indulgence of the House merely to quote from a interview that George Shultz, the Secretary of State, gave to Frank Lehrer on American television on 17 October following the Reykjavik meeting. George Shultz said:

"But I think it would be a better world from our point of view if we didn't have these offensive ballistic missiles. And apparently the Soviets think so from their point of view too.

Lehrer: What about Senator Nunn's concern, however"——

I remind the House that as well as being a member of the Henry Jackson tendency Senator Nunn is also the Senator for Kings Bay Georgia——

"that it would make for a less stable world"

to get rid of these ballistic missiles.

"It would make for a less stable world. It would make our defense more vulnerable than they are now.

Shultz: What's so good about a world where you can be wiped out in 30 minutes? If ever anything starts, 30 minutes later it's over with these awesome ballistic misssiles, and there's nothing left of them"——

that is, the Russians——

"and there's nothing left of us. I don't see what's so good about that".

He went on:

"If you say, 'why, then, is the Soviet Union interested?' The Soviet Union has shown over many wars that they're heroic in defending their homeland. How they'll do invading somebody else is another question, but they're heroic in defending their homeland. And so they also must be concerned about the ballistic missiles that we have that can wipe that homeland out. So that's basically the essence of it."

Mr. Patrick Thompson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure you are aware that the opening speeches from the Front Benches have now taken one hour 20 minutes, leaving 54 minutes for the replies and Back Benchers. I hope that you will give your mind to that.

Mr. Speaker: I have given my mind to it, but I have no authority to stop it.

Mr. Davies: I should point out that two speeches were made by the Conservative Front Bench and the Leader of the Liberal party which were highly critical of the policies of the Opposition. I think I am entitled to take slightly longer. Incidentally, there were also a number of interventions. I was chided for not giving way, although I was happy to do so. I apologise to the House, but I shall now bring my remarks to a close.

All I can say is that the debate goes on. It does not go on in the Liberal motion. The Government are burying their head in the sand and, sadly, it seems that the Liberal party is doing so as well.

9.4 pm

Mr. Julian Critchley (Aldershot): A lifetime on the Back Benches has at least enabled me to keep my speeches short. In *The Standard* yesterday there was a MORI poll on the position of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal parties. Why was that? It surely cannot be anything that we have done. Playing away in Australia is no way to win a victory, but we owe our new-found success to the defence policies of the Labour and Liberal parties. We owe it to the so-called non-nuclear defence policy of the Labour party. That non-nuclear defence policy has put a cap on the votes that the Labour party will win at the next election. I have a cheerful feeling that history is about to repeat itself. We should not forget the Liberal party. The battle at Eastbourne, otherwise described as the lightweight championship of the world, at which I was present, has done marvels for the support of the Conservative party all over the country.

What would be the effect of Labour's non-nuclear policy on the United States? To put it in a nutshell, it would add hugely to what has already become an inglorious state of confusion. NATO is a nuclear Alliance or it is nothing. For as long as our adversaries have nuclear weapons, so should NATO. We can argue whether the British should have weapons, but we are unable to assert that NATO should become a non-nuclear Alliance in a nuclear world.

Surely the almost unanimous view in Washington is that if a major nuclear power such as Britain were ever to give the United States notice to quit, we would run a serious risk of starting the process of unravelling NATO. We must ask whether that would matter. Everyone, save the Labour party, thinks that it would. Russia fears not just Western or western European arms alone, but our ideas and prosperity. An unarmed Europe would be a political threat to the Soviet Union and would be an acute political threat to its control over eastern Europe, but an armed and independent Europe would pose an even greater threat than an unarmed Europe. The Alliance must remain essential for East-West stability.

On British nuclear weapons, Labour has surrendered to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament while at the same time remaining committed to our membership of NATO. But the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament remains hostile to our membership of NATO. Therefore, should we not ask when the process of the Labour party being subsumed within the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament will end? For as long as the Warsaw pact has nuclear weapons, a NATO without nuclear weapons would be a sham. It is no good advocating a defence policy in central Europe which is based on no first use—certainly not if we are to postulate that the Soviet Union is the aggressor, that we are the weaker of the two sides and that we would face defeat in a war fought with conventional weapons.

No first use is fool's gold. All that one can aspire to — conceivably by spending more money on British conventional forces in Europe — is no early first use. That is the practical side of the dilemma. Where is the

[Mr. Julian Critchley]

morality in Britain hitching a ride on the back of United States nuclear power? Where is the common sense in expelling from our country the nuclear forces of our major ally? Those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the next speaker, I must say that the Front Bench speeches will begin at 9.40 pm. I appeal for short contributions because many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate.

9.14 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): What is already apparent from the debate is the confusion on defence policy in the majority of the parties whose members have spoken in the debate thus far. The confusion on the Tory Benches was not as clear tonight as it has been in previous debates on defence, but there is a clear contradiction between the continuing residual commitment of large sections of the Conservative party to the notion of deterrence, and the removal of that option according to the latest thinking on United States policy. It does not make sense for the Tory party to continue to endorse deterrence, which relies upon mutual destruction, while its senior ally apparently regards that as immoral. The Prime Minister's approach in seeking to save Trident after the Reykjavik summit shows that the Government are determined to hang on to a deterrent which is no longer regarded as credible or moral.

We have also heard from the Conservative party, although not tonight, that we should support the strategic defence initiative research project and that there should be an SDI shield for Europe. However, expert scientific opinion on both sides of the Atlantic seems to believe that that is completely impossible.

Although the Government reiterate in their amendment to the alliance motion their broad defence approach, it contains a series of fundamental contradictions. There are also contradictions in the alliance defence policy, although we heard little about such a policy this evening. The right hon. Member for Llannelli (Mr. Davies) stressed that point. We did not hear much about the minimum European deterrent that has been canvassed, what delivery systems that would have and how it would operate. That is right, because the system could hardly be called a contribution to disarmament. It would contribute to an escalation in nuclear weapons in Europe——

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): It is not a policy.

Mr. Thomas: I am told from a sedentary position that it is not a policy. We were not told clearly tonight what the policy is. If that is not the policy, what is? I was under the impression, from following the internal debates and reading the joint commission document, that this might be the policy. Now we are told that it is not. It is clear that such a policy would lead to conflict between the more nuclearised states in Western Europe—France, Britain and, presumably, West Germany — and the rest of Europe.

We should approach defence policy so that the next generation in Britain and in Europe sees the non-nuclear contribution that Britain can make to de-escalating the arms race in Europe. It is important to stress that the non-nuclear defence option that is contained in the CND programme — the Labour party officially supports that programme — is a scaling down of Britain's defence posture. After all, a non-nuclear capability can mean many things. It starts with the decommissioning of Britain's nuclear weapons and it is followed by a requirement for the removal of some nuclear bases from British territory, although not necessarily — as in the Labour party's policy—of the intelligence and control capability. It also extends to an attempt to de-nuclearise NATO strategy in Europe by moving away from the first-use strategy and the reliance by NATO in Europe on nuclear weapons.

Finally, the approach should lead to questioning the notion of the United States nuclear guarantee as security for Europe. That is what we mean by moving towards non-nuclear defence. The long-term goal must be the construction of a European security system that is determined not by the super-powers but by Europeans themselves. That is what might have been agreed at Reykjavik.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Thomas: I shall not give way because of the time factor and because of Mr. Speaker's request.

Mr. Bowen Wells: Mr. Speaker is not the arbiter of whether an hon. Member should give way.

Mr. Thomas: I shall not give way. I am coming to a rapid conclusion, and I do not wish to interfere with my delivery system.

The emphasis after Reykjavik should be an understanding among Europeans that if it is legitimate for intermediate nuclear forces talks between the super-powers to propose the removal of nuclear weapons in Europe, it is high time that Europeans took part in such discussions. That is the lesson that we must learn from Reykjavik.

9.19 pm

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): This debate is about deterrence and disarmament, or should be. Three arguments are popularly advanced against the possession of Trident.

First, it is argued that Trident would represent an increase in the level of nuclear forces, so would be likely to be in breach of the non-proliferation treaty. I must say to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) that while it is true that Trident will enhance the capability compared with Polaris, that is inevitable, given that we must provide an effective deterrent well into the next century to face improved Soviet anti-missile defences. It has been made clear that the Government do not intend to use the full capability of the system. Indeed, when it enters service in the 1990s, Trident will represent only the same small proportion of Soviet strategic forces, even if they are reduced along the lines of the United States START proposals, as did Polaris when it entered service in 1970. United Kingdom strategic forces will continue to be of a minimum size compatible with ensuring a cost-effective deterrent at all times.

The second argument is that we should not have nuclear weapons because other NATO countries do not. The most persuasive argument in favour of nuclear weapons in Europe is that that provides a second centre

of decision-making. If we are not to be that second centre, where is it to be? Is it seriously suggested that it should rest alone with France – a country which does not commit its military forces, other than its navy, to NATO exercises? It is suggested that there might be a joint agreement with France, but surely that is wholly impractical and undesirable.

The third reason is the cost of Trident. Yet it is now well understood that it will cost less than the Tornado aircraft system. It is the cheapest form of deterrent available.

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) told us that politicians in opposition should not take this decision, so he has disfranchised himself from making any decisions. I can understand that when he iterates the various options and cannot determine which should be preferred. He spoke of extending the life of Polaris. Presumably when his car is falling to pieces on his drive, he merely pretends that its life will be extended and that he will not have to replace it. He suggested putting cruise missiles into aircraft without contemplating the disadvantages of range and vulnerability. He also suggested that cruise missiles could be put into SSNs, without contemplating the reduction in their effectiveness in their primary role.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli argued his case for the Labour party, but his party is destined to make the same mistake as it did in 1983, because it has yet to understand that some of its staunchest supporters believe in the defence of the realm and will not be persuaded by a party which leaves the country completely defenceless.

The United States Congress is in advance of this House on the support for a comprehensive test ban treaty. We are closer to the mechanics of a proper nuclear weapons control agreement than we have been for a long time. Neither side will trust the other on an arms deal, unless such an agreement is capable of adequate verification. Therein lies the key.

The Government's commitment to a comprehensive test ban treaty is often overlooked by the so-called peace lobby. As early as 27 March 1982, in a speech at Harrogate, the Prime Minister stated:

"We want a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty . . . it remains this Government's objective."

That commitment to a verifiable comprehensive test ban treaty has been reiterated by Ministers subsequently.

Together with the United States and the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom participated fully from 1977 to 1980 in trilateral negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty. The United Kingdom has played a full and active part in multilateral discussions at the Geneva conference on disarmament, where a nuclear test ban working group was established in 1982. In a debate on 7 June 1985 my right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) than a Minister in the Foreign Office, pointed out:

"we are not looking for perfect or 100 per cent. verification." —[*Official Report*, 7 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 617.]

As a signatory of the non-proliferation treaty, we are required to show that we are using our best endeavours to make progress towards nuclear disarmament. The final declaration of the third review conference of the NPT held in Geneva from August to September 1985 called upon the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom to reconvene their trilateral negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty by the end of 1985. We all know that that has not yet happened. Although our commitment to a comprehensive test ban treaty is not unique, we have a particular role to play in acting as a catalyst and in seeking to remove obstacles.

The British Government have submitted a paper to the conference on disarmament entitled "Seismic Monitoring for a Comprehensive Test Ban", which is a full and technical document dealing with the matter, and acknowledges that seismic monitoring offers the only practical long-range means of ensuring compliance with a treaty banning underground nuclear weapon test explosions.

The United Kingdom's paper argues that a negotiated ban on underground nuclear testing would demand setting up a global seismic network for monitoring at teleseismic ranges. It concludes that such a network would serve to detect and identify all normal underground test explosions with yields greater than the 1 kiloton. However, it is believed that with the development of the high frequency seismometer, explosions as small as one tenth of a kiloton can be identified.

In 1984, a group of six world leaders came together in New Delhi and issued a joint statement of their intention to become a third party in arms negotiations between the super-powers, known as the five continents peace initiative. That initiative has been promoted by Parliamentarians Global Action, an international body of some 600 Members of Parliament from 36 different countries, to which many British Members of Parliament belong.

From October 1985, the six had continuing correspondence with President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev on the issues of a testing moratorium and verification of arms control agreements. In November 1985, at the Geneva summit, one major obstacle to the advance of verification measures was removed by the Soviet Union reaffirming that it was prepared to have internal seismographic stations installed on its own territory. That was a major shift from earlier policy in the 1960s, when it was the Americans who wanted on-site verification and the Soviets who claimed that it would be an unwarranted intrusion into their sovereignty.

In the summer of 1985, Parliamentarians Global Action commissioned a scientific study on verification of a time-limited testing moratorium, the first study of its kind, which was written by three top American seismologists. The conclusions of that study encouraged the group of six to make a series of verification proposals to the United States and the USSR. In April 1986, officers of Parliamentarians Global Action met Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze and other high-level officials to discuss verification of a test ban.

Shevardnadze said that his country would permit seismic devices provided by the six leaders around the Soviet test sites, and after meeting members of the National Academy of Sciences it was decided that a group of American and Soviet scientists would be brought together in Moscow to examine in detail the possibilities of third party verification measures. At the conclusion of the meetings, an agreement was signed between the Soviet Academy and the New York-based Natural Resource Defence Council to launch a joint study of seismic events around the test site near Semipalatinsk.

The agreement also stated that Soviet experts were willing to participate in similar projects in the USA around the Nevada test site. A team of United States and Soviet technicians was created, and in July they placed their

[Mr. Keith Best]

instruments in the ground near the Soviet test site. It was the first time that American scientists had operated a verification system inside the USSR, and last month those Soviet scientists were in the United States deciding where the corresponding American test site would be.

On 6 August 1986, the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, the group of six issued detailed technical proposals to Reagan and Gorbachev in which it offered to monitor a full nuclear testing moratorium covering all test sites. The six nations are prepared to finance all the costs of that verification plan. This was the first time in history that a third party had offered finance and personnel to verify a testing moratorium. In the United States Senate, a vote which was designed to coincide with this initiative was passed by 64 votes to 35 on a resolution calling upon President Reagan to resume negotiations towards concluding a verifiable comprehensive test ban treaty. In a most significant open letter to the group of six, Chancellor Kohl of West Germany, said that he had

"followed with great interest the initiative of the Six Heads of State or Government. My Government is committed, just as the Six expressed their commitment in the Delhi Declaration, to a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban at the earliest juncture."

That was the first open message of support from the head of an important NATO country. I yet hope that this country will also support the proposals.

Of course there are difficulties still with verification, and there is not yet enough confidence in the capabilities of seismological monitoring to ensure that such verification will be accepted without demur by all countries. Nevertheless, a major advance has been made. If a complete ban on nuclear explosions were ever agreed between the United States and the Soviet Union, any system of verification would need to provide assurance that neither side were cheating. I do not underestimate the problems associated with adequate verification, but these are capable of solution soon, if not now.

The United Kingdom is committed to a comprehensive test ban treaty. This in itself will not give greater global security because the potential use of nuclear weapons is not inhibited by banning testing. We still need to find a system of international arbitrament of disputes which is universally acceptable and removes the need for possession of weapons of mass destruction. Only then will there be the capacity for prolonged peace but, as is acknowledged by the British Government, a comprehensive test ban treaty is an important step forward, and they are pursuing that objective. It is within our reach if we are prepared to stretch and grasp it.

9.30 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): This is a crucial subject, and, as all parties will be facing a general election at some time, it is important that their policies are set out as clearly as possible. All loyal party Members have to accept their party policies, no matter what their individual policies might be, and continue to argue for those party policies. This goes for Conservative Members as well. No doubt the hon. Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) and for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) who put down an early-day motion in 1984 calling for a review of the Trident programme, have not changed their position, just as the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) has not changed his position.

The discussions and negotiations that have led to the alliance policy have resulted in an approach that is central to the defence of our country and compares well with the belligerence shown by Conservative Members and the isolationism shown by Labour Members. It does nothing for the defence of the country to have a Labour party policy that concentrates more power in the hands of the Americans, from whom the Labour party professes to distance itself. It is not in the interests of this country to pursue the belligerent increase in nuclear fire power represented by the Trident programme.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North) *rose*——

Mr. Meadowcroft: I am under instructions to sit down at 9.40 pm and I can do that only if I do not give way, much as I should like to do so.

In all these discussions we have to back our judgment as to where we shall be in government, and this is as true of the alliance policy as of any other. Our policy has three factors which I am prepared to support. They are that we shall freeze the current capability and negotiate down from that. That is fundamental to our policy and is a worthwhile aim which the public will support. Secondly, it requires no decision about the modernisation of any deterrent until the mid to late 1990s. There is no reason why it is not possible to go into government and look carefully at that within he lifetime of that Government. Thirdly, it sets out a moratorium on the deployment of intermediate nuclear weapons, and that means no cruise or Pershing at Molesworth.

We must all make judgments about what will happen in defence. At our party conferences, who could have imagined what would happen at Reykjavik and what would be put on the table there? I hope the Government will accept that the existence of SDI means nothing in relation to the intermediate nuclear forces and that they will go back to the negotiating table to use every possible influence on the Geneva talks so that the zero option for Europe is pursued with the utmost vigour.

Mr. Gale *rose*——

Mr. Meadowcroft: It is not possible for me to give way.

I hope the Government accept that, if the Reagan Administration continue with the research on, and deployment of, SDI, that will change the whole concept of deterrence. The alliance accepts that we cannot continue with SDI and deterrence, because the former destabilises the latter. Following the speech that he made to the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies on 14 March 1985, I do not believe for a moment that the Foreign Secretary has moved at all on the trenchant criticisms that he made of SDI. Nevertheless, the Conservative party and the Government continue to support the Americans in their policy to deploy SDI. I believe that it will be possible when we come into Government in the next Parliament to perceive that the existence and continuance of SDI has an effect across the spectrum of defence spending and defence policies.

I am anxious to ascertain whether it is possible to find a way between the belligerence that comes from those on the Tory Benches and the isolationism that comes from those on the Labour Opposition Benches. I believe that it

is possible to produce a policy which will be way ahead of those two approaches and which will be acceptable to our parties.

Mr. Gale: The hon. Gentleman has referred to his party's policy and its endorsement of it. Will he confirm that the policy in the motion is endorsed by, for example, the alliance candidate for north or south Thanet, the candidate for Newcastle-under-Lyme, who is a member of CND, and the Liberal candidate for Hereford, who at Eastbourne voted for unilateral disarmament?

Mr. Meadowcroft: The answer is yes. It is endorsed as the policy of the alliance on which it will fight the next general election. Members on both sides of the House contribute to the formulation of their parties' policies. Having done so, they draw a line before the next election and say, "We shall fight the election on this policy."

It is crucial that politicians address themselves to the effect that their defence policy has on the overall defence policy and the nation's defence commitment. I am concerned that it is understood that, whether we unilaterally escalate our firepower or nuclear capability, or unilaterally abandon it, we shall have some effect on what happens throughout the continent and across the Atlantic. If we believe that we can act in isolation, we shall do a disservice to the electorate and the security and safety of the nation.

Foremost in our thinking must be a recognition of the need to seek to achieve a European initiative and European unity that will allow us to move away from the idea that the only way in which we can defend ourselves is by being part of a nuclear alliance which depends permanently on increasing firepower and by ratcheting up the different systems and methods of delivery. As long as we are faced with that attitude on the one side, and by a policy of abandonment on the other—"Let us abandon it and wash our hands of the whole business"—we shall never come to the view that our future lies in Europe rather than across the Atlantic.

The initiative upon which the alliance has determined it will fight the next election is one which is popular with the electorate and which can be sustained. If Conservative Members choose to listen to the siren voices which suggest that security lies only in strength, they will delude themselves. If Labour Members believe the siren voices which tell them that we can abandon everything and still remain secure, they are foolish. I support the initiative that we have taken and I hope that it will be supported when the Division takes place.

9.43 pm

Mr. Gerry Neale (Cornwall, North): The motion highlights the problem of the Liberal party in this place and in the country. The Liberal party comprises those who have sincere and deeply held views on nuclear defence, but they are diametrically opposed views. The unilateralists among the Liberals will be appalled by the motion and, I fear, dismayed. I put it to the leader of the Liberal party, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), who was quick to say that he had not made a speech in September 1981, that I have a copy of the *Daily Telegraph*, which quotes him as saying:

"The Liberal party in Parliament, and especially in future, in government, must take heed of that mood and use its best efforts to promote unilateral disarmament."

Mr. Gale: That was the other speech, which the right hon. Gentleman made the day before.

Mr. Steel: I have said once to the Secretary of State for Defence—I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept this from me—that the quotation that he has used is not something that I have said, whatever a misprint in a newspaper may say.

Mr. Neale: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman would like to take up that matter with the *Daily Telegraph* as well as with my right hon. Friend.

The interesting aspect of the debate is that it seems that the SDP is comfortable with the Government's policy, but the Liberals are in difficulty. So far as their so-called partnership is concerned, each time the Liberals manage to line up on a pitch laid out by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), they find that he has moved the wickets. First, Trident was not an option, but even then the Liberals had difficulty in cobbling together a policy to reconcile the irreconcilable within their party to try to meet the right hon. Gentleman. Now the right hon. Member for Devonport has moved the wickets again. He has said that Trident is an option for the British nuclear deterrent. On the programme "This Week, Next Week" he said that one of the options was a very much reduced Trident. I do not know whether the option of a very much reduced Trident for the SDP is the same as a minimum nuclear deterrent, with whatever necessary modifications it requires, for the Liberal Party. There seems to be considerable difficulty among them on that matter. It is clear that there is a split between them.

The motion meets the SDP's view, but it misrepresents the Liberal party's view. It identifies the all-pervading problem that faces the Labour party in particular and the alliance in general. As Liberals are instinctively in favour of a secure defence policy backed by effective nuclear weapons, they are not convinced. As Liberals are instinctively opposed to nuclear weapons, they find the notion utterly repugnant. In the west country, the Liberal party and the SDP cannot even agree on a bypass. Voters will find them neither dependable nor in possession of a clear policy on defence, and will certainly reject them at the next election.

9.47 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): This has been an interesting debate. On occasions, it has generated more heat than light. Certainly, at times it has shown more aggression than defence. The Secretary of State attacked my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) for making what he called an extraordinary speech, and then went on to make his own extraordinary claim that the progress in arms control in recent years had something to do with the Government. That is a dubious claim, I must say, for a Government who are dragging their feet on the zero-zero option.

The Secretary of State also challenged us on the Trident programme as set out by the Government. He must know that our doubts about Trident are well established. We do not regard the Government's Trident programme as a natural replacement for Polaris. The Government have been coy about the total number of warheads to be deployed. Even if we accept what the Secretary of State said about a 2·5 per cent. increase in destructive power, it is a substantial one.

[Mr. John Cartwright]

We do not accept the argument that to deal with the anti-ballistic missile system around Moscow, we simply have to have more warheads. Such systems can be dealt with by decoys and the like. As my right hon. Friend said, why do we continue to set up the Moscow criterion as the one to meet? It is possible to have adequate deterrence based on an ability to threaten unacceptable damage to the Soviet Union somewhere other than Moscow.

There is a new stance on ballistic missiles since the Reykjavik summit. The United States President offered to phase out ballistic missiles over 10 years. We know that Trident D5 will not start its flight tests until 1987. It will not be deployed for the first time on an American submarine until 1989 at the earliest. It is not likely to be fully operational until 1992. Against that timetable, there must be doubt about the ability of the Government to obtain Trident when the time comes.

The Prime Minister may be satisfied with the undertakings she has received from President Reagan. As we all know, the President will not go on forever. If there is to be between the super-powers an agreement which phases out domestic missile systems, it is inconceivable that the United States will supply either the missiles or the back-up system for servicing and so on, on which the system will depend. Therefore, there is bound to be some doubt about the Trident system.

The Secretary of State alleged that the alternatives to Trident that my right hon. Friend set out were some sort of mirage. So much of a mirage are the air-launched cruise missile systems that the United States air force is deploying over 1,400 of them. By 1989, 180 B52 bombers will be equipped with air-launched cruise missiles. As for the sea-launched cruise missiles, 21 American attack submarines are now equipped with Tomahawk systems; by the mid-1990s, the entire United States fleet of 101 attack submarines will be equipped with Tomahawk systems and there will be another 82 surface ships. That does not suggest that the system is a mirage.

We heard from the Secretary of State the usual attempt to rubbish the cruise system as some sort of inferior weapons system.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cartwright: I shall not.

The Secretary of State seems to be completely unaware of the state of the advanced cruise missile system in the United States. It has a substantially increased range with stealth technology, which makes it much more effective in evading radar, and laser guidance systems. It is an extremely effective weapons system moving into the next generation. Although it is not the only option that we advocate, it is a powerful one.

I turn to the motion and the lengthy speech of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) — 34 minutes. Unfortunately, he did not tell us anything about the policy of digging tunnels filled with explosives, which he was still advocating as recently as Friday and which, apparently, has since been exploded by the Labour party.

Mr. Denzil Davies: When did I advocate that policy?

Mr. Cartwright: The right hon. Gentleman is quoted in the *Western Mail* of 29 November, last week, as advocating

"the possibilities of digging tunnels filled with explosives".

[Interruption.] The right hon. Gentleman, on occasions, has advocated the Labour party's policy on nuclear weapons as being the most radical that this country has ever seen. I think that that is a fair description. It needs to be taken seriously on that basis.

Our motion draws attention to the three elements in the Labour party's policy which we think are individually dangerous but which, taken together, are destabilising to NATO and threatening to this country's security. The first is the renunciation of Britain's nuclear weapons. That is largely a domestic issue but, if we follow that policy through, the only nuclear weapons state in NATO will be the United States. That situation would not improve the transatlantic relations between the European and the American members of NATO.

The second element is the policy to remove United States nuclear weapons from Britain. It is worth remembering that these are not simply United States weapons — they are assigned to NATO. Greenham Common and Molesworth are bases that are the direct result of a unanimous decision by NATO in December 1979. If this country renounces that decision, how can we complain if other European nations follow our line? As hon. Members have pointed out, there is a psychological impact on American public and political opinion if the British, of all people, pursue a policy of saying, "Yanks go home," in respect of our nuclear weapons system. There is the risk that Americans will take the view that they should not go on committing large sums of taxpayers' money to defend Europe if the Europeans are not prepared to accept their share of the commitment.

The third element in Labour's strategy is a strightforward challenge to basic NATO nuclear strategy. The hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) was right when he said that NATO has rested on the ability and the willingness to use nuclear weapons from its beginnings. If a British Government rejected——

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cartwright: I have two minutes left.

If a British Government rejected that essential tenet of NATO strategy, I do not see how it could logically remain a member of NATO. It would be like trying to stay in the temperance league when one was becoming a confirmed drunkard. It is all very well for the right hon. Member for Llanelli to refer to other members of NATO that do not have nuclear weapons on their soil but accept the basic nuclear strategy of NATO. That is what the Labour party now claims it will not do. The fallacy of that position by the Labour party was cruelly exposed by somebody as well-intentioned towards that party as Mr. Anthony Howard. In *The Observer* on Sunday he called the Labour party's commitment to NATO, "a nonsense". He said:

"There is no way in which a member-country can unilaterally, without consultation, announce its intention of removing the main-spring from an alliance and still declare that it regards itself as being ready, as always, to fulfil all its obligations to its partners."

That is a fair assessment of the Labour party's position.

I am not at all surprised that we have again seen in this debate the unholy alliance between the two Front Benches —*[Interruption]*—each of them propping up the other like a pair of faded bookends on each end of a mantelpiece, and each of them saying that it is Trident or nothing. We

reject that approach. It is perfectly possible to maintain an effective nuclear deterrent without going down the road of the Government's Trident programme.

We believe that a majority of our people reject the bigger and better nuclear weapons policy of the Government and equally reject the give-it-away neutralist policy of the Labour party. A majority of people support the maintenance of a deterrent on broadly the same level as the existing one, and that common-sense option will be put before the British people at the next election.

9.51 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): My comment to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) is that the one place where there has not been an alliance during this debate has been on his own benches. Hon. Members will forgive me if I do not refer specifically to each speech. However, the contribution by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) was one of the most pithy and telling in favour of NATO's nuclear policy that the House has heard.

I should like to deal with one aspect of the defence policy of the official Opposition and then an aspect of the defence policy of the Liberal and Social Democratic parties. The policy of the official Opposition proposes not just a single blow for British defence interests. It would be a major blow for United Kingdom, American and NATO defence interests. The Government and the country at large believe without any question that the policies to which the Labour party has committed itself are quite the most damaging and disastrous to which any British political party has committed itself in 40 years.

The combination of scrapping Polaris, coupled with the decision not to proceed with Trident and the extraordinary commitment by the Leader of the Opposition, who says that he will remove Britain from the American nuclear umbrella, means that a Labour Government would leave the British people more exposed to nuclear blackmail, or worse, than any other NATO country. That is the reality.

As some hon. Members have said, the Labour party policy on American bases in Britain has the most disastrous implications for the commitment of the United States to western Europe. There is no doubt that if that policy were implemented it would result in other European countries also seeking to reduce the extent of their commitment to NATO's nuclear policy. Even more serious, it would result in increasing pressure from the American Congress to withdraw American conventional forces from western Europe and that would mean the unravelling of NATO. That would be set in hand by the policies of the Labour party.

I turn next to one new aspect relating to the implications for NATO of a non-nuclear policy. Most of the attention has been addressed to the strategic implications of a non-nuclear Britain. I remind the House that, as the Leader of the Opposition confirmed only yesterday in a speech in Boston, the official Opposition are committed to removing tactical nuclear weapons as well as strategic nuclear weapons. That has the most profound implications for the military cohesion of NATO. It would remove a significant proportion of SACLANT's tactical nuclear assets in the eastern Atlantic and a considerable part of the nuclear capabilities of the second tactical air force in central and northern Europe, and it would create a major gap in the nuclear deterrence provided by NATO's land forces on the central front by removing the nuclear capability of the 1st British Corps.

The House must consider what a profoundly impossible military position would be created if there was a four corps army group — such as NORTHAG — with three corps that were nuclear capable and one corps that was not. That would be the effect of the Labour party's policy. The House will note something that has been grasped by those serving in the British Army of the Rhine and those who are part of the regular and Territorial Army reinforcements to the British Army of the Rhine. If the Warsaw Pact was to face a four corps army group, three corps of which were nuclear capable and one of which was not, one does not need to be a military expert to predict on which corps the main weight of attack would be launched. It would fall on the 1st British Corps, disarmed unilaterally by the Labour party.

I would like to consider the position adopted in the debate by the Liberal and Social Democratic party alliance. The position was vividly exposed by the speech of the leader of the Liberal party. The right hon. Gentleman's speech contained an extraordinary contradiction. He said that as a party of opposition, it was unable to make up its mind about the deterrent and how an Opposition party should meet the minimum deterrence obligations and commitments. The right hon. Gentleman was in such difficulty that he had to list a total of six separate options that the party was considering for maintaining the minimum nuclear deterrence of this country.

There is an extraordinary contradiction here. The Liberals and the Social Democrats are unable to make up their minds in opposition between the six alternatives. However, when it comes to Trident, they can make up their minds instantly and decide that Trident should not be proceeded with. It is a fundamental contradiction for the leader of the Liberal party and Liberal Members to say that they cannot make up their minds about the deterrent but they can decide not to proceed with Trident.

The degree of division that exists on the alliance Benches was exposed when the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) listed his options. He came up with a different set of options for the minimum deterrence from those proposed by the leader of the Liberal party. The right hon. Member for Devonport, was interviewed on the "This Week, Next Week" programme and was asked to outline his options. He said:

> "a ballistic system not Trident; or a very much reduced Trident missile, with reduced deployment — three submarines and less warheads".

There is the so-called united position of the so-called alliance party. The Leader of the Liberal party outlines his six options without a word about Trident and only a few weeks previously the Leader of the Social Democratic party set out his options on television and said that the Trident missile in some shape or form was one of the options under consideration.

The posturing by the alliance parties that they are united on defence is nonsense. They have cobbled together, through political expediency, an attempt to paper over the cracks and once again tonight they have been exposed as fundamentally divided on the defence issue.

[Mr. John Stanley]

The Labour party favours having no deterrent at all. The alliance favours an inadequate deterrent. Only the Government have a soundly based defence policy.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 22, Noes 217.

Division No. 20] **[10 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Paddy
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Freud, Clement
Hancock, Michael
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Livsey, Richard
Meadowcroft, Michael
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Penhaligon, David
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Steel, Rt Hon David
Wainwright, R.
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Alton and
Mr. James Wallace.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clay, Robert
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madden, Max
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Neale, Gerrard
Nellist, David
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments)*:—

The House divided: Ayes 208, Noes 35.

Division No. 21] **[10.12 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*

Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pollock, Alexander
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gerald Malone and
Mr. Michael Portillo.

NOES

Ashdown, Paddy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bruce, Malcolm
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clay, Robert
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Freud, Clement
Hancock, Michael
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
Loyden, Edward
Madden, Max
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Nellist, David
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Wainwright, R.
Wigley, Dafydd
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Alton and
Mr. James Wallace.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House rejects the non-nuclear defence policies of the Labour Party, based as they are on the abandonment of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent, the expulsion of United States nuclear forces and bases from Britain, and the withdrawal of Britain from the protection of the American nuclear umbrella, thus jeopardising the United Kingdom's security and the cohesion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; and the policies of the Liberal and Social Democratic Parties, which advocate the maintenance of a British nuclear capability below the minimum required to provide effective deterrence beyond the mid 1990s; and reaffirms its support for the Government's firm defence policies founded on the need to maintain credible nuclear and conventional forces for Britain within the NATO Alliance.

European Community (Research and Development)

10.24 pm

The Minister for Information Technology (Mr. Geoffrey Pattie): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8764/86, a draft Regulation concerning the Framework Programme of Community Activities in the Field of Research and Technological Development 1987 to 1991; endorses the view that the Framework Programme offers an effective means of assessing priorities for European Community Research and Development and for monitoring its implementation; and welcomes the United Kingdom's endeavours to secure a cost-effective programme of high quality scientific and technological research with the main emphasis on activities aimed at promoting Europe's industrial competitiveness.

The Commission has put forward ambitious and far-reaching proposals for Community research and development over the next five years within the context of an overall strategy, or framework programme. It is proposing new or significantly expanded research activities in eight main areas with a total cost of 7·735 billion ecu or about £5·3 billion. Further details are given in the explanatory memorandum before the House. This framework will replace the present framework programme agreed in 1983, which is due to run until the end of 1987. An indicative spending target of around 3 billion ecu or £2 billion was set for the current framework, excluding energy demonstration activities and work in the European Coal and Steel Community, which are not covered by the new proposal.

The origins of the present proposal can be traced to an idea put forward by the Dutch Prime Minister at the European Council in December 1984, when he argued that Europe needed to develop a "technological dimension" to ensure that it was able to compete effectively in world markets, particularly for high technology goods, against United States and Japanese competition. His initiative, rightly, placed technological development in the wider context of the internal market, common standards, public procurement and a trade policy. The proposal now before the House, which is a refinement of two earlier Commission memoranda, concentrates more narrowly on one specific aspect, namely, the strengthening of the research and development capability. There is no doubt of the importance of this aspect, but it is essential to remember the wider picture, which is one to which I shall refer again.

In parallel with the consideration of the Commission's earlier memoranda, discussions were also taking place on what has become known as the Single European Act. Member states decided to include in the Act new treaty articles on technological research and development in recognition of the importance of this subject to Europe's economic future. Article 130 F of the Act explicitly recognises that the primary aim of European Community research and development shall be to strengthen the technological basis of European industry and to encourage it to become more competitive at international level. Article 130 I of that Act sets out the basis for adopting a framework programme. The draft proposal before the House has been prepared in conformity with those articles. It must be adopted by unanimous decision of the Council, following which specific implementing programmes in the various main areas of research may be adopted over the next five years by qualified majority. It is, therefore, of great importance that this framework should correctly identify the most appropriate areas for European collaborative research, ensure cost-effective management procedures and set a reasonable cost to the total programme. I shall deal with each of these aspects in turn.

I should point out that since the explanatory memorandum was placed before the House there have been some developments which have alleviated some of the Government's concerns described in that memorandum. The Community's scientific and research committee has proposed a revised structure for the research proposals and has redrafted the technical content in a standard format which considerably clarifies the objectives and proposed means of implementing the research. The Commission has also tabled a draft action plan on evaluation which sets out how it intends to measure progress towards the various research objectives which will be embodied in the framework programme. It has also spelt out how it sees Community activity linking with EUREKA activities. These are all helpful developments which, the Government believe, mean that the draft proposal now provides a better basis for decision on priorities and on the size and scope of future European Community research and development. However, significant changes in a number of other respects will still be required before this draft proposal can be adopted.

The Government have always recognised the potential value of collaboration within the European Community in tackling research and development problems. The Single European Act has already recognised that in terms of promoting industrial competitiveness. There are other issues which, because of their sheer size and scale, lend themselves particularly well to European collaboration —the fusion experiment JET is a good example. There are still other areas, such as environmental research, where the problem quite obviously transcends national frontiers and where study on a European basis can provide an additional dimension. Research which will contribute to the establishment of common European standards and thereby to the promotion of the internal market is also an obvious area for joint effort. In assessing Community research proposals the Government are always looking for this European added value, which will ensure that the Community research offers more than national programmes in the same areas. It is obviously important that Community and national programmes should complement and not duplicate one another. It is also important to establish the correct balance between the two. A strong national programme provides the best basis for effective participation in Community activity. The Government have also to bear in mind other international programmes which may offer better ways for collaboration. The European Space Agency, for example, or the European Council for Nuclear Research, CERN, or the European molecular biology laboratory — or most recently EUREKA: all these organisations have their place, and again Community programmes must not duplicate them.

As far as the scientific and technical content of the framework is concerned, the Government have welcomed the proposed emphasis on activities promoting Europe's industrial competitiveness. We attach the highest priority to programmes in the fields of information technologies,

such as ESPRIT, telecommunications, such as RACE, industrial technologies, such as BRITE, and advanced materials. These are all areas where we believe that greater collaboration between member states at the pre-competitive research stage can help to lay the foundations for a true internal market.

The Government therefore support an increased emphasis on research in support of Europe's industrial competitiveness. Previous and current programmes reflect the fact that Community research had its origins in the 1970s when energy problems, quite rightly, dominated our thinking. Priorities have changed. This does not detract from the continuing importance which the Government attach to some of the activities in energy. For instance, the JET experiment is recognised internationally as being first-class science and a field in which Europe is pre-eminent, but we must be careful not to commit ourselves prematurely to the next stage of fusion research, the scale of which may require even wider international collaboration involving the United States and Japan.

The Community's research programmes on non-nuclear energies have also produced some very valuable results as well as identifying some approaches which are no longer worth pursuing. In the Government's view the emphasis in this sector should now be on demonstrating the economic viability of the technologies which have been developed. Moreover, there are established wider forums for international research and development collaboration on these technologies, for example under the auspices of the International Energy Agency. Community programmes in radioactive waste management and radiation protection also quite clearly have an important European dimension and should continue, as should programmes on health and the environment.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is this a convenient moment to raise the question of Ispra and the problems of that site in northern Italy, which many of us have visited at some time or another? Is there any way in which Ispra can be improved or shrunk?

Mr. Pattie: There are ways in which Ispra could be improved. If it helps the hon. Gentleman and the House, I may come to that topic in more detail later. In the past few days I have gone around Europe and discussed with my opposite numbers on the Research Council the industrialists' report on the joint research centre at Ispra. I discussed that yesterday in Rome, and obviously the Italian Government are very interested in the matter. I should like to discuss it in detail, perhaps later in the debate. The Italian Government have been particularly receptive to our suggestions, which I will put on the agenda at the Council meeting next Tuesday morning. I assure the hon. Gentleman that much effort has been spent by me and others on this, and it does not require my receiving a brief on the subject. I know the problems of the JRC off by heart.

The Government believe that useful and viable programmes can be maintained in the sectors to which I referred earlier at around the current levels. As well as being concerned with the scientific and technological quality of the Community research, the Government are concerned with the cost-effectiveness of its management. There is sometimes a tendency within the Community to confuse quality with width and to assume that more is necessarily better. In my experience, this is rarely the case. What we shall be looking for in the framework programme therefore will be activities of the highest scientific and technological quality, but ones which are carefully targeted and sharply focused on areas of direct relevance to Europe's industrial needs and which are managed in a cost-effective fashion. I shall deal with some of these aspects in more detail.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point about scale?

Mr. Pattie: I wish to deal with these aspects in more detail, and if the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue he may find that his intervention is more telling.

The Government will be concerned to ensure that Community research and development programmes measure up to the same high standards of management and cost effectiveness as domestic United Kingdom programmes. I regret to say that this has not always been the case in the past. In some sectors, such as ESPRIT, the record is good, but in others, such as the Community's own joint research centres, the record of financial management is poor, and the relevance of the scientific work to the Community's current needs is very limited. The JRC at present consumes a substantial proportion, around 25 per cent., of the total Community expenditure on research and development and over the past 18 months the Government have pressed hard to ensure that any continuing JRC activity secures much better value for money. A panel of eminent European industrialists has been reviewing the centre's work and submitted its report last week. The panel has concluded that the JRC as presently organised does not meet the Community's research needs and that fundamental changes in management procedures will be required. The Government will wish to be satisfied that these changes will be implemented.

I have already mentioned evaluation. This has been another major aspect of the Government's policy. Without effective evaluation of programmes that are based on verifiable objectives there can be no assurance that money is being well spent. The Commission has made some significant progress on this front over recent weeks, which I greatly welcome. Provided we are satisfied that an effective evaluation system is in place, we can have greater confidence in the future management of Community programmes. We need also to consider more imaginative approaches to financing programmes. We should not be limited to 50 per cent. support levels for all industrial programmes. This may be necessary for small and medium-sized enterprises, or in the first year of a project, but we should consider tapering funding levels to test industry's commitment to the research.

Mr. Ashdown: The Minister has moved on beyond the point at which I would have liked to ask him this question. He used the phrase that we should not confuse quality with width, which is an elegant way of saying that the Government intend to cut. Is it not the case that the Prime Minister at Milan, Fontainebleau and subsequently at Luxembourg last December committed Britain, together with other European nations, to increase research and development on a European scale to combat what the Japanese and the Americans are doing? How does the hon. Gentleman square that with the way in which the

[Mr. Ashdown]

Government are dragging their feet on these commitments? Does he not understand why many regard Britain as having reneged on those undertakings, given three times?

Mr. Pattie: The hon. Gentleman always finds it difficult to understand that if one is having a debate in the European forum in this or on any other matter one is debating the size of a new programme, and it has been agreed that the aim of such a new programme should be to increase activity. It is not anything other than realistic to say that we should like to have cost-effective programmes. The hon. Gentleman is rushing to conclusions, as he so frequently does. I cannot hope to reform him.

I find it remarkable,, however, that at a stage when we are considering a new framework programme we must have regard to all the expenditure that went on before the first programme, and that we are still having some difficulty in convincing the Commission to come forward with what I think any hon. Member who takes an interest in these matters would recognise as sensible evaluation procedures. All that we are seeking in any programme of this sort is to determine the objectives, whether we shall recognise them when they have been achieved, and whether it will be possible to turn off any of the programmes so that others may be commenced in their place. Surely those sets of procedures, which I have lumped together under the term "evaluation", should be a pre-requisite of any form of activity of this sort. I find it some commentary on the ineffectiveness of the Commission's procedures that we should at this stage, when we are talking about the second framework programme, still be discussing the evaluation procedure. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) may find that straightforward and acceptable.

Mr. Ashdown: The Government gave commitments.

Mr. Pattie: Indeed. The hon. Gentleman will have to await the outcome of the Research Council's meeting next week. As I have said, the entire thrust of the programme is to find a series of eight action lines that will address the research and development needs of 12 European nations.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): None of those reasons explains why the Government are trying to keep research off the summit agenda. Are the Government trying to do that? Is it the Government's intention at the Research Council next week, if it is not discussed at the summit, to support an increase in the proportion of the Community's budget that is directed to R and D?

Mr. Pattie: The hon. Gentleman must have intelligence that is better than that which is available to anyone in the House if he knows what attempts are being made to keep various items off or on various agendas. It would not make any difference whether the presidency decided that it did not want to have something on the agenda for debate later this week. If any of the member states wished to raise the item, I have no doubt that they would do so. There are items such as "any other business" or "any other matter" under which a member state can raise the issue in question. I am sure that a member state would find ways of raising it.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): As Labour and Liberal Members are talking about cuts in the European research programme, would my hon. Friend care to speculate on the implications for the programmes if the commitment of the two parties to abandon civil nuclear power were implemented?

Mr. Pattie: It will be interesting to hear whether Opposition Members care to take up that issue if they seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is a matter for them to answer, but I am sure that my hon. Friend's point has been duly noted.

The Government remain concerned about the scale of the Commission's expenditure proposals. At the last Research Council meeting in Luxembourg in October the United Kingdom representative indicated that on the basis of the approach that I have outlined the United Kingdom had concluded that a cost-effective and viable research programme could be drawn up for about 3·5 billion ecus, compared with the Commission's proposed expenditure of 7·7 billion ecus. We believe that expenditure at this level should be adequate to cover all of the priority research programmes at adequate levels, but we recognise that some additional funding may be necessary to respond to the particular interests of other member states. It is a view that is broadly shared by France and Germany. It is a level of funding which the Government believe is consistent with their commitment to increase the proportion of Community resources that are devoted to priority research and development activities. Moreover, in the light of the overall pressures on the Community budget, the Government believe that it is a far more realistic rate of expenditure than that which the Commission proposed.

There are, however, a number of other member states which would be prepared to agree to either the Commission's target expenditure or to figures substantially higher than that which the British Government believe to be necessary. I am at present in the process of consulting my Research Council colleagues to try to determine the common ground on which we might build an agreement on this point. I firmly believe that it should be possible to meet the aspirations of other member states within a total expenditure very significantly less than that which the Commission has proposed, if, as I have argued, research is concentrated on high priority areas, with a clear Community dimension and on the basis of rigorous and effective management procedures. I believe that it is only by following this approach that we can feel confident that European Community research will respond to Europe's research needs, and that lies at the heart of the Government's policy, which I commend to the House.

10.45 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Three issues in the European framework programme for research and technological collaboration face the Minister in his capacity as Chairman of the Research Council and at the forthcoming Council meeting. The first issue is the scale of resources that should be committed. The Minister has had a good deal to say about that matter. The second issue is the extent of control that member Governments should seek to reserve to themselves. He hid that issue among a lot of waffle about efficiency and so on, which comes ill from the Minister who had considerable responsibility for the development of airborne radar during his term as a

Defence Minister. The third issue is the relationship between European programmes and national programmes.

The Opposition regard the science and technology policies of the Government as totally inadequate. The restoration of Britain's technological and industrial competitiveness is the avowed ultimate aim that the motion sets for the European programmes. The Government show no signs of waking up to the magnitude of the task. So we have to address ourselves to actions taken within the limitations of present Government policy that might at least leave open the possibility of constructive development by a future Government who are seriously interested in industrial recovery.

We make no objection to the commission's proposals for the Framework programme. The United Kingdom research and development contribution to European programmes will still remain small compared with that of any Government who wish seriously to restore the industrial competitiveness of this country. When the Labour party comes to office, the resources that we will need to commit, and stimulate industry into committing, will certainly allow room to correct the imbalances between possible European and United Kingdom programmes.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): The hon. Gentleman will have noticed that the document that we are debating mentions the possibility — indeed, the desirability — of what he calls trans-European mobility of scientists. I do not demur from the hon. Gentleman's desire that the United Kingdom should make a sensible contribution to the cost of the European programme for research and development. Does it strike the hon. Gentleman that, if the Labour party were to carry through the wider public expenditure commitments that it has made and to accept the implications of its taxation policy, there would be no scientists working in Britain because the levels of taxation will drive them out of the country? In America, the top rate of personal taxation will be 28 per cent., whereas in Britain the basic rate is 29 per cent. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, in future, it will be important to ensure at least that our top rates of tax are no higher than those in other member countries of the European Community?

Dr. Bray: No, I certainly do not agree. I regard the hon. Gentleman's intervention as the most arrant hypocrisy. He does not know how much scientists are paid. Can he tell me how much an Imperial college research assistant with a first-class honours degree and three years' experience is paid?

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Gentleman wishes scientists to be paid at internationally competitive rates. The problem is that, if we take it away in taxation, we will lose them.

Dr. Bray: He is paid £8,500, with another £1,500 in London weighting. It is absurd to say that a brilliant young scientist earning £10,000 a year is highly paid. The hon. Gentleman is living in cloud cuckoo land. *[Interruption.]* The Minister is on to the point. I do not think that Conservative Members really know how badly scientists have been treated by the Government. I do not think that they have ever looked at how the salary scales of scientists compare with the earnings of their friends in the City. They are putting an absurd argument.

Until the Labour party comes into office, the enterprise and insight shown by the Commission and by Commission officials, much maligned by precisely the type of slur that the Minister is casting, so far overshadow the ignorance, timidity and prejudices of present British Ministers that I would cheerfully trust Commission officials better to understand and provide for the real needs of Britain. I hasten to add, for the benefit of those officials, that that will not apply to Labour Ministers.

On the extent of Commission and national control, any coherent programme must be sufficiently negotiable to take advantage of the opportunities open to it, and thereafter to have sufficient continuity. Both considerations point to the Commission being allowed considerable responsibility, which it will be able to exercise in practice only if it remains sensitive to the interests and institutions of member countries. The Commission is far more likely to understand and tolerate the initiatives that we shall have to take nationally to restore national competitiveness if it is allowed and encouraged to play its full part in the initiatives necessary at the European level.

On the relationship between European and national programmes, there is not much to be said about the Government's national programmes, because there are not many of any significance. But let me treat this in the context of the national programmes that we believe to be necessary in the United Kingdom. The test of the adequacy of science and technology policies is that they should contribute what they have to to the restoration of Britain's technological competitiveness. The measure of competitiveness is that we should be able substantially to restore full employment, without generally reducing the expectations of those now in work and without running into the constraints of inflation and the balance of payments. Of course no Government will be able to do that overnight, but it is possible to estimate the research and development resources needed to achieve that result in due course.

Much else is needed in industrial policy in training and investment. But the income of an industrial country above the average global level that can be earned in operating branch factories planted in countries by overseas multinationals is broadly determined by the range of technologies in which it is able to maintain world competitiveness in technology centres with the full range of industrial activities from research and product and process development, through pilot and full-scale production, innovation, marketing, and investment in branch operations elsewhere.

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman speaks about maintaining a competitive position in a wide range of sectors. I should like to ask him a question about one institution, Harwell, in my constituency—it is concerned with the nuclear industry, which is very important for our competitiveness, and so on — which I have put to my hon. Friend the Minister. What will be the implication for Harwell in my constitency, for this important industry and a range of British competitors of the implementation of the Labour party's policy?

Dr. Bray: The diversification of Harwell into other research, started under the Ministry of Technology in the 1960s, when I was a junior Minister in the Ministry, has proceeded well and will, of course, proceed further. Whether, in the long run, people will choose to work at

[Dr. Bray]

Harwell or elsewhere will be a matter for the individuals concerned. It is clear that any Government giving top priority to research and development will create such a buoyant market for scientists and technologists that they will not have the slightest difficulty in finding the jobs that they want wherever they choose to work.

I shall continue with my argument about the competitiveness that is needed to maintain the expectations of those in work while restoring full employment. As a first step, we need broadly to increase the level of our civil research and development from its present 1·6 per cent. of GDP to about the 2·5 per cent. that was reached in Germany and Japan as long ago as 1983. By now, that percentage is probably being approached in France. Translated into money terms, that means increasing our civil research and development from about £5 billion this year, from both Government and industry, to £9 billion per annum in four or five years. That is the amount that will be required to match the 1983 level of Germany and Japan as a proportion of national income. If we measure that against the £1·1 billion per annum proposed by the Commission for the whole of the Framework programme for the whole of Europe, we see that it is tiny in proportion to the figures that I have quoted.

Much can be said about how we can manage this restoration of technological competitiveness, but we cannot deal with that in this debate. It will need a combination of general fiscal incentives for research and development, project support and advisory services, and we must take the necessary action to restore our much eroded science base. I shall relate it to some of the European programmes, such as BRITE.

A lot can and should be done to update the technology of our established manufacturing industries. The new EURAM programme in advanced materials gives us the opportunity to bring our metals and new materials manufacturing industries up to speed, so that they are better able to complement the investment that more newly industrialised countries will make in established technologies, the installation of which we are only just completing. However, the fastest rate of growth will continue to be in information technology.

The industrial participants tell me that the European RACE programme in telecommunications research is going well. Before long that will reach the point where major issues of policy will be raised on the operation of switchable wideband fibre optic networks, procurement, and industrial structure. The European Commission deserves full credit for having encouraged Mr. Ian Mackintosh to put forward his proposals for Eurogrid, the switchable wideband fibre optic network, which he has now published in his book "Sunrise Europe." That book is far more readable than most Commission documents. The RACE programme is plainly pointing in that direction.

The connection of every home and workplace in Europe into a switchable wideband network, and still more the value added services that that will make possible, offer a vehicle by which Europe will be able to catch up with the large and still rapidly increasing lead which the United States and Japan have built up in information technology industries and services, a catching up process that no European country would be able to afford on its own.

I have seen no sign that the Government have woken up to the challenge and the opportunity offered. Indeed, I see many signs that they are still heavily prejudiced against the active industrial policy that is needed. We have seen in this debate their foot-dragging over the European framework programme of research and development. It is the more to be deplored because Britain's role could be decisive. Certainly Germany, led by Siemens and the Bundespost, opposes RACE because it thinks it can go it alone with the rest of Europe falling in behind. But it can not, and if the rest of Europe pushes on with RACE and shows signs of developing it into Eurogrid, Germany would soon join in. It is quite specifically the British Government who are blocking progress.

We do not have to be starry-eyed about Europe to see the role that European technological co-operation can play—and it would not be to the exclusion of the rest of the world. Technologically, the world is one, and includes the developing and newly industrialised countries as well as Japan and the United States. The House should urge the Government to give more positive support to the programmes of European research and technological development than is reflected in their recent actions and in the motion before us.

10.59 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): Such is the nature of this place that we have only 90 minutes to debate a subject that I believe could and perhaps will be the basis of the growth in wealth and employment throughout the EEC and in the United Kingdom during the next decade or so.

I support the establishment of the framework, but I can also appreciate the Government's concern at the volumes of money that are involved. However, £5·3 billion over five years is really not a great deal of money when one considers the programmes in Japan and the United States. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has reversed the television slogan "Never mind the quality, feel the width" by claiming that we must aim for quality. I would like to believe that is correct, but we should not stint when a little more research into quality is needed. If we are to stay ahead or if we are to stay level with the opposition, we must have the programmes that will produce the results that we need for our industries to provide all the jobs and the growth that we want to see in future.

I do not agree with the principle of throwing money at a problem. However, when we consider the amount of money that goes into an early warning system or a Chevaline, and compare that sum with what is necessary for the growth of so many bases of our industrial companies, £5·3 billion over five years tends to be put into perspective.

Having said that, I would like to show that I am impartial in my comments by referring to the comments made by the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray). I listened to the hon. Gentleman's criticisms and I recalled the period of the previous Labour Government when the Labour party was supported by the dynamic Liberal party. I struggled to recall the initiatives taken by the Labour Government to assist British industry. All I can think of is the National Enterprise Board. After that, there is a big black hole.

The Government deserve credit and praise for what they have done to help industry through Alvey, ESPRIT, EUREKA, research in advanced communications in

Europe, BRITE and all the other programmes put forward by this Government. *My hon. Friend the Minister can* dismiss the criticism, because we are doing something, unlike the Labour party.

Under the eight programmes within the framework, all the new technologies except that of space is covered. Space technology will be covered under another aspect of the EEC. I will not argue with the general principle. There is, however, always a "but" and many hon. Members raise the "buts". It must be sensible to have a framework that prevents the duplication of problems within each member state. I hope that we can be sure that we will get our share of the action. The calculations on the Airbus programme have been complex but in the programme proposed under the framework, there will be nearly 1,000 projects. There are 210 projects in ESPRIT, RACE has 31, and EUREKA has 72. There will be many programmes to be covered by the £5·3 billion. The control of those programmes will be very important. The need for control is self-evident—my hon. Friend the Minister made that point — because control has not always been successful in EEC activities.

Within all those activities, there is danger of two overlaps. First, there must be doubt about the proposed division of research areas and the scale of the programmes. For example, there will be an overlap between the research programmes on the environment, under the No. 1 programme on the quality of life, and biotechnology. The environmental protection and study of natural and technological hazards seem to be inextricably linked with the management of agricultural resources. Therefore, the Government's reservations about the basis on which the Commission has grouped some of those activities are well founded. They were right to ask for clearer details on the content of the programmes and to stress the need for objective management and evaluation. I support what my hon. Friend the Minister has said on that point.

The second overlap is that within the United Kingdom systems and programmes. It is important that we have a clear research and development target in information technology, as that is the area to which the greatest amount of money will be allocated. My hon. Friend will remember that the report of the committee chaired by Sir Austin Bide, currently being studied by the Government, recommended additional public expenditure of about £300 million. If we extend that over the next five years, in the public and private sectors it will be about £550 million. Therefore, we must know how the European and our domestic information technology programmes will be co-ordinated.

Are the priorities recommended by the Commission and the Bide committee compatible? Will they come together? It is not yet clear how the collaboration between the academic and research teams envisaged by the two bodies might be dovetailed. That must be clarified.

In addition, the West Germans have said that they wish to run their own information technology programme rather than join the EEC programme. The Government must make absolutely clear the balance between the Community programmes and our national research.

The Commission's proposals will have to be judged on its success in co-ordinating all those factors. If it does not co-ordinate them properly, that will lead to bickering and dissent. I do not want that to happen. As I said at the start of my speech, I believe that the growth and the wealth of our country will rely upon how effectively the programme goes forward.

My next point—a fairly obvious one that has been raised in the past—is that every one of the programmes must have a commercial point to it—a product that will go into the market places of the world and be sold at the right price so that work activity can be generated in the Community. It is no good doing a series of almost esoteric research and development if someone else picks up the rewards at the end of the day.

When my hon. Friend enters the long and detailed negotiations in the Community, I hope that he will spend every possible moment ensuring that every programme has sales and jobs at the end of it. If he does that, he will have done an invaluable service to this country for the next 10 or 20 years.

11.9 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I followed the speech of the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) carefully and I wholeheartedly share his belief that the future of Europe and of this nation will depend on the invention and especially the application of new technologies. We must all agree with that because the Government have said it. That is their rhetoric, but the sad fact is that when it comes to be translated into action they will find ever-more elegant phrases to justify cutting the money available to achieve it. We must judge people not on their words but on their delivery. If that is the future for Britain, as the Prime Minister herself would agree, we are doing miserably badly. Britain is now running an increasing deficit in high technology which, in my view, is at least in part a direct result of the fact that the level of research and development in this country has become catastrophically low. I shall deal with that aspect in a moment.

Mr. Richard Page *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I shall be giving figures to back my case and I shall be happy to allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene at that point.

We must welcome the programme proposed in the Community document. I believe fundamentally in new technology, in research and development and in the new inventions that we require if we are to be competitive and efficient in the world into which we are moving, only if we tackle those issues on a European scale. There is scope, of course, for national programmes, but tying it all together on a European scale is vital because it is the only way to stand up to the competition of the United States and Japan in this area. In so far as the Community "framework programme" actually provides a framework for this, it is to be welcomed.

I must confess that the language in which we are invited to participate in the Single European Act strikes me as obfuscatory and odd. Last night my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) had to read from a Community document in French because there was no English translation. I almost wish that the document before us were in French. I fancy, indeed, that it may be a translation from the French, as the English is so bad in some places. On what appears to be page 6—the copy is so poor that it is hard to tell—we are told:

"The Community programmes, on the other hand, combine a strategic conception of the 'top-down' type with 'bottom-up' implementation.

[Mr. Ashdown]

What on earth does that mean? A Single European Act that is both top down and bottom up — the mind boggles. Unfortunately, there is worse to come. The document continues:

"On the other hand, the precise definition of the projects and their implementation are prompted by an open, transparent and variable-geometry process promoting cross-fertilisation among the industrial and scientific partners involved not only at the level of the projects themselves but also downstream of their implementation."

One is seriously worried at the terminology involved. What on earth is a "variable-geometry" organisation? Are we being asked to join some kind of swing-wing quango?

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: If the hon. Gentleman can eludicate, I shall certainly give way. Perhaps he could do it in French.

Mr. Soames: I could indeed, but for the benefit of the public school boys present I shall not do so.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that his comments merely reinforce what my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) said — that none of this is possible without a clear, coherent management strategy and that unless we hang out for that strategy we may as well sink the whole thing?

Mr. Ashdown: I take the point, which echoes what the Minister, too, was saying. Members of all political parties sometimes take comfort in the aphorism, which I may well have invented in front of the mirror myself, that ideas are not responsible for the people who believe in them. One might add that ideas coming into implementation are not responsible for the bureaucrats who murder them.

The Community programme is a great idea, but I hope that in trying to translate it into English, French or any other language so that we may understand and express the grand transcendental notion of the Single European Act the bureaucrats in Brussels will find a better method than the appalling and meaningless prose of the document before us. If the Government intend to hang out for a better way of expressing things in the Berlaymont in Brussels, I am frankly all for it. The Government fairly comment in their explanatory note that there are areas, including

"the presentation of information in the document,"

in which they look forward to a more professional approach. So do I. In no circumstances do we wish to achieve anything less than the best value for money that we can get out of these programmes, paltry and small though they are. I welcome the Government's decision to drive and push for that.

I hope that the House will forgive me—I have been in it long enough to be a sceptic — but I realise that when the Government use phrases such as value for money they do not mean just value for money; rather it is a front for cuts. That is what is at the heart of this proposal. The evidence is there and it is perfectly plain and I shall seek to touch on it in a moment.

A careful reading of the Minister's elegant prose at the beginning of the debate will reveal that, when it comes to it—I repeat what the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) said — it is the British Government, perhaps assisted by the West German Government, who are dragging their feet on this. If I felt that the Minister was being honest and admitting that the Government are dragging their feet to get value for money and better management, I would accede in full to the proposals put forward by the Commission—I would be happy about that — but I have the strong suspicion that the Government are using this as an excuse to cut funds for vital projects in the future.

Despite those caveats, we must welcome the Government's motion, however the last sentence of the Government's motion—I shall read it to the House for fear that there mught be a suggestion that I was out of order—reads:

"; and welcomes the United Kingdom's endeavours to secure a cost-effective programme of high quality scientific and technological research with the main emphasis on activities aimed at promoting Europe's industrial competitiveness."

We must substantially disagree with the Government on that point, because research and development in Britain is falling to disastrous levels. Those levels cannot sustain our industrial needs, even our present needs, let alone what they should be. They are well below the levels needed to follow along the lines suggested by the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West to promote the new technologies.

The Government tell us that research and development should be increasingly industry financed — I do not dissent from that as a concept—but if one considers the figures one will discover that Britain's industry-financed research and development is less than that of Belgium, Italy or Luxembourg. Surely we must do something to turn that round, and if industry does not do so, Government must cajole it to do so or, indeed, take over such financing.

Britain cannot afford to fall below the line on this matter, but that is not the end of the story. It appears that 60 per cent.—a massive sum in comparison to any other European nation — of finance for research and development goes into the defence sector. If we had a decent freedom of information Act we might have a situation similar to that which exists in the United States where a degree of such finance will spin off into the private sector. Our secret system prevents that from happening.

One does not have to accept my word on this but take, for example, the words of Sir George Porter president of The Royal Society and a close friend and mentor of the Prime Minister. He says that morale amongst scientists and technologists in Britain is at the lowest level reached this century and he blames that, fairly and squarely, on cuts in Government funding.

The suggestion made by the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) that the Labour party's policies would cause some kind of vast exodus of scientists from Britain came strangely from the mouth of a person whose party has encouraged that exodus to the point that, by the time the next Government come in, one doubts whether there will be a corpus of scientific ability in Britain [HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] I dare say that that may be slightly over stating the case, but figures will prove my point.

The truth is that, as pointed out by Sir George Porter, 82 fellows of The Royal Society, a premier British scientific institution, are now resident in the United States.

Last year I visited Silicon valley and it struck me as extraordinary and tragic that the second largest population in that area is British, larger than the Hispanic population. It is an area noted for the research and

development of high technologies. We are witnessing the beginnings of a brain drain from Britain because of the lack of Government support for research and development.

It was significant that the Minister touched on the question of space research and development. I wonder whether the Minister has read the excellent article by Admiral James Eberle published in *The Times* on 13 November 1986 in which he said that Britain's lack of any policy towards space research and development was losing the country serious opportunities in that area.

I return to the point that I tried to put to the Minister during his speech, because it is within that context that we must look at this programme. We must remember that the Government made commitments at Milan, Fontainebleau and Luxembourg to increase the resources going into research and development. Calling on them to honour those commitments in no way means that we do not wish to get the best value for money. Those commitments have been made, and it is reasonable for people in this country who study these matters, and for many of our European partners as well, to regard British action following those commitments as reneging upon them and being thoroughly unhelpful.

Mr. Richard Page: I have listened with great care to the hon. Gentleman's criticism of the Government's actions over the last few years. What actions were taken by the Labour-Liberal Government between 1974 and 1979 that have somehow brought about this dramatic situation?

Mr. Ashdown: I remind the hon. Gentleman that there was not a Liberal Government in 1974 to 1979. We participated with the Labour party. I also remind him that during that period industrial production was going up while unemployment, inflation and mortgage rates were coming down. The figures show that that was one of the best periods of Government that Britain has had for a very long time.

I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman disagrees, but I ask him to look dispassionately at the figures for industrial production during that period and to compare them with the present figures. In fact, one sixth of our manufacturing base has been wiped away under this Government and 2 million jobs have been lost. We are now running a balance of trade deficit that will mount in the years to come and will become one of the most significant factors in our economic decline unless policies are changed. For the first time in 150 years Britain had been reduced to being an importer of manufacturing goods. The devastation wreaked by this Government in the last seven or eight years has been a disaster for Britain, and those birds will come home to roost.

In that climate the need for research and development is now so much greater than when our economy was much more prosperous. There was less of a need then, but there is a desperate need now.

Dr. Bray: There was an increase up to about 1980 in research and developmemt in industry specifically financed by both Government and industry. Since then it has fallen.

Mr. Ashdown: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for those figures, which I did not have to hand. I am sure that the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West has taken note of them and will bear them in mind for the future. However, I recognise that the figure I am giving about the industrial devastation of Britain, including the high technology sector, are uncomfortable facts. If the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West studied them he might realise that our industrial base and economy are now facing a desperate situation.

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to say that the only way out is to encourage the new technologies and to build on Britain's inventiveness. That is why the Government's policy of dragging their feet within the European framework is so damaging.

Mr. Richard Page *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way, but other hon. Members wish to participate and I am coming to a close.

Research and development in Britain is now woefully inadequate and falling behind. In Europe, the total sum that will go towards research and development over three years from the Alvey and ESPRIT programmes combined is still less than what IBM gives in one year. I welcome the framework programme and this document, provided it means a serious approach to a pan-European research and development programme with adequate funding to face up to the competition in the world markets. If on the other hand this is yet another piece of rhetoric, or a cover or front, behind which this Government will again drag their feet, hold up progress in Europe, cut the budgets and obfuscate and delay, no one can welcome it. We must give the Government the benefit of the doubt on this occasion, but we shall be watching to see whether the goods are delivered. If they are not that will prove a disaster for Britain and, I hope, for the Government.

11.24 pm

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Plainly, there is much on which the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and I are bound to disagree, but I warmed to the section of his speech in which he drew attention to the abuse of language in this document. One feels for my hon. Friend the Minister as he grinds through the meetings of the research council and has to deal with this fairly intractable prose. Therefore, there is all the more reason for congratulating the Government, and especially my hon. Friend, on the momentum which this area of EC policy has achieved during the British presidency.

All hon. Members would agree that scientific research is a suitable area for international co-operation. Science, properly, knows no frontiers and, as a distinguished scientist said in a letter to *The Times* this week, it is becoming increasingly meaningless, in academic terms, to talk about British science. I welcome a move towards the internationalisation of our policy in this area.

The Commission's proposal of 5 August sketches some principal areas of research activity that are envisaged in the framework programme. They include research into information technology, microelectronics and data processing and research that will lead to the modernisation of the older European industries. Britain should welcome that. Sadly, for too long, we shrank from embracing the modernisation of too many of our industries. This category includes research into materials such as ceramics and composite materials and research into advanced design and manufacturing techniques.

Such research programmes are immensely expensive, and have already acquired a formidable momentum in

[Mr. Alan Howarth]

competitor countries such as Japan and the United States of America. Earlier this year, I visited the fifth generation computer project in Japan. I did so in company with the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), and I hope that he will allow me to say that his experienced and learned appreciation of the work being undertaken there greatly enhanced the benefit that I gained from the visit. The fifth generation computer project is an immense programme. It is Government-inspired and funded, it has enlisted contributions from all the major Japanese electronics and computer manufacturers, it has drawn in the best academic contributions from other countries, including Britain, and it is focused in a pragmatic and down-to-earth way on eventual commercial application. It suits those Japanese firms and Japan itself to undertake that research co-operatively at the pre-competitive stage, and I welcome the Government's thrust towards the development of similar pre-competitive research on a European scale.

Defence is not a policy area where the EC has any standing, but defence procurement is important for industry and the benefits of European research to industry are our central concern in this debate, so I hope that I will not be ruled out of order if I allude briefly to defence. We cannot afford the wasteful duplication of extremely expensive research and development among fragmented European NATO members. After Reykjavik, and after the Democrats' capture of the Senate, we must focus more clearly on the need for Europe to provide effectively for its own defence. Whether research would be on the means to produce conventional weapons that we may need or on aspects of the strategic defence initiative, such research is massively expensive and massively important. The research must be concerted, if not by the EC, by a parallel system in Europe.

In medical and environmental research, we are on less controversial territory. Who would dispute that we must mobilise all the resources that we can to find a cure for AIDS, which is proposed as an example of the first framework item of research to improve the quality of life? One major strategic programme in this area, unstintingly funded, would be preferable to a variety of fragmented programmes. Is it not right, too, that we should invest in research into protection against radiation? If we are to have nuclear power, we must leave nothing to chance. After Chernobyl, the public will not let us do so.

Another area of research proposed in the document is biotechnology. This is particularly necessary in the European Community, weighed down as it is by the excesses of the common agricultural policy. Developments in biotechnology should, as the document says, help a movement towards new relationships between agriculture and industry. Agriculture could diversify towards objectives other than food production, working with the pharmaceutical and energy industries.

Agricultural research should also contribute to the solving of environmental problems. The Institute of Horticultural Research at East Malling leads Europe in research on root stocks. That institute has proposed to the Commission a project to develop micropropagation/genetic manipulation for forest trees. The institute will develop such systems for broadleaved trees such as poplar, oak and birch, building on its experience working with fruit trees. This project should be immensely attractive to parts of Europe where people are worried about dying forests. It would be beneficial both environmentally and politically.

Agricultural research should not of course be blamed for the existence of surpluses. It is a benign contribution to enable two blades of grass to grow where previously only one grew. Surpluses are the product of political decision — or indecisions — which give incentives to produce crops where markets are already saturated. The remedy is to stop doing that, not to discontinue agricultural research. The history of agriculture alternates between feast and famine. We in Europe are sated in this generation, but it will not always be so. To condemn ourselves to ignorance in the future would be an extraordinary folly.

One justifiable area of agricultural research would be in import substitution. We tend not to think about the need to ensure supplies until a crisis is upon us. Hon. Members are now aware of a crisis. The navy bean crop in Canada and the United States has failed this year. Navy beans are what we import—no less than 80,000 tonnes of them each year—to turn into baked beans. Baked beans are an indispensable part of the English way of life —indeed, of House of Commons life. The fact is that they are going to be horribly expensive before long.

So far no variety of navy bean has been successfully developed which will grow in our climate. But the pre-eminent centre of research into beans in Europe is the National Vegetable Research Centre, now a part of the Institute of Horticultural Research. In a fit of what I must charitably call absence of mind, public funding for research into beans in the United Kingdom has been cut. It was cut at a late stage in the programme when new varieties were already in the national list trials. The cut was made without consultation with the National Seed Development Organisation—a commercial organisation which the Government created to exploit public-sector bred varieties. Perhaps, however, relief is at hand. The NVRC has applied to the Commission for Community funding for farm-level development of navy bean cultivars.

Apart from averting mass demonstrations by frustrated housewives, it makes sense to find a new crop into which British and European farmers can diversify. I hope that the Government will therefore smile on this application.

That brings me to another point. Industry, farming and the academic world will be disposed to welcome the Government's commitment to a collaborative approach to European research. But they will ask whether this commitment means that more cash will be forthcoming.

The experience of the IHR is that if it is successful in obtaining European funding, the benefit is docked off at home. I wondered whether it was a little ominous when the Minister talked about complementing rather than duplicating. There seems to be a Catch-22. The Commission does not want to find projects which are not funded by Governments in the member states. But our Government do not want to fund anything that is funded from Europe. The Commission believes in additionality; I am not sure that our Government do.

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend has talked about the importance of giving incentives to research programmes without losing national funds. What about the Plant Breeding Institute at Cambridge? I understand that the Government are contemplating the privatisation of that

body without any of the assets going to the Agricultural and Food Research Council, which must damage its ability to take advantage of privatisation.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend draws attention to a real issue. That research establishment is an excellent one and it is incumbent on the Government to ensure that it has the resources that it needs. I hope that the apprehensions of my hon. Friend will prove to be unjustified.

I noted the reservation expressed by my hon. Friend the Minister about the total cost of the programme—£5·3 billion. That is not an excessive sum to be spent jointly by 12 of the wealthiest countries in the world. But I know there is a problem. We have, rightly, been struggling with might and main to limit the growth of the Community budget. But it should not follow that we should reduce the common policy for science and technology to almost nothing. Surely the proper reaction—I am sure that my hon. Friend must be sympathetic to this — is to acknowledge that this is a good policy in which we should invest. To make room for it we must work harder still to limit the common agricultural policy. We must cut it from the 73 per cent. or 79 per cent. or whatever grotesquely disproportionate percentage of the budget it turns out to be. I am informed that the CAP overshoot is likely to be £2 billion this year. That is where savings should be made, not on research funding.

My hon. Friend the Minister in his explanatory memorandum talks about the appropriateness of a "gradual" increase in the proportion of Community resources earmarked for research and technology. That, I suggest with regret, would be a formula for a continued gradual relative decline in Europe's industrial competitiveness yet the very purpose of the policy is to promote Europe's industrial competitiveness.

The last question I should like to consider is that of co-ordination of policy in practice. Within the United Kingdom we have, notoriously, found it hard to co-ordinate and establish priorities in publicly funded research. Ministerial responsibility for programmes has often been split between, for example, the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Trade and Industry, or between the Department of Education and Science and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, with the research councils independently playing a major part in the allocation of taxpayers' money. Responsibility has been diffused to the point at which Ministers in all Governments have too often been unwilling to acknowledge paternity and to fight to secure adequate funding for particular programmes. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Defence has taken an unwarrantedly high proportion of total public expenditure on research and development.

If we face such difficulties within our country, how will 12 European Governments sort out their policy on research? Even to establish the framework programme will be difficult. It will be hugely more difficult to make progress on the second stage of negotiating specific programmes.

It is proposed to outflank that second range of difficulties by having decisions taken by qualified majority. I wonder whether my hon. Friend would agree that the Government will need to clarify their systems and lines of communications between Departments, with industry, and with the academic world, so tha they are prepared to argue effectively in Europe the case that they believe is right. We also need a strong presence of our scientists and officials on the advisory committees of the Commission.

I regard this policy as an exciting prospect, but it raises important and difficult issues. I congratulate my hon. Friend on bringing us to this point and I look forward to him leading the Community further forward.

11.38 pm

Mr. Norman Atkinson (Tottenham): The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) aroused passions earlier by talking about the Labour party and the export of scientific and engineering talent. He proceeded to read out seven or eight sheets of notions conceived before he listened to the Minister setting out the Government's case. I do not know whether he is interested in the debate, but he raised the question of income tax. That has nothing to do with the problem. He shares the romanticism, to which the Prime Minister gave credence yesterday at Question Time, that this has to do with taxation. It has to do with the amounts of petty cash paid to our scientists and engineers. By comparison with any other country in the world, they are so badly underpaid that we are now the biggest exporter of scientific and engineering talent. That is our major problem. Moreover, scientists have to go to other countries to obtain any continuity in their work, and that is another reason for their leaving this country.

We were asked what the Labour party's attitude was towards nuclear issues and research. The phasing out of obsolete reactors does not mean that a Labour Government would switch off the sort of research funds that we are discussing tonight. Phasing out certain reactors does not mean that the United Kingdom will abandon all its studies into, say, particle physics. That is what the great bulk of this money is about. Of course research should continue into fast reactor technology and into fusion, and all the other things connected with CERN. Britain, of necessity, must be interested in high temperature reactors. If nuclear sources of heat can be used for purposes other than the generation of electricity, such research will play a significant part in any future programme, particularly in relation to the conversion of coal.

We are concerned about the restoration of British industry, because that is the most important factor. However, as time is short, I shall concentrate on one point, even though there is much that I would like to say. The fourth item involves £281 million, which is to be given for the application of new technologies to the modernisation of industrial sectors. That worries me, because the amount of funding is obviously insufficient. If the fifth item, involving nuclear research, is taken away, along with information technologies, we are left with about £3 billion out of a total of £5 billion. When the rest is divided up, the amounts are very small.

In the application of new technologies, I am concerned about the translation of pure theory into applied technology. Labour Members who have studied the situation in Europe know about the weaknesses. There is an absence of any sort of co-ordinating agency. All of us would applaud what has been said about the necessity for enforced managerial controls over research programmes of this size, but commercial application is involved. In the remaining days of this month, I hope that the Minister will raise time and again the whole question of how a system can work in the absence of such an agency. I do not know,

[Mr. Norman Atkinson]

for example, what Sir Austin Bide is doing in his investigation in relation to Alvey, and so on. I do not know what conclusions he has reached.

Leading personalities in the scientific world are concerned about the lack of co-ordination, on how manufacturing industry is able to take advantage of what is available and is alerted to the potential of research. The transitional mechanism is non-existent in Europe, and we should give attention to this and to the fact that multinational companies play such a dominant part in European industry and have their own methods of tuning in to what is happening.

An example of the lack of co-ordination is the fact that there is no clearing house for all the PHD research in Europe. It is not fed into a central computer and fed out into industry so that companies understand what is being done. Therefore, much of the work is lost because it is not available to industry.

The hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) ignores other hon. Members on similar occasions, but he is looking with increased agitation at his watch, so I shall make my final point. If the Minister will agree that a co-ordinating agency is a central part of the management that he seeks, I shall make room for the hon. Gentleman.

11.46 pm

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Atkinson), who is a regular attender at these debates, and an expert on this subject.

Bearing in mind the fundamental and desperate problems of the balance of our research programmes, it is a pleasant change for us to be debating research programmes that are not devoted to the military sector. Self-evidently, there are relevant and pertinent programmes included in this proposal, and some worthwhile research is being carried out, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) has said, particularly on cancer and AIDS, all of which will be appreciated by all members of the European Community.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister not to come to an agreement on this until clear and definitive performance yardsticks have been agreed, and he is satisfied that they are in place. These programmes are far too vital for the future of European, and therefore our industry, for the calculations to be wrong, which would lead to some of the programmes being abandoned. These great new industries in Europe will be able to compete internationally only on a pan-European scale, so it is crucial that the initial research is correct.

I greatly welcome the approach of my hon. Friend the Minister. He has a mammoth task, and knows that it is absurd to pretend that the United Kingdom can compete in the industrial big league without some fundamental changes in our research programmes. A balance of 60 per cent. going to military research is a disgrace for an industrialised Western country which has been at peace for over 40 years.

The Government should make the funding of basic and strategic science once more their priority, and let us leave to industry the business of funding applied research and development. As for the European programmes, my hon. Friend is right to be concerned about the Commission's ability to manage these vast but excellent plans. He should proceed only when he is satisfied that the matter is properly gripped.

11.48 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I was in Norwich yesterday at the university of East Anglia, where Professor Davis and Doctor Duncan of the biology department were two of many who have said at many universities that they think that Europe is becoming much more efficient in giving out money in the most worthwhile way. I hand over that bouquet for what it is worth. There is now a high regard for what the Commission is doing in many British universities.

I strongly support any moves that the Government make on wider fusion research, and bringing in the Americans and the Russians.

Cannot the problem of CERN and the exchange rates be sorted out? Every other country has arrangements to ensure that, if the exchange rate goes against it, particle physics does not take up so much of the scientific budget.

In the light of EMBO, we should consider the case for a biological sciences council.

11.50 pm

Mr. Pattie: I share the view of some of those who have participated in the debate that we have not had long enough, but anyone who takes an objective view of the debate and reads the contributions will find, even if the names of the contributors are deleted to ensure absence of party bias or rancour, that the most constructive contributions have come, almost without exception, from the Government Benches.

I compliment especially my hon. Friends the Members for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) and for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page). The speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon was one of the most thoughtful and constructive that we have had on research and development for quite a long time and it will repay further study. Complementing and duplicating was a topic embraced by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West when he was talking about the Bide report and how we can be satisfied that there will be compatibility with European Community programmes. When my hon. Friend studies the Bide report he will note that one section is set aside specifically for European Community activity. There is a deliberate and positive attempt to recognise convergence, complementality and avoidance of duplication, and there will be two related programmes.

I noted with interest the issues that my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon raised about older European industries and defence expenditure, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) referred a short while ago. I noted also the comments that were made on agriculture and horticulture research. I am sure that the report of them will be read carefully by those in other Government Departments.

The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Atkinson) made an extremely constructive contribution, if I may say so. He addressed himself to the question of how we can ensure that innovations become marketable products. That is one of the thrusts of the Bide report, which suggests that others are thinking on the same lines as the hon. Gentleman. The hon. Gentleman talked also about co-ordination. The

various programmes that have been introduced have been established on the basis of a minimum of bureaucracy and the maximum involvement by industry.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) urged me to say that we want action and not rhetoric. In supporting innovation, the Government have spent twice as much in real terms as that which was being spent in 1979 by the previous Labour Government. That is action and not rhetoric. The establishment of the Alvey programme in 1982 was action and not rhetoric. The establishment of ESPRIT 1 in the European framework programme under the jurisdiction of the Government was action and not rhetoric. The establishment of RACE under the Government was also action and not rhetoric. The Bide report was initiated by the Government. The EUREKA programme has been adopted, taken into account and made more realistic by the Government, and we have established the British National Space Centre.

As for the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), he wrote an article which appeared in *The Guardian* recently, which was described later by someone as nothing more than "pseudo scientific piffle." We did not even have the "pseudo scientific piffle" this evening. We had opposition to various programmes announced by the hon. Gentleman. He claimed that the Government are opposing the basic research in Europe programme and industrial technologies in opposing EURAM. Let me make it clear that we are supporting BRITE and EURAM in doubled expenditure terms. We want to double the expenditure — do I have to repeat that again? — yet the hon. Gentleman is saying that we are dragging our feet. This is——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8764/86, a draft Regulation concerning the Framework Programme of Community Activities in the Field of Research and Technological Development 1987 to 1991; endorses the view that the Framework Programme offers an effective means of assessing priorities for European Community Research and Development and for monitoring its implementation; and welcomes the United Kingdom's endeavours to secure a cost-effective programme of high quality scientific and technological research with the main emphasis on activities aimed at promoting Europe's industrial competitiveness.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

DANGEROUS DRUGS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Modification) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 13th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Question agreed to.

JUDGES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Maximum Number of Judges (Scotland) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 12th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Question agreed to.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Recreation and Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 18th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

That the draft Enterprise Ulster (Continuation of Functions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 18th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Question agreed to.

Security Services (Accountability)

Mr. Tim Brinton (Gravesham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your advice on a matter concerning the Adjournment debate. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) will talk about the security services. I seek your advice in view of a letter from the noble Lord Rothschild that will appear in tomorrow's edition of the *Daily Telegraph*. Is it not right that the hon. Member should be extremely careful, in view of the fact tht the noble Lord Rothschild's letter states that the director-general of MI5 has unequivocal evidence that Lord Rothschild was not and never had been a Soviet agent——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I cannot rule on what an hon. Member may say. I cannot rule on a hypothesis. The hon. Member should wait and see.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have just ruled that it is not a point of order.

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

11.55 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I welcome the Minister to the debate. Unlike the Minister, I have had access to secrets. I have been positively vetted and I have attended courses organised by MI5 at Curzon street. Ironically, I have been security cleared for the debate, but the Minister has not.

Today, an ideological difference emerged between the Labour party and the Conservative party. The Labour party believes that MI5 and MI6 should be accountable to Parliament and to the public. The Conservative party says that that accountability should be to a select number of Ministers drawn from the Executive—that is, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, and the Home Secretary.

I should have thought that there could have been agreement on this matter. Bearing in mind that the proceedings in the Australian court have damaged the reputations and integrity of the Cabinet Secretary, the Attorney-General and the Prime Minister, and bearing in mind the contempt in which some members of MI5 and MI6 now hold those three persons because of the harm that that court case has caused to their services, surely the time has come for the Prime Minister to put country before party and pride and to abandon these proceedings.

Lord Rothschild was correct when he told Peter Wright that he thought that the Prime Minister was inexperienced and could not handle these matters properly. I am bound to say that I think that the problem is much graver than that. If there is to be accountability to Parliament, and if there is even to be democracy, Ministers or Prime Ministers should not lie to Parliament. That accusation that an hon. Member lied is so serious that it cannot even be made in the House. We have to say that Ministers or Prime Ministers deliberately and seriously misled Parliament. That is the charge that I level against the Prime Minister and can prove against the Prime Minister. In *Hansard* of 26 March 1981, column 1079, the Prime Minister——

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Have I not just heard the hon. Gentleman make the gravest charge against the Prime Minister, namely that she has misled—or, further, lied to—the House? Is that not a grave and serious matter?

Mr. Deputy Speaker:: That construction can be put on the remarks of the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore). If that was his intention, he must withdraw the expression.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must resume his seat.

Mr. Sedgemore: The allegation that I have made against the Prime Minister is that she has misled the House of Commons. I believe that that allegation is perfectly in order.

Mr. Soames: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am dealing with a point of order. If the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch is alleging that the Prime Minister deliberately misled the House, he must withdraw his remarks.

Mr. Sedgemore: I respectfully argue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I know of no reason not to suggest that the Prime Minister has misled the House of Commons. The word "mislead" is not, in my respectful submission, out of order in "Erskine May" or in the terms of the proceedings of the House. If we could never say that a Minister had misled the House, we could never criticise a Minister at all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House rests on the assumption that we are all honourable Members. Although it may be in order to recognise that an hon. Member may inadvertently mislead the House, it is not in order, and has recently been so ruled by Mr. Speaker, for an hon. Member to accuse any other hon. Member—a Minister or otherwise—of deliberately misleading the House. If the hon. Member is seeking to persist in that, I must tell him that he must withdraw.

Mr. Sedgemore: I shall use any word that you care to mention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is responsible for his own words. I am responsible for judging whether they are admissible. It is for the hon. Member to withdraw the words he used if he is saying that the Prime Minister has deliberately misled the House.

Mr. Sedgemore: I shall withdraw those words and any other words that you care to mention, Sir.

On 26 March 1981, following an investigation after the publication of the Chapman Pincher book, the Prime Minister said:

"The case for investigating Sir Roger Hollis was based on certain leads that suggested, but did not prove, that there had been a Russian intelligence service agent at a relatively senior level in British counter-intelligence in the last years of the war."—[*Official Report*, 26 March 1981; Vol. 1, c. 1079.]

That statement was untrue on an important matter of national security. The proof that it was untrue is as follows. First — I advance this only as a matter of corroboration—I ask the House to turn to an article in *The Times* written nine months later, on 12 December 1981, by Mr. Chapman Pincher. He said:

"Mrs. Thatcher's statement . . . has been analysed by some of the former investigating officers. They have found at least six areas where it is grossly at variance with the facts as they knew them."

I have subsequently discovered that one of those officers was Mr. Peter Wright.

Speaking of the inquiry into the inquiries into allegations against Mr. Roger Hollis, Mr. Chapman Pincher said that they did not arise out of the war. He said:

"In fact they were undertaken because so many MI5 operations in the 1950s and 1960s went so seriously wrong that they could be explained only if there was a high-level spy still in the organisation."

That statement, I subsequently discovered, is true in as far as it states the reasons for the allegations and investigations made against Hollis. What were involved were the operations of the 1950s, and 1960s and not anything that happened in the war. The Prime Minister, when she made her statement on 26 March 1981, knew that.

Indeed, I go further. The Prime Minister had received a letter from the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken)—I spoke to the hon. Gentleman this evening and told him that I would mention this—dated 31 January 1980. That is three months after the right hon. Lady's statement about Blunt and six months before she is said to have met Lord Rothschild. The hon. Member for Thanet, South told her in that letter that suspicion arose out of the operations and foul-ups of the 1950s and 1960s—indeed, as late as 1964. My investigations reveal that some of the information in the letter from the hon. Member for Thanet, South was, in fact, new to the Prime Minister.

In the court case in Australia, Sir Robert Armstrong repeated the Prime Minister's statement of 26 March 1981 in a series of sworn affidavits. He said that the investigations into Sir Roger Hollis had arisen out of the last years of the war. He knew when he swore those affidavits that that statement was untrue, and in a series of heated exchanges in the Australian court the judge replied to Mr. Turnbull:

"Your point was that there was a deliberately misleading statement in the House . . . The point is there. It is made."

The case is made by Mr. Chapman Pincher, by the hon. Member for Thanet, South and his sources, which are good and reliable, by Mr. Peter Wright, by Sir Robert Armstrong and by subsequent investigations. In making that statement on 26 March 1981, the Prime Minister traduced the democratic process.

I should now like to turn briefly to Sir Robert Armstrong, and I shall begin by observing that, when a country sends its Cabinet Secretary on a 12,000-mile journey to mislead a foreign court, that is surely the nadir of moral bankruptcy. Sir Robert Armstrong said that he was "economical with the truth". Some people would say that he privatised it; that is to say, if he can get away with not telling the truth, he is prepared to do so. He kept telling the judge in that trial that he did not know about this important security matter——

Mr. Soames: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Surely it cannot be right for the Floor of this House to be used as a forum for the character assassination of one of the highest public servants in the land who is currently representing the Crown before a court in another country. Can it be right that the character of this good man should be assassinated by an hon. Gentleman during an Adjournment debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Speaker has recently drawn attention to the problems that arise when allegations are made in the House about someone who does not have the right or the opportunity to seek redress for his grievance about the allegations made against him. We should be very cautious, but so far I have not heard on this point anything from the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) that I could rule out of order.

Mr. Sedgemore: I am grateful for that ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall not be bullied by Government Members—*[Interruption.]*—and I shall not be deflected from the truth by cynical and callous laughter.

Sir Robert Armstrong kept telling the judge that he did not know about this or that important matter of security. I find that odd, because, since the time of Harold Wilson's Government, the Cabinet Secretary is the principal civil servant for security matters. If he does not know what is going on, it means that the Prime Minister does not know. If there is no knowledge of what is going on, there is no accountability. That is assuming that Sir Robert told the truth in the Australian court when he said that he was ignorant of the matters about which he was being cross-examined.

I shall now come to the matter of Lord Rothschild. In order to get to the bottom of this cloudy issue one must seek to understand the possible motives of Lord Rothschild in his conversations with Peter Wright. Those in the know who advise me know a lot more about this matter than I do, and they tell me that there are three possible motives for Lord Rothschild seeking to get Wright to encourage Mr. Chapman Pincher to produce his book.

First, they say it is possible that Lord Rothschild still thought that Sir Roger Hollis was a spy and that the Government had come to the wrong conclusion. My advisers do not think that that is likely, but they say it is a possible motive. Secondly—this leads me directly to the point just raised, though I must say that I knew about it before then—they say it is possible that Lord Rothschild was protecting himself or a third party. Those in the know tell me, and I believe that they are right, that Lord Rothschild was not the fifth or sixth or seventh man or, indeed, a spy at all.

They say that there is a third possibility, and in my view it is the most intriguing and possibly the correct one. They say they believe that Lord Rothschild was attempting to create a cause celebre by which some short-term instability would be created inside the security services in order to create more political control in the long term. The question is simple. Did the Prime Minister know about that? Did she authorise Lord Rothschild to do and say what he did? Unless Lord Rothschild was so authorised, whatever his motives, he was in serious breach of the Official Secrets Act 1911. That is the point that Conservative Members refuse to examine. The fourth matter relates to the Attorney-General. I am in some difficulty in this respect, because I have a sneaking and fairly high regard for the Attorney-General and I will not traduce him in this debate as I might otherwise have done. I am very sorry that Sir Robert Armstrong traduced the Attorney-General for a week without correcting his comments about the Attorney-General. There are some questions that the Attorney-General must answer. Why did he tell William Heinemann, Mr. Wright's publisher, in October that he should drop the Australian case and save his money

[Mr. Sedgemore]

because the Prime Minister and Mr. Bob Hawke, the Australian Prime Minister, were going to fix the Australian courts? Is it appropriate conduct for Prime Ministers of two countries to fix the Australian courts——

Mr. Soames: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has now said on the Floor of the House that the Attorney-General suggested that a court in a foreign land was going to be fixed. Is that not a fundamental breach of privilege in this House? It cannot continue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not sure that I followed the point that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch was making. However, I thought that his point was rather different from that put to me in the hon. Gentleman's point of order.

Mr. Sedgemore: The second question that I would like to ask is, is it appropriate for a Law Officer to talk about foreign courts and those possibilities in those terms? I understand that, if the matter had been left to the Attorney-General, he would not have tried to stop the publication of Mr. Wright's book. That was basically the Prime Minister's decision. Surely, under the conventions of our constitution, before the Attorney-General tried to re-write them with his bogus distinctions between criminal and civil actions, he should have been consulted. He was not consulted about the publication of Mr. Chapman Pincher's book, but who were the lawyers who gave the advice in that case? They must have been responsible to some Minister, either to the Attorney-General, the Home Secretary or the Prime Minister. Who will accept the responsibility for their curious advice — the unnamed lawyers or one of the Ministers?

If we sum up the facts of the case and examine the conduct of the Prime Minister, the Cabinet Secretary, Lord Rothschild and the Attorney-General, we discover that their actions show that the security services are out of control, that there is no proper accountability and that national security is not safe in the Prime Minister's hands.

In response to that, we should take two steps. First we should set up a Select Committee, not of both Houses, but of the House of Commons—the democratically elected Members of Parliament. The members of that Committee should not simply be drawn from existing Privy Councillors, most of whom will at some time have come from the Executive. They should be drawn from existing Privy Councillors and Back Benchers who would have to be made Privy Councillors and would have to be positively vetted.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Including sacked Parliamentary Private Secretaries.

Mr. Sedgemore: At least sacked Parliamentary Private Secretaries have been positively vetted; that is more than the hon. Member for South Africa can claim.

Secondly, that Select Committee should be advised by a parliamentary security commission, which should have the power to investigate on behalf of the Committee and also on behalf of those who lay complaints against members of the security services. That is a sensible and modest proposal which arises out of this shabby episode, and I hope that the Minister will agree to it.

12.14 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman was not in the House for much of this afternoon's debate, but it means that I can be excused for repeating some matters that have already been dealt with today.

I must first say that anyone answering such a debate is constrained in what he can say because he must stick to the practice of not commenting on security matters. The House also knows that I am under a further constraint because I cannot comment on matters in issue in the case in Australia. Of that case I shall say only that the Government are defending the principle that former intelligence agents owe a lifelong duty of confidentiality. I think that that is something that any sensible person can understand.

I am bound to say that I was deeply shocked by the frivolity displayed by some Opposition Members this afternoon, who seemed to think that it was a huge joke that we had failed to prevent the publication in Ireland of a book by another former agent. These are not matters for frivolity. The attitude of Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), cannot increase the standing of the House in the country. All that they have succeeded in showing is a determination to make whatever mischief they can, regardless of the interests of the country.

What the hon. Gentleman said this evening hardly improves the argument for greater disclosure of security matters to a Select Committee. I would think that what he said completely destroys any argument there might have been for disclosure of information to such a body, on which he could sit.

The real issue is that there obviously cannot be complete openness about those responsible for the nation's security. If we are to keep our defences against espionage and terrorism, secrecy is essential. There is obviously a public interest in seeing that the Security Service carries out its duties properly, but such public interest in the oversight of the Security Service must be satisfied by something other than a process of chequebook journalism.

The established practice—and it is not necessarily the wrong practice just because it is long established and has been followed over the years by Governments of the Right and the Left—is that the responsibility for these matters should fall upon the Home Secretary of the day, who in turn is accountable to Parliament.

It is said that there should be some external oversight, but a number of questions have to be asked and answered. First, what form of external oversight will preserve effectively the necessary secrecy of Security Service operations and the necessary confidence in that secrecy?

Secondly, what form of external oversight can be devised that will not blunt or diminish the very personal responsibility of the Home Secretary of the day to this House? Thirdly, given the constraints under which it would have to operate, would any new body actually be able to meet the concerns expressed and thereby serve any useful purpose?

That brings me to the point made by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary this afternoon. A barrier of secrecy must be drawn between the Security Service on the one hand and the debates in this House or on the front pages of newspapers on the other. But then the question is, on which side of that dividing line would a monitoring

body sit? On the secret side? How would that help public accountability? Even if it were a Select Committee of this House, what good could it do if all that it could say was that it was satisfied that all was well without being able to produce evidence of methods of operation to which it had been given access? If it was not given access to those operations, how could it satisfy those who are so anxious to find out more about the operations of the secret services?

Mr. Soames: I entirely accept my hon. and learned Friend's comments about operational matters, but could there not be a role for a Security Commission which had oversight rather than hindsight in respect of administrative measures, which might have prevented the situation in which Mr. Wright finds himself?

Mr. Waddington: I was hoping to come to some of those matters later. My hon. Friend heard what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said this afternoon. It may be possible to return to those matters later when there is less froth and less nonsense being talked in the House by Members such as the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch. We may then be able to return to these issues in a sane and sensible mood, but tonight I do not have time to do more than point out the evident absurdities in some of the arguments advanced by hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch.

There are difficulties if the body is to be on the secret side of the fence, as it were, but if it sat on the public side of the dividing line it is hard to see how it could perform any useful function at all.

Various suggestions have been made as to the kind of body that could carry out a reviewing role. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) made one suggestion earlier today. Others have included the Security Commission mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames). As my hon. Friend knows, the Security Commission is a panel of people called upon ad hoc to report on particular matters. It does not attempt to provide a continuous monitoring of the security services. If it were given a wider public monitoring role its membership would need to be supplemented in a way that might make it little different from, say, a committee of Privy Councillors. What is certain is that any of those suggestions would tend to blunt—because they would share it—the heavy responsibility to the House which rests on the Home Secretary of the day. That is an important obstacle. There may be a way round it, but so far it is very difficult to see one and I have certainly heard nothing today to suggest a ready route around it.

Some of those who argue for some form of external oversight talk as though the present arrangements left Parliament wholly uninformed. That is evident nonsense. There has been greater openness under this Government than ever before. In view of certain remarks made tonight, perhaps I should prove my point by spelling out again some of what was said by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary this afternoon.

Mr. John Carlisle: Talking about the remarks made by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), should it not be noted that the hon. Gentleman was sacked for leaking secrets from the office of the then Secretary of State for Energy, and admonished by the Prime Minister of the day, so the House should take virtually no notice of what he has said this evening?

Mr. Sedgemore: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was not sacked for leaking any documents from the office of the Secretary of State. It is typical of the hon. Gentleman that he cannot distinguish between the truth and lies.

Mr. Waddington: I do not intend to get involved in these matters, save to say that the whole of the hon. Member's conduct tonight has done no credit to him or to anyone else and he cannot complain if he is attacked on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Sedgemore: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Minister to stand there and seek to back up the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), who has deliberately misled the House about what happened to me when I was in government? Can Ministers act with Back Benchers unable to distinguish between truth and lies? I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the same protection as that for which those hon. Members have asked. That dreadful Minister there does not know the difference.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Unless I misunderstood the Minister, I did not hear him make the allegation about which the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) complains.

Mr. Sedgemore: The Minister condoned the allegation, and he knows it. I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you should protect Back-Bench Members from that kind of conduct from that kind of Minister. It is not acceptable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that the Minister is seeking to respond to the hon. Gentleman's allegation.

Mr. Waddington: There was no allegation, but some may notice that it is always the bullies of this world who shout the loudest when they get kicked back.

I was just reminding the House of some of the important points——

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock on Wednesday evening and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House, without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-five minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 4 December 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRIGHTON MARINE PALACE AND PIER BILL *[Lords]*
Read a Second time, and committed.

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 11 December.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Butter

1. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much butter is currently stored in intervention in the United Kingdom; how much butter is imported annually into the United Kingdom; and what steps he is taking to improve the marketing of British butter.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): The United Kingdom currently has about 260,000 tonnes of butter in intervention. Imports have declined in each of the last five years and stood at 138,700 tonnes in 1985. The marketing of British butter is primarily a matter for the industry itself, but the Government have taken the initiative of establishing Food From Britain, with substantial Government funding, and are pressing for reform of the Community's milk regime in order to secure a viable long-term future for the United Kingdom dairy industry.

Mr. Hughes: Can the Minister confirm that butter stocks in British intervention stores have increased by a staggering 33 per cent. in the past six months? That being so, will the Government make a quantity of butter available, free, to old-age pensioners this Christmas?

Mr. Gummer: If we could find a way to ensure that the butter that was given to deserving people did not mean that there was less butter sold and, therefore, more going into intervention, we would be happy to do it. I am looking carefully at proposals, but I have not found a way to do it. I would like to, but I cannot see that it is sensible to increase the stocks of butter by providing at great expense the sort of system which we have done before.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the New Zealanders and other importers have access to the United Kingdom market but do not have the right to sell? They must sell their butter on better performance and better price. Therefore, it is the English butter industry which is failing to sell its British butter production.

Mr. Gummer: It is important that the British butter industry should seek to sell to British housewives. It is difficult to talk about the fact that we are self-sufficient if we are putting so many tonnes of butter into intervention while other people, not just New Zealanders, are selling their butter on our market even though, in many cases, that butter is more expensive than ours. New Zealand butter was more expensive than British butter in Tesco's last Monday, and it is only 1p less expensive in Sainsbury's today.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. John Hume.

Mr. John Home Robertson *rose*——

Mr. John David Taylor: It is not the first time you have made that mistake, Mr. Speaker. Other people in Northern Ireland have suffered worse for the same mistake.

As the stocks of butter are a fundamental reason why an urgent reform of the common agricultural policy is required, is the Minister not surprised that a reform of the CAP is not on the agenda for the meeting of the Heads of the EEC Governments when they meet later this month?

Mr. Gummer: The basic arguments about the reform of the agricultural policy are on the agenda for the meeting of the Agriculture Ministers next week, when we will try to get an answer to our dairy and beef problems and the structures. That is where the negotiations ought to take place, and that is where we shall take the steps which this presidency is determined to achieve.

Mr. McLoughlin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is essential that we keep confidence in the dairy industry? —[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] Is he not disturbed by the remarks of Sir Stephen Roberts, the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board, this morning, who said—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must paraphrase not quote.

Mr. McLoughlin: The chairman of the Milk Marketing Board is predicting that there will be a cut of 11 per cent. in the British dairy quota. He is also predicting the loss of thousands of jobs in the United Kingdom creamery industry. Does my right hon. Friend agree that such scaremongering, ahead of any consultations and any proposals, is damaging the British dairy industry?

Mr. Gummer: The kind of statements that are sometimes made frighten people entirely unnecessarily. There needs to be a more sensible balance between supply and demand in the dairy industry, and it has to be achieved on a time scale that is acceptable to the industry. We must also ensure that it is fair across the whole of Europe. That is what this Government are determined to achieve, and that is what we shall be fighting for on Monday.

Mr. Home Roberston: As the British presidency is about to finish with an all-time record butter mountain that is costing £1 million a day, is the Minister aware that the whole House hopes that he will be able to redeem his reputation at next week's Council meeting? The Opposition would strongly support effective action to

control over-production, but we expect the Minister not to sell out Britain's interests, as he did in 1984, otherwise this particular turkey is likely to be set aside long before Christmas.

Mr. Gummer: We obtained an extremely good deal for Britain's interests in 1984. We have never sold out Britain's interests. The only people who sell out Britain's interests are those who suggest that this Government do not stand four square behind the consumer and the farmer in Britain.

Food Prices

2. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the percentage rise in food prices between 1980 and 1985 as compared with all consumer expenditure items.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): Between 1980 and 1985, the food component of the retail prices index rose by 31 per cent. compared with a 42 per cent. increase in the retail prices index as a whole.

Mr. Atkins: Does my hon. Friend agree that this is a splendid success for British agriculture and for the British Government? Will he compare the average annual increase of 6·1 per cent. under this Government with the 16·4 per cent. each year under the last Labour Government?

Mr. Thompson: I should like to compare that increase again and to emphasise the comparison. I reiterate the 6·1 per cent. increase under this Government and the 16·4 per cent. increase under the previous Government. We try as hard as we can to keep food prices at a reasonable level.

Mr. Deakins: Would it make any difference to the comparison the Minister has drawn if the base figure was that for 1978 or 1979?

Mr. Thompson: The fact remains that food prices have increased at a lower rate under this Government than when the hon. Gentleman was a Minister in his party's Government.

Mr. Marland: Does my hon. Friend agree that the marvellous record of the food producers of this country is a great contribution towards reducing the rate of inflation?

Mr. Thompson: It is not difficult to agree with that question. Indeed, I fully agree with it.

Mr. Randall: Does the Minister agree that the figures he has quoted are averages and that they are quite misleading in respect of poor people? Does he agree that food prices for the poor are much higher, certainly when they are expressed as a percentage of the total income of those who fall into this category?

Mr. Thompson: Not all food prices rise and fall at the same rate. There have been declines this year in the price of food that the poor buy — for instance, in lamb, margarine, cooking fats, tea, sugar, processed vegetables and processed fruit. There has been a relatively stable market in fresh beef, bacon, chicken, pork, butter, milk products, soft drinks and ice cream. Therefore, a total diet can easily be constructed by buying food that has not increased, or has increased very little, in price.

Sheep Farmers (Radiation Compensation)

4. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures have been taken to compensate sheep farmers affected by the restrictions imposed following the Chernobyl disaster.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): Following full discussions with industry representatives, we introduced three schemes of compensation for sheep producers in the areas in which movement and slaughter restrictions have been imposed. We consider that these compensation arrangements represent a fair and balanced response to the needs of sheep producers whose marketing, prices and costs have been affected by the restrictions.

Sir Hector Monro: I thank my right hon. Friend for the steps that he has taken, unlike any other country, following Chernobyl. However, will he do all that he can to ensure that every farmer who has lost income because of the disaster receives compensation through one or other of these very helpful schemes?

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. I shall certainly be prepared to consider any new cases which might slip through the arrangements which we already have. I should have thought that we had already thought through almost all the cases where there has been hardship.

Mr. Torney: What steps has the Minister taken to ensure that British sheep farmers are compensated for the sheep that were stolen or damaged when they were taken across to France? Will he ensure that France pays that compensation to British farmers? Will he take retaliatory action if that sort of thing is continued by the French?

Mr. Jopling: Although the question was about Chernobyl, I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman, as he will no doubt have seen in the press, that the French Government have said that they will be responsible for compensation in those lamentable cases.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Secretary of State, having acknowledged the fact that the sheep farmers have been badly affected by Chernobyl, now recognise that they face further threats in the less-favoured areas from the cereal set-aside policy? Has the Secretary of State plans to assist——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question concerns compensating sheep farmers.

Mr. Livsey: Has the Secretary of State plans to assist the sheep farmers who may be affected?

Hon. Members: Answer.

Mr. Jopling: I am afraid that I did not hear the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question, because of the noise made by hon. Members wondering whether the hon. Gentleman was aware of what Chernobyl was. He will no doubt have seen — although perhaps he has not — the various schemes, which have been widely welcomed by the sheep farmers affected by that unfortunate fall-out.

Mr. Home Robertson: In view of the public concern among sheep farmers and others about Chernobyl, which is reinforced by the fact that sheep are still under restriction and affected more than seven months after an

event which took place 1,400 miles away, will the Minister undertake to publish new contingency measures to deal with nuclear emergencies as soon as they are prepared?

Mr. Jopling: Levels remain high only in the upland areas. Of the 4 million sheep in the United Kingdom which were originally subject to controls, fewer than 300,000 remain under control. Levels remain high because of a number of factors arising from the nature of the terrain and the dietary habits of sheep in upland areas. I shall certainly make announcements as I think it right and proper to make them.

Quick-frozen Foodstuffs

5. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received about European Community document 9402/84 on the approximation of laws relating to quick-frozen foodstuffs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We have received recent written and oral comments from the representatives of frozen food manufacturers, retailers and refrigeration engineers. Discussions are continuing in Brussels. We are maintaining a general reserve on this proposal.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend assure the House that the Government will continue to oppose this unhelpful draft directive, which is harmful to both consumers and traders? Will he tell the Commission that this nation of shopkeepers knows more about selling frozen foods than the rest of the Common Market put together?

Mr. Thompson: I agree that this is one of the dafter Common Market directives. We will oppose the Community measures in this field unless we can modify them to meet United Kingdom interests.

Sir John Wells: Is my hon. Friend aware that the entire frozen food industry, especially at the retail end, is extremely concerned about the regulations concerning cabinets and so on——

Mr. Robert Atkins: There is nothing wrong with our Cabinet.

Sir John Wells: I was referring to freezer cabinets. That is causing great concern to the trade, and I hope that my hon. Friend will look into it.

Mr. Thompson: I am fully aware of the retail trade's concern. I have arranged today to meet some of its representatives so that we can see whether we can possibly find a way through this directive that will help everyone in the United Kingdom.

Dairy Industry

6. **Mr. Latham** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the proposed charge to dairy farmers in respect of inspections.

Mr. Gummer: I explained the basis of the proposed charge in the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend on 20 November. The £90 charge will cost wholesale producers with the best standards less than £30 a year. Even so my right hon. Friend and I are considering a reduction to £80 for herds of fewer than 20 cows. We also propose to adjust our arrangements so that charging will bear less heavily on the untreated milk sector, including farmhouse caterers using untreated milk. Proposals for regulations are being issued today.

Mr. Latham: That is a step in the right direction. However, when milk producers face further cuts in quotas, is this not a bad time to impose charges of up to £90 for a visit that often last much less than an hour? Should not those charges be substantially reduced?

Mr. Gummer: I do not think that my hon. Friend is right about that. The charge is made not for the visit but to cover the cost of carrying it out, including all the back-up work, administration, testing, travel time and so on. I have been through every detail making up the charges and I have convinced myself that they are the right charges, with no element of profit whatsoever. In those circumstances, it is not unreasonable that farmers should have to bear the cost of ensuring that their market is greater because their products are so clearly guaranteed.

Mr. Hicks: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is somewhat misleading to use the argument about the number of visits that the £80 or £90 will cover? It is how he arrives at those figures that troubles dairy farmers.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is no doubt right that people are troubled by that, partly because some people —I know that my hon. Friend is also concerned about this — have made statements that are entirely untrue. Consequently, I have sought to give the exact details. I should be happy to go into those details with any hon. Member, because I want people to know that we have been absolutely fair.

Mr. Home Robertson: Why have dairy farmers been singled out for these excessive, unjustifiable charges, or do the Government intend to impose similar charges on shops and restaurants for their public health inspections?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman destroys his case by talking about excessive charges. They are not excessive. They cover the cost of undertaking that work. They ensure that the dairy industry can sell more milk than it would otherwise sell. We have been very careful in that we do not propose to charge those catering in their own homes using untreated milk. That seems to be sensible. We have tried to obtain a proper balance, but ultimately it is reasonable for people to pay the price of ensuring that they sell more of their products and that others in competition have the same high standards.

Mr. Jackson: Will my right hon. Friend remind the House of the average cost to public funds of subsidising every dairy herd in the country?

Mr. Gummer: On average, every dairy herd in the country is subsidised from public funds to the tune of £6,000 a year——

Mr. Budgen: £8,000.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend may like to know that the figure of £8,000 was for the year before; it is £6,000 this year. I should like us to be absolutely accurate. The shops, restaurants and so on mentioned by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) pay rates, out of which their testing is done.

Industrial Fishing

7. **Mr. Richard Page** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent steps the Government have taken to control industrial fishing within the EEC.

Mr. Gummer: At the end of 1985 we successfully opposed an increase in the by-catch in the Norway pout fishery for the 1985-86 season; during the revision of the technical conservation regulations, which will take effect on 1 January 1987, we obtained further improvements including a total ban on the shredding and processing of fish for industrial purposes on board vessels, and additions to the list of protected species. I believe that we should fight against this kind of industrial fishing.

Mr. Page: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply, although I do not think that it will affect the fishing fleet of south-west Hertfordshire. Will the new provisions that were brought in on 6 November have any effect on these industrial fisheries?

Mr. Gummer: Indeed, they will. We are fighting such fishing in various ways. We have just made a trilateral agreement with Norway and Sweden, and will stand fast by our determination not to see the sort of industrial fishing that some want. It means that the Commission's inspectors will be able to require inspection and sampling in their presence of the catches of vessels that they have specified. Consequently, they will be able to oversee the discharge of industrial catches from specified vessels. Under this extremely successful common fisheries policy, we shall once again on a Community basis be able to control industrial fishing.

Mr. Wallace: I welcome the moves which the Government have made to restore the Norwegian pout fishing by-catch to 10 per cent. Will the Minister take this opportunity to say whether at yesterday's meeting of the Council of Ministers there were any measures agreed that will help to control industrial fishing? Perhaps he will refer to some of the measures that will help the fishing fleet but are not directed to combating industrial fishing?

Mr. Gummer: With the measures that we negotiated right through last night we shall be able to help the British fishing industry considerably. I shall be announcing later precisely what these are. On industrial fishing, the great advantage was that for the first time in the Fisheries Council no one even suggested that we should be extending the Danes' right to catch Norwegian pout. That shows how much we have progressed in the past 18 months. I believe that, on that basis, the battle has been won.

Mr. Harris: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the position which he has set out today. Does he agree that industrial fishing of all sorts, particularly the dreadful experience that we had of the bulk fishing of mackerel, has brought stocks to a desperate state in the seas around our coast? Will he continue to fight against this exploitation of those stocks?

Mr. Gummer: Fish is an extremely valuable food and far too valuable to be used for industrial purposes as some have done in the past. Production for those purposes can take place far more effectively on land. If other means are used for the production of that sort of protein, we should have a fishery that is used for human consumption.

Mr. Donald Stewart: I welcome the advance that has been made in reducing the by-catch in pout fishing. Will the Minister remember that there are certain forms of industrial fishing, for fish such as sand-eels and blue whiting, that are not for human consumption, and that that should continue despite his worthy efforts to end the other type of industrial fishing?

Mr. Gummer: The right hon. Gentleman is right to suggest that we do not want to stop industrial fishing for species that cannot be used for human consumption. The Government are determined in all the circumstances to lean towards conservation of stocks for human consumption. That is a proper and moral way of using the benefits of the sea.

Mr. Skinner: Has the Minister noticed that the Foreign Secretary has found a pretty good answer, in his opinion, to the threat of industrial fishing around the Falklands, and that is the imposition of a 150-mile exclusion zone? If that zone will work there, why do we not introduce such a zone here and tell the other members of the EEC and the rest of them, who we reckon to be our colleagues, that we are taking the action to save the British fishing industry?

Mr. Gummer: It is sad that the hon. Gentleman knows so little about fishing, as he would coming from his constituency, that he does not understand that it is because of the EEC common fisheries policy that we are protecting the fish for the whole of Europe. I am proud that we are doing so and that Britain is taking the lead.

Mr. Randall: Is the Minister satisfied that all the existing measures on by-catches are sufficient to protect commercial stocks, especially in respect of the Danes?

Mr. Gummer: I am not satisfied, and we must continue fighting to ensure that the rules are kept. All the evidence this year shows that there is much more keeping of the rules. The fact that the Danish Minister of Fisheries has been attacked by Danish fishermen for being too tough, and that the Dutch Minister is under great pressure in his House of Commons because he has been so tough on conservation, show how successful our policy is. We in Britain should be proud of it instead of, like the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), always attacking every success that Britain achieves.

Pesticides

8. **Sir John Wells** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is being taken to control the supply and use of pesticides.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Powers to control the supply and use of pesticides are contained in part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 and were implemented in the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986, which came into force on 6 October.

Sir John Wells: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is great anxiety about the pesticide temir, or dinoseb, or whatever it is called, and that it has been withdrawn already in the United States? Will he update the House on what he intends to do in future about this product?

Mr. Thompson: I know of my hon. Friend's great interest in this matter because of his constituency interest in ICI and his own professional background. Today the Government have suspended all approvals that authorise

the sale, supply and use of dinoseb, dinoseb acetate, dinoseb amine binapacryl and dinoterb, pending a full review by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is one thing to make regulations on pesticides to protect the public and the countryside, but quite another to make them effective? What is he doing to advise the public and farmers on the use of pesticides so that the excellent new regulations can work?

An Hon. Member: Nothing.

Mr. Thompson: "Nothing" is not the right answer. There are 72 Ministry officers, the Health and Safety Commission, local authority officers and contractors in the trade to whom we are supplying information all the time. That information is constantly updated. With that army, we should be able to monitor the pesticide regulations.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours: I welcome the Government's decision, in relation to the recommendations, to reconsider the distribution of those pesticide products. Would it not be better, whenever concern is expressed abroad which leads to the withdrawal of pesticides from distribution, if that automatically triggered a re-examination of the distribution of those products on the British market?

Mr. Thompson: That is what happens. I was asked a question on this subject on 7 November last, and I can give the House a more detailed answer. The scientific subcommittee, acting on the basis that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, considered data provided by companies supplying dinoseb products, and, as a result of its recommendation, and with the agreement of the chairman and other members of the ACP, we have introduced the ban today as a matter of urgency.

Sir John Farr: What further progress has my hon. Friend made in analysing the Union Carbide chemical, aldecarb? In a reply a fortnight ago he said that he was conducting experiments into whether it should be allowed to be sold in this country, in view of the fact that, in parallel tests that have been conducted abroad, it has been found to destroy, or certainly damage, the immune system.

Mr. Thompson: We are carrying out those tests with the same urgency as we carried out those on dinoseb. I shall advise the House or write to my right hon. Friend as soon as those tests have been completed.

Mr. Home Robertson: I welcome the Government's decision to act on and control the availability of dinoseb in the light of new evidence. Dinoseb has been on the market for a long time. That must raise serious questions not only about this chemical but about others, such as 2,4,5-T and aldicarb. Has the time not come for a further review of the procedures for clearing agricultural chemicals?

Mr. Thompson: We are constantly reviewing, as I have already said twice today. This particular chemical is not dangerous to the consumer; it is dangerous to the person who applies it. We have taken this swift action because of the possible effects on female operatives. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the number of women engaged in farming and horticulture is growing, and is welcome.

Beef

9. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has made progress in European negotiations for maintaining beef variable premiums for United Kingdom beef products.

Mr. Jopling: The Agriculture Council is considering proposals for reform of the beef regime, including a Communitywide premium scheme which would replace our variable beef premium. We are pressing for agreement on arrangements which give adequate and effective support to our industry.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Minister acknowledge that in areas such as mine, where beef production is crucial to the rural economy, and where the range of alternatives is limited, it is vital that some equivalent support to the variable beef premium is maintained? Will he fight to maintain that level of support to maintain the viability of rural economies in areas such as mine?

Mr. Jopling: Although a number of member states remain strongly attached to intervention as the main form of support, there is a general recognition that intervention is proving too costly. There is a growing feeling of support for the introduction of a new premium on a Communitywide basis for the first time. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that that is a welcome move.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the proposal put forward by the EEC to limit the premium to specialist beef producers with 50 head of cattle discriminates against the British farmer and that he will have none of it?

Mr. Jopling: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Commission's proposal that the premium should be limited to the first 50 animals on any holding is unacceptable because it would discriminate against the United Kingdom. Any new premium would be acceptable only if it did not discriminate against us.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Did the Minister propose a scheme for beef producers similar to that for our sheep producers? If not, why not?

Mr. Jopling: I should like to see our beef variable premium scheme being extended to the whole Community, but it is unpopular with other member states, which do not have the United Kingdom's administrative machinery for running such a scheme. The Commission is anxious to secure a more uniform regime, and a majority of member states prefer intervention as the main form of support. However, acceptance of a new premium Communitywide is growing.

Mr. Cockeram: Will my right hon. Friend explain to his European colleagues that the British beef variable premium scheme directly assists producers and keeps prices down for consumers, and that that must be better than piling up stocks in intervention?

Mr. Jopling: I agree with my hon. Friend, because the beef variable premium scheme gives producers direct price support, keeps consumer prices down and is a less costly and more efficient method than intervention support for beef.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the Minister acknowledge that there are considerable difficulties in the beef sector at

present because of fluctuations in green currency valuations? Does he accept that there is universal support for the principle of a beef variable premium because it is unique in CAP terms in that it benefits both producers and consumers? Will he fight determinedly to keep that principle?

Mr. Jopling: I agree with the hon. Gentleman and I am worried about the low level of beef prices at present, but, as a large farmer, he will know that beef prices are traditionally low at this time of year. Therefore, at present it is important that we match the devaluation of the Irish currency. He will know that immediately after that was accepted I made an application to the Commission in Brussels, which has at long last accepted it and put forward a formal proposal to the Council. Next week we shall fight hard to get the 6 per cent. beef green pound devaluation agreed by the Council of Ministers.

Baby Foods (Additives)

10. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce new regulations on the use of additives in baby foods.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The use of additives in foods, including those specially prepared for babies and young children, is already controlled by the Food Act and regulations made under it. As part of its continual review programme the Food Advisory Committee is currently reviewing the use of additives in baby foods. When completed, the committee's report will be published.

Mrs. Roe: Does my hon. Friend recognise the considerable work being done by food retailers and the children's hospital at Great Ormond street in identifying additives with harmful effects? Does he agree that certain additives are essential for public safety to prevent risk from contaminated food?

Mr. Thompson: We believe that at present there are no additives with harmful effects, but we continually review them. I agree with my hon. Friend that the Great Ormond street hospital and retailers do a great deal to monitor what they sell and what is produced.

Forestry (Broadleaf Trees)

11. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received in favour of incentives to farmers to diversify into the systematic planting of broadleaf trees.

Mr. Jopling: I have received representations from a number of organisations and individuals on the benefits of an expansion of farm woodlands. These have stressed the environmental benefits of including a broadleaved component, but have not pressed exclusively for these species.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my right hon. Friend for what I hope is an awareness of the need to encourage broadleaf woodland. When does he expect to be able to respond to the report prepared by the Nature Conservancy Council, entitled "Nature Conservation and Afforestation in Great Britain"?

Mr. Jopling: I was interested to see the report presented by the Nature Conservancy Council during the summer. However, the Government's response is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I hope that my hon. Friend will table a question to my right hon. Friend on that matter.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the growing concern in many parts of the country at the current system of grants and fiscal incentives used by management companies to provide blanket afforestation in many upland areas, resulting in considerable damage to farming and environmental interests, as well as to tourism?

Mr. Jopling: We must remember that the reason for so much forestry today is largely due to the activities of specialist firms. My hon. Friend is especially critical of the environmental aspects, and I strongly agree that all future tree plantings must be examined to ensure that they are environmentally sympathetic.

Mr. Randall: What special arrangements would the Minister envisage being provided for tenant farmers who do not own the land?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman has put his finger on one of the greatest difficulties, bearing in mind that a farmer or anyone else who plants trees does not get a return for a very long time. One of the most difficult problems that we and others are considering is how to bring the tenant farmer within the wider group of foresters.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Before my right hon. Friend becomes too attached to trees as a way of saving the rural economy, will he instead, or in addition, persuade planning departments to deal sympathetically with alternative enterprises and developments in those areas which will provide more employment at lower public cost?

Mr. Jopling: I think that the use of trees is only one of a package of ways to help the rural economy. However, I agree with my hon. Friend's point about planning. Many hon. Members and people outside the House—especially in rural areas—would like to see greater sympathy by members of planning committees to allowing non-agricultural developments in the rural countryside, provided that they are sympathetic to the environment.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

12. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress on his priorities as President of the Council of Agriculture Ministers.

Mr. Jopling: My priority as President remains the expeditious handling of the Commission's proposals for the reform of the common agricultural policy, particularly in the beef and milk sectors, and the measures which contribute to the completion of the internal market.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Secretary of State tell us what priority he will give to low pay in agriculture, especially at a time when we know that two fifths of those working in the industry are on wages at or below supplementary benefit levels, and at the same time farmers' profits have increased enormously? Is that not a scandal in an industry in which people work so hard and give so much for the benefit of this country?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman should have visited the Smithfield show this week and talked about farmers profits increasing enormously. He will know that, in real

terms, since the middle of the previous Labour Government's term in office there has been a decline in in farmers' profits. Their profits were down by 43 per cent. last year. The hon. Gentleman would have been lynched if he had made his point at the Smithfield show.

Mr. Pollock: Does my right hon. Friend accept the need to secure a proper scheme for the future of the beef industry? May I re-echo the plea for a scheme that will not in any way have a limitation on headage payments, to allow a viable scheme to carry on and give confidence to the farming community?

Mr. Jopling: We are very conscious of the need to reform the beef sector. As my hon. Friend will have heard a few moments ago—and I am glad to endorse this once again — any limitation in the number of animals that would qualify for the new premium would be unacceptable to us.

Miss Maynard: Will the Minister make it his priority to ensure that the Government stop breaching the European social charter in relation to farm workers' pay, as two in five farm workers are paid wages below the decency threshold as detailed in the European charter? This is at a time when Lloyds bank has forecast a 50 per cent. increase in farmers' profits this year and when even the National Farmers Union has said that there will be a 20 per cent. increase in farmers' profits this year?

Mr. Jopling: If the hon. Lady will give me a pound for every percentage point increase below 56 per cent. this year I will give her a pound for every percentage point increase above that figure. As she well knows, responsibility for farm workers' wages is not mine but that of the Agricultural Wages Board.

Mr. Chapman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that at least a tithe of the huge amount spent on subsidy to encourage food production should go towards encouraging good conservation policies to protect the landscape, bearing in mind that conservation of the countryside is not incompatible with sound food production and agricultural policy?

Mr. Jopling: I agree with my hon. Friend. I refer him to a survey completed not long ago. The very large number of trees and lengths of hedgerows planted each year by farmers shows that they are the largest group of conservationists in this country.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Blair** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 December 1986.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of the Netherlands.

Mr. Blair: As the Prime Minister had cast-iron legal grounds for stopping Pincher's book in 1981 and could not possibly have been advised that she did not, why did she deliberately allow its publication? Is it simply that when it suits her she is prepared to sacrifice the interests of national security to the interests of the Tory party?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that I cannot comment on matters which are in issue in the proceedings in Australia.

Mr. Brinton: Does my right hon. Friend recall the important work done for successive Governments by Lord Rothschild? In the course of her busy day, will she consider what steps can now be taken to protect his reputation against false innuendoes and smears?

The Prime Minister: I have seen Lord Rothschild's letter, published this morning. That letter is being considered in government. I cannot add anything further at this stage.

Mr. Hattersley: That is an extraordinary answer for the Prime Minister to give on this subject. Can she not follow the precedent that she herself set on 26 March 1981 in the case of Sir Roger Hollis and respond explicitly now to Lord Rothschild's plea by making it clear that he is not, and never has been: a Soviet agent?

The Prime Minister: Lord Rothschild's letter was published this morning. I have seen it. The letter is being considered in government, as it should be, and I cannot add anything further at this stage. I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would understand that.

Mr. Hattersley: I certainly understand the implications of the Prime Minister's prevarication, and I hope that she does, too. Putting aside the personal anguish that her answer is bound to cause, Lord Rothschild was the head of the central policy review staff working in Downing street for the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) when he was Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister not prepared to say here and now that Lord Rothschild was not a spy?

The Prime Minister: It is the right hon. Gentleman who is causing anguish. Lord Rothschild's letter was published this morning. I have seen it. The letter is being considered in government, and I cannot add anything further at this stage.

Mr. Hattersley: Even now, answering this question, will the right hon. Lady consider not simply the obligations of generous impulses, which she does not possess, but the damage that her answers are doing to the British Security Service? It is preposterous to continue to give the impression that we are infiltrated by moles. We are not, and the right hon. Lady ought to make that clear here and now in the case of Lord Rothschild.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing furter to add to what I have already said about Lord Rothschild. I remind the right hon. Gentleman of what he said about security matters. When he was asked about them, when he was a Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, he said:

"It is the long-established practice of this House that the Government do not comment on matters of this kind."—[*Official Report*, 28 July 1976; Vol. 916, c. 626.]

Sir Ian Gilmour: I understand that the DROPS contract will shortly be awarded. Has my right hon. Friend been made aware that the procurement process in this case has been a continuing scandal, not only on the part of the Ministry of Defence, but on the part of one of the competitors? Will my right hon. Friend insist on the Ministry of Defence setting up an immediate independent inquiry into this very murky affair?

The Prime Minister: I have heard what my right hon. Friend says, and I will, of course, consult my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Q2. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hamilton: Will the Prime Minister tell us when she first became aware that Sir Robert Armstrong's evidence was incorrect, and when she instructed him to correct it?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, and as the Attorney-General repeated on Monday, the Government are plaintiffs in this case and we are not able to comment upon matters before the court.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will my right hon. Friend accept that many of us share her view that we must build one nation? Will she square that with what happened yesterday, when Birmingham lost £31 million of its grant? Bearing in mind the deprivations in Birmingham and the prosperity in the south, how does that help to build one nation?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend speaks about the rates details published yesterday. As he is aware, a new consultation paper has been published. I am aware that it will be greeted with approval in some parts of the House and with disapproval in other parts. I am afraid that that is inevitable in view of the way in which the formula works. That is one reason why we shall have to change the whole way in which that formula works. I understand my hon. Friend's feelings.

Q3. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lewis: In the court in Sydney Sir Robert Armstrong said that a Committee of Ministers, including the Prime Minister, decided not to ban the Chapman Pincher book. When did that book come into the possession of the right hon. Lady?

The Prime Minister: I remind the hon. Gentleman of the answer given by the Attorney-General on Monday, when he said:

"So far as the proceedings in Sydney are concerned, I must remind the House that I am the plaintiff and therefore cannot comment on anything which is in issue before the court. Although, under the rules of the House, judicial proceedings abroad are not subject to the sub judice rule, I have to be careful to avoid the risk of prejudicing the case or at the worst being in contempt of court in Sydney. It inevitably follows the Government are handicapped in respect of some of the allegations being bandied about." — [*Official Report*, 1 December 1986; Vol 106, c.*415*.]

Q4. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to consider the extra-parliamentary pressure that is being applied to certain Members of Parliament? Is she aware that Arthur Scargill has demanded the expulsion from the Labour party of the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon)? Will she refer that matter to the Lord Privy Seal as a possible breach of parliamentary privilege? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should listen to the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question. He asked the Prime Minister whether she would refer the matter to the Lord Privy Seal.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal will have heard what my hon. Friend said and will have taken note of it. I believe that it is a matter purely for the House, not for me.

Mr. John David Taylor: As the Prime Minister missed out last year on her annual pre-Christmas visit to Northern Ireland, and as she has not been to Northern Ireland since her rather strange visit to Hillsborough on 15 November 1985, does she propose to resume her pre-Christmas visits by going to Northern Ireland this year?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman may be wise to ask that question; it would be most unwise for me to answer it.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim: Will my right hon. Friend consider later today the excellent news that the Labour party has decided to sell shares in one of its loss-making publications and that the National Union of Mineworkers has decided to contract out cleaning at its Sheffield headquarters? Does that not prove that it is never too late to learn?

The Prime Minister: I join my hon. Friend in welcoming those latest converts to the efficiency which comes from competition.

Mr. Steel: Did the Prime Minister know that arms sales to Iran were being arranged through London? If she did know, was that not contrary to the publicly declared policy of the Government; and, if she did not know, was not her friend, President Reagan, not keeping her in the dark?

The Prime Minister: The Government have not received evidence of illegal exports of defence equipment from Britain. If the right hon. Gentleman has such evidence, he should make it available. The United States Government did not inform us about their arms consignments to Iran. British policy on arms sales to Iran and Iraq is one of the strictest in Europe and is rigidly enforced, at substantial cost to British industry. That policy has been maintained scrupulously and consistently.

Mr. Rhodes James: Is my right hon. Friend aware—I am sure that she is—that Lord Rothschild is an eminent constituent of mine, that he is a distinguished public servant, and that his letter requires immediate and urgent attention?

The Prime Minister: I cannot add to what I have said. I had hoped that the House would understand that. I cannot add to it at this stage.

Cabinet Secretary

Q6. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she will separate the position of Cabinet Secretary from that of Head of the Civil Service; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No, Sir.

Mr. Dalyell: Six years before Sydney, was Sir Robert Armstrong acting in his capacity as Head of the Civil Service, or in his capacity as Cabinet Secretary, when he participated in the decision to withhold from the Attorney-General knowledge of how Chapman Pincher's book was obtained or purloined?

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Attorney-General's answer on Monday 1 December when he said:

"So far as the proceedings in Sydney are concerned, I must remind the House that I am the plaintiff and therefore cannot comment on anything which is in issue before the court."

He went on:

"I have to be careful to avoid the risk of prejudicing the case or at the worst being in contempt of court in Sydney."
—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1986; Vol. 106, c. *415*.]

Mr. Latham: Has not Sir Robert Armstrong, acting in either of his official capacities, been trying to assert the essential doctrine that former British security personnel have an overriding duty to keep their mouths shut?

The Prime Minister: I cannot add anything to what I have already said.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Is the Prime Minister aware that many of us on this side would be glad if she would suspend forthwith her contacts with the Leader of the Opposition on matters of security, because none of us believes a word that she says about that or anything else?

The Prime Minister: As far as this side of the House is concerned, the normal courtesies will continue to be observed.

Q7. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thurnham: In view of the benefits that polytechnics bring to local industry, will my right hon. Friend, during her busy day, find time to consider the case for an additional polytechnic in the north-west and the additional jobs that would bring?

The Prime Minister: I am aware that the National Advisory Board is meeting today, and I will pass on my hon. Friend's comments to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Williams: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This arises out of Question Time this afternoon.

As you appreciate, Mr. Speaker, questions, in terms of admissibility, are very much guided by precedent. We have had a rather confusing exchange this afternoon during which the Prime Minister has repeated that, in her opinion, in the case of Rothschild, she cannot comment because of the precedent relating to security. Conversely, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has quoted the precedent set by the Prime Minister on 26 March 1981, when she made a statement to the House regarding Hollis. Which precedent applies in the case of Rothschild? Who decides which applies, or is it utterly a matter for the Prime Minister to choose as suits her individual whim?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that I cannot be responsible for the answers that are given. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is a matter for you arising out of Question Time and the events in Australia.

I understand that the Leader of the Opposition—I am sorry that he is not here at the moment—wrote to you at some length about the affaire téléphonique that he has had with various succulent sources in Australia. I believe that this affair culminated—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot know what letters are sent to me anyway, but I must tell him that the Leader of the Opposition certainly did not write to me about that matter. He asked if he could issue his letter to me as a press release. I dealt with this the other day. I replied that it was entirely in order for him to issue that letter as a press release.

Mr. Faulds: Further to the earlier point of order Mr. Speaker. As you will know more than most, the conduct of this House is based on precedent, and you are the guardian of that behaviour. Would it not be advisable for you to make some utterance on whether the Prime Minister is, at will, entitled to slough off these earlier practices?

Mr. Speaker: A moment ago I said that these are not matters for me. Order in this House is essential. We have freedom of speech here, and we should conduct ourselves with discretion in a parliamentary fashion.

Mr. Home-Robertson: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have been hearing a lot from across the Atlantic about the fifth amendment. Is it in order for the Prime Minister to keep refusing to answer questions on the ground that they are likely to incriminate her?

Mr. Speaker: I am not Tip O'Neill.

Mr. Skinner: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that you have just remarked that the business of the House depends on good order, on hon. Members being able to hear what other hon. Members are saying and that that causes you some difficulties, and as recently there have been recurring instances of the Prime Minister refusing to answer questions, will you look into the possibility of allowing Ministers, such as the Prime Minister, to plead the fifth amendment? That would save a lot of time.

Business of the House

3.35 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): May I ask the Leader of the House to tell us the Business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes. Sir. The Business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 8 DECEMBER — Second Reading of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill.

Afterwards there will be a debate on EC documents on aid to shipbuilding. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the British Shipbuilders Borrowing Powers (Increase of Limit) Order.

TUESDAY 9 DECEMBER — Second Reading of the Abolition of Domestic Rates etc. (Scotland) Bill.

There will be a debate on a motion to take note of EC Document 8705/86 on food aid policy and management.

Afterwards there will be a debate on EC documents relating to air transport. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

WEDNESDAY 10 DECEMBER—Remaining stages of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill.

At Ten o'clock the House will be asked to agree the Civil and Defence Votes on Account and the Winter Supplementary Estimates.

THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER — Second Reading of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill.

Motion on the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 (Continuance) (No. 3) Order.

FRIDAY 12 DECEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 15 DECEMBER—Until seven o'clock, Private Members' motions.

Motion for the Christmas Adjournment.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the House will wish to know that it will be proposed that, subject to the progress of business, the House should rise for the Christmas Adjournment on Friday 19 December, until Monday 12 January.

Monday 8 December
Debate on Aid to Shipbuilding
Relevant European Documents:

(a) 9470/86	*Aid to Shipbuilding*
9470/1/86	

Tuesday 9 December
Debate on Food Aid
Relevant European Documents:

(b) 8705/86	*Food aid policy*
+ COR 1	

Debate on Air Transport
Relevant European Documents:

(c) 5938/84	*Air Transport policy*
(d) 7932/1/86	*Community air transport policy*
(e) 8324/86	*Community air transport policy*
(f) 8109/86	*Inter-regional air services*
(g) 9132/86	*Inter-regional air services*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 21-xxvii (1985-86) para 3
(b) HC 21-xxvii (1985-86) para 1 and HC 22-ii (1986-87) para 2
(c) HC 18-xxvii (1983-84) para 9 and HC 5-xxi (1984-85) para 1
(d) HC 21-xxviii (1985-86) para 4
(e) HC 21-xxvili (1985-86) para 4
(f) HC 21-xxviii (1985-86) para 3
(g) HC 21-xxviii (1985-86) para 3]

Mr. Hattersley: I ask the Leader of the House two specific questions about next week. He will recall that a private notice question was recently asked concerning the Government's manipulation of the trade figures. The House was assured that the figures published on the day of the private notice question were accurate. We now know from the information available today that that was not so. I am sure that the Leader of the House will agree that the Minister in question has a duty to return to the House next week to clarify the position and correct the errors he made when answering the private notice question.

Will the Leader of the House confirm that the Government have already made up their mind to carry the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill through all its stages in three sittings of the House and have already promised to deliver it to the House of Lords immediately after Christmas? Does that not confirm the view of the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) that, given a large majority, the Prime Minister would certainly abuse it?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly look into the right hon. Gentleman's first point, with which I am not as familiar as he obviously is, and refer it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I accept that the right hon. Gentleman's second point is a matter of great substance. The House will understand the urgency in coming to a decision on these matters. With that in mind, I have tabled a motion which, if passed today, will enable amendments to be tabled to the Bill before Second Reading. I hope that the arrangements which I have outlined will prove to be helpful to the House. I note the right hon. Gentleman's point. I shall arrange for the matter to be considered further through the usual channels to ascertain whether a more acceptable day for the remaining stages can be found. We shall have to judge progress.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend find time to allow the House to discuss the issue of the compulsory attendance of pupils at the teaching of Punjabi in a number of schools in the west midlands? In particular, will he provide such an opportunity for those who wish to express doubts on behalf of the parents of children at the Colton Hills School in my constituency, who find that, against their wishes and against the promises in the prospectus, they are obliged to attend lessons in Punjabi?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has raised a valid point which could have wider application in the future. Therefore, I would like to draw his attention to the opportunity that would be presented by proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill, when he might make the matters more extensible to the House.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Is the Leader of the House aware that it is now nearly a year since the Leader of the Liberal party wrote to the Lord Chancellor asking that the cases against the 47 Liverpool

councillors facing disqualification should be proceeded with with the greatest expedition? Is he further aware that the cases have now been put back to 26 January and the council is facing a potential 60 per cent. rates increase and a deficit of perhaps as much as £50 million at the beginning of the next financial year? Will he arrange for an urgent statement to be made to the House to demonstrate that there is no political manipulation of the judicial process, that the case will be heard as quickly as possible and that urgent assistance will be given to Liverpool in facing the crisis?

Mr. Biffen: Any innuendo that there was political manipulation of the judicial process would be greatly resented. Of course, I shall refer the hon. Gentleman's point to my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion 213 in my name and the names of hon. Members on both sides of the House regarding the proposed takeover of Pilkingtons by the financial conglomerate BRT?

[That this House deplores BRT's bid for Pilkingtons, a world leader in its own industry; and calls upon the Government to discourage the takeover of British firms with proven technical commitments and long-term research and development programmes by amorphous conglomerates interested primarily in short-term profits.]

In view of mounting concern that the long-term interests of advanced British industry are being subjected to the short-term requirements of the City of London financial institutions, will my right hon. Friend arrange for an early debate on that and related subjects?

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend has said. He gives a view upon it, but he will appreciate that I am unable to give a view, not least because it is at present before the Office of Fair Trading.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Since the Secretary of State for Defence has refused to come to the House today to make a statement on decisions affecting the royal dockyards, will the Leader of the House ensure an early debate on the threat to 1,300 jobs at Rosyth, caused by decisions slipped out in Scotland today? Will he ensure that the Secretary of State, in his rush to privatise, does not fail to consult the work force as he promised only a few days ago to do?

Mr. Biffen: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has acquainted the House with his proposals in a perfectly familiar way. However, I shall draw the observations of the hon. Gentleman to his attention. The hon. Gentleman, in his turn, will note from the business I have announced that there are plenty of opportunities for him to raise the subject.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Has my right hon. Friend noticed that the rise in the Government's popularity may be dated from the appointment of our hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)? Without tempting my right hon. Friend to elucidate on the distinction between post hoc and propter hoc, can we have an early debate on early-day motions 257 and 281?

[That this House calls on the honourable Member for South Derbyshire, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department of Health and Social Security to make a statement about the interests of her relatives in Arthur Andersen & Co. a company which gains financially from contracts entered into by the Department of Health and Social Security itself and by regional health authorities.]

[That this House notes with dismay the attempt by the honourable Member for Cynon Valley to impugn the reputation of the honourable Member for South Derbyshire, insinuating that her spouse and a relative of his used her office to influence the award of contracts to their firms, and speculates whether the remoteness of the association would have been worthy of comment had the honourable Member not been female; and further suggests that this kind of implication with its sexist undertones does nothing to advance the interest of politically minded women who aspire to membership of this House and who are related to or associated with successful men of commerce.]

We should have a debate so that the attack on our hon. Friend through her husband's employment may be fully exposed and thoroughly repudiated.

Mr. Biffen: I share the distaste expressed by my hon. Friend and, what is more, I think that it is downright sexist. If the hon. Member concerned had been male, it would have passed unnoticed.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Has the Leader of the House—he obviously has—had an opportunity to look at early-day motions 257 and 258?

[That this House calls on the hon. Member for South Derbyshire, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department of Health and Social Security to make a statement about the interests of her relatives in Arthur Andersen and Co. a company which gains financially from contracts entered into by the Department of Health and Social Security itself and by regional health authorities.]

[That this House calls on the Secretary of State for Social Services to set up an independent inquiry into the decision of the Wessex Regional Health Authority to award a £29 million computer contract to Arthur Andersen and Co., a consortium consisting of the accountants Arthur Andersen, IBM, and Technicom; calls on the Wessex Regional Health Authority to explain how they came to award this contract to a consortium which includes Arthur Andersen, when Arthur Andersen were the consultants advising the regional health authority on whom the contract should be awarded to; notes that Mr. Raymond Currie, is, according to the Institute of Chartered Accountants, a partner in Arthur Andersen, in charge of audit training; further notes that Mr. Brian Currie, the brother of Mr. Raymond Currie, is the senior partner in charge of the public service contracts division of Arthur Andersen and Co. the firm which was awarded this contract; is concerned that in the bidding for this contract Arthur Andersen and Co. came in late and after International Computers Limited; and that the same process seems to be taking place in East Anglia; and finally calls on the Secretary of State for Social Services to make a statement on allegations that the Department of Health and Social Security have made substantial payments to Arthur Andersen and Co. for work that has not been carried out or completed and that an internal investigation into these matters is now going on.]

Does he believe that the time has come to review the code of conduct for Ministers so that they have to register their close relatives who might benefit financially from contracts entered into by their Departments in the Register of Members's interests?

Mr. Biffen: I do not believe for one moment that there is any conflict of interest in this case and I believe that the House demeans itself when——

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): The right hon. Gentleman does not know that.

Mr. Biffen: I certainly would not take guidance from the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton). The hon. Member for Fife, Central is on the Select Committee on Members' Interests. If it is a matter of such concern, the Committee will consider it.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): As a year has elapsed since the conclusion of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, should the House not have an opportunity to debate the dangerous and disquieting developments that have taken place since it was signed?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend, who has a very clear record of consistency in his attitude to these matters, might consider raising the matter during the proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill. That would certainly be an occasion for it to be raised.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): The answer of the Leader of the House to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) was utterly unsatisfactory. Is he aware that it is nearly a year since I had correspondence with the Lord Chancellor about the need, in the public interest, to deal with the cases against the 47 councillors in Liverpool? The Government give the impression that they are prepared to allow the city to slide into financial chaos rather than to face the 47 by-elections because there would be nothing in it for them.

Mr. Biffen: That is not a particularly worthy comment, in the context of the earlier remarks about political interference with the judicial process. *[Interruption.]* Oh, yes.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Yes, he did say that.

Mr. Biffen: I hear that endorsement, but I shall stand on my own observations. I have said that I shall refer the matter to my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor. Surely that is a reasonable and forthcoming response.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that early-day motions are now a much debased currency? Would it not be good if the rules governing them could be referred to the Select Committee on Procedure?

Mr. Biffen: As my hon. Friend knows, the terms under which the House established the Select Committee on Procedure were such that the Committee itself could decide what to consider. I am sure that the Chairman of the Committee will have noted my hon. Friend's remarks, but I shall certainly draw them to his attention, anyway.

Mr. Skinner: Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 105?

[That this House is very concerned at the increase in the number of absent landlords and property companies that have taken over many of the estates previously owned by the National Coal Board; further condemns those property companies who are using the courts to a far greater extent to either evict families or, in many cases, cause substantial court costs to be added onto the rent thus putting families into further arrears; calls upon the agents who act on behalf of the property companies to reveal to councillors and other tenants' representatives the names and addresses of the real owners, including those companies based outside the United Kingdom; and, finally, calls for a public inquiry into the way in which the National Coal Board disposed of these houses and to establish whether any tendering took place before sale.]

It relates to the fact that the Coal Board has been selling off housing in the coalfields at less than market value. In one instance, it sold them for £3,000 for each dwelling. Most of the houses were semi-detached. According to a valuer, they were sold for less than the value of the ground upon which they stood. One property owner made a profit of £3,000 on each house by this deal. It did not go out to open tender.

Will the Leader of the House join those hon. Members who have signed the early-day motion and ensure that there is a public inquiry into this housing scandal? While he is about it, will he tell his hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) that the National Coal Board owns the property in which the National Union of Mineworkers has one floor—in an 11-floor building—and that it has played no part whatsoever in any cleaning contract at any time?

Mr. Biffen: I think that we all know grateful tenants when we see them. I have not given the early-day motion to which the hon. Gentleman refers the close attention that perhaps I should, but he will have every opportunity to raise the matter either on the motion for the Christmas Adjournment or on the Consolidated Fund Bill debate that will follow.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): The Leader of the House is aware that today, during Prime Minister's Questions, my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) drew to the Prime Minister's attention the outrageous attack by the president of the National Union of Mineworkers on two Members of this House. The Leader of the House will know that it is not for hon. Members on this side of the House to seek to defend Labour Members of Parliament, but it seemed to me to be an attack on the integrity and the duties, in the wider sense, of hon. Members. Will he find some time in the very near future for the House to debate such attacks on hon. Members?

Mr. Biffen: It is a most interesting proposition. My hon. Friend will be able to pursue that point in the debate upon the Consolidated Fund Bill. If, of course, hon. Members feel that this is a breach of privilege, there is a recognised procedure to be followed.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): May I assure the Leader of the House that, although it is some time since he was last pressed on the establishment of an Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier, there is none the less a considerable weight of feeling behind this proposal, both here and in Dublin. Is it not time that the Government stopped equivocating, or that the Leader of the House stopped equivocating, and gave the House a chance to debate the measure so that the Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier can be started?

Mr. Biffen: I suppose that, cautiously, I was waiting for a fairly spontaneous and unanimous manifestation of support for that idea—*[Interruption.]* Oh, yes. I should have thought that there is enough experience of Irish

affairs to make one fairly cautious about initiatives. If the hon. Gentleman wishes the matter to be raised on the Floor of the House, this coming week is ideal from his point of view.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Will my right hon. Friend consider setting up this week an all-party committee of senior and experienced Privy Councillors with a view to their formulating a code of conduct compatible with national interests for the Leader of the Opposition, who does not seem to be able to work one out for himself? Does my right hon. Friend consider that it would be fair to exclude him from security briefings until he has had the opportunity of mending his ways?

Mr. Biffen: If the committee were to be brand new with very little working experience, its first task would be a major one. Perhaps, in the circumstances, this is something which will solve itself.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to see early-day motions 275 and 276 concerning the training of El Salvadorean army officers by the British Army and the hosting of a conference in London this weekend about Contra terrorism in Nicaragua?

[That this House deplores the decision of Her Majesty's Government to offer training facilities to officers of the El Salvador army; considers the record of the armed forces in El Salvador to be one of the most appalling violations of human rights and brutality; believes that the poverty of the people of El Salvador is due to high military spending; and therefore believes that the decision of the British Government to give aid to the army of El Salvador is a reflection of their policy of obedience to the United States policy towards the region.]

[That this House is appalled at the activities of the Contras in murdering and maiming people as part of their United States inspired plan to return Nicaragua to the servitude of the days of the Samoza dictatorship; and therefore demands that the British Government ban Contra organisation and funding in Britain and resume aid to the government of Nicaragua.]

In the circumstances, does not the House need a statement from the Foreign Secretary on Britain's relations with those two countries and the apparent approval that the British Government give to terrorism in Nicaragua by allowing the Contras to organise freely in this country?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot accept or agree with the hon. Gentleman's observations in their entirety—he makes a point that he raised with me recently — but I shall certainly refer his comments to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. Friend investigate today and report to the House next week on what he can do to enable the people of this country to see their Parliament more easily? Is he aware that there are the most shocking queues for tours to go round the House? At 11.45 am today there was an absolutely enormous queue, and it is high time we did something about it.

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says. Perhaps he will allow me to point ut that there is a question for oral answer on that point on Monday.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to consider early-day motion 165 concerning the London Regional Transport redundancies?

[That this House deplores the decision of the Board of London Regional Transport to close a major part of its builders organisation involving the loss of around 470 jobs; and calls on the London Regional Transport Board to reverse this decision immediately and to enter into negotiations with the unions representing the London Regional Transport Builders workforce on means of improving the business prospects of London Regional Transport Builders which safeguard the employment prospects of London Regional Transport employees.]

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the real concern in London about the further loss of 470 jobs, which is implicit in London Regional Transport's proposals? Will he urge his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to come to the House and make a statement at the earliest opportunity, and allow for a full debate on this important subject?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman's points are essentially for London Regional Transport. I shall of course draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to the point that he has made.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): My right hon. Friend is always very anxious to correct injustices. May I draw his attention to the case of the six people who were imprisoned for the bombings in Birmingham 10 years ago? Since then, in recent days, some very material new evidence has come forward in the form of new witnesses and new forensic evidence. Can my right hon. Friend persuade our right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to make an early statement next week, or give the House an opportunity to have a short debate on the matter, so that what may be an injustice can be removed which none of us would like to see persevered with?

Mr. Biffen: I understand that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is clearly aware of the points made by my hon. Friend, but I shall most certainly draw his attention to the point that my hon. Friend has just made on this matter.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that the second late-night debate next Tuesday on EEC air travel is on five sets of European regulations and five Government memoranda on which the Select Committee on European Legislation has made seven separate reports, thus making 17 documents in all? Is he further aware that the terms of reference of the EEC Scrutiny Committee do not permit it to consolidate its seven reports into one? Will the Leader of the House bear that in mind when he consults his right hon. Friends on their response to the second special report of that Committee?

Mr. Biffen: Most certainly.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip, Northwood): Will my right hon. Friend consider my amendment to early-day motion 91? It calls for the Royal Air Force to be equipped with the most effective airborne early warning control system available to defend Britain. In that regard, will he consider the establishment of a defence equipment appropriation Sub-Committee to the Select Committee on Defence, as the most key defence issues these days seem to

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

be helicopters, airborne early warning, and so on, which require a degree of technical expertise and specialist information that can only be transmitted to the House through such a body?

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says, but I am not sure that an initiative on my part is necessary to secure that end.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): As a cultured creature, the right hon. Gentleman must be aware, is he not, that the National Portrait Gallery is in desperate need of greater space to exhibit its most marvellous collection? Is he aware, in that context, that the Government have done nothing at all to ensure that the National Portrait Gallery should get the site of the neighbouring dental hospital, and that if it does not move quickly, the site will go and be lost to the National Portrait Gallery?

Mr. Biffen: I understand that, thanks to the good offices of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), there will be an Adjournment debate on the arts on 11 December. With a little fraternal co-operation between the two hon. Members, the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) could snatch two or three minutes from that debate.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am deeply grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for calling me. The Leader of the House will agree that yesterday's debate on rum goings-on at MI5 was exceedingly interesting, and he played a not inauspicious part in it, but would it not have been interesting if the rest of the country could have watched it on their televisions? When will there be an early opportunity to debate a resolution on the televising of the Houses of Parliament, and in particular of this House? The whole country could then enjoy the Prime Minister's twice-weekly discomfort and listen to the Opposition's excellent speeches.

Mr. Biffen: I shall try to respond in a narrow and desiccated fashion rather than in the manner in which that question was put. In the concluding stages of this Parliament, it would be wholly unrealistic to try to take such a major decision.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will my right hon. Friend consider holding a debate on the sale and disposal of council houses? One million pople have by now been wise enough to buy their council houses. Most generous discounts are available, particularly for those wishing to buy council flats, but unfortunately many local authorities, including Leicester, are unwilling to make those discounts available, even though they could make us an even greater property-owning society.

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that there is interest throughout the House in the prospect of a debate on housing. However, judging by the business that I have just announced, private Members may have an opportunity to raise that subject. To that end, I wish my hon. Friend well.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): May we have a debate on the Government's continuing commitment to the green belt, and in particular on the disgraceful application by the Prudential Insurance Company to construct a huge urban complex on 500 acres of a green field site in my constituency?

Mr. Biffen: It would not in any sense be appropriate for me to comment on the circumstances that have prompted my hon. Friend's question, but I shall certainly refer his remarks to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May I agree with the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) that there should be a debate on housing, specifically in Leicester—not so that he can continue his silly, mindless blackguarding of that excellent city council but so that attention can be drawn to the needs of the 10,000 people waiting to be properly housed, and prevented from being housed by the Government's refusal to allow sufficient funds for people to have the housing that they so greatly need?

Mr. Biffen: The calm and measured way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) requested that debate shows his confidence about the next general election, while the hon. and learned Gentleman's frenetic and feverish response shows his anxiety in that regard.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. Friend will be aware that for the past two and half years I have been asking the Government to take action to improve the A1 north of Rotherham, and to bring it up to motorway status. Unless that is done, the north-east of England will continue to be deprived more than any other region in the country. May I tell my right hon. Friend that I have had a letter from the Minister in which he refuses categorically to consider the upgrading for which I have asked? The House deserves the opportunity to debate the subject, as the north-east is not getting its fair share of road transport provision.

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says and I realise the anguish that the news must have produced within him. He will understand that the motion for the Christmas Adjournment and the proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill are almost tailormade to provide the opportunity for him to draw attention to the matters which he has raised this afternoon.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Next week, some hon. Members from both sides of the House who are more lucky at bingo than I am will be presenting their ballot Bills. As the Leader of the House will know, this raises the starting gate for the ten-minute rule procedure. Will he take urgent action to stop the nonsense of hon. Members arriving here at 3 o'clock in the morning with their thermos flasks and sandwiches to await the 10 o'clock getaway so that they can be first in the queue for time on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Biffen: I do not think that I have any authority to stop what I believe are bipartisan practices.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for an early statement on the miserable decision of the Atlas Express Company to close its Perivale branch, with a loss of work for some of my constituents? Could we have a statement on the redundancy terms that they will be offered in the light of the company not having made anything known on this subject? Could we have also a statement on what the length of notice should be, the company having been entirely unforthcoming to the work force?

Mr. Biffen: I judge from my hon. Friend's remarks that the matters which he wishes to raise fall within the responsibilities of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, and I shall refer them to him.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I refer the Leader of the House to early-day motion 155, which was tabled by my hon. Friends the Members for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and myself?

[*That this House calls on the Prime Minister to state whether the security services ever carried out an investigation into suspicions, which surfaced at the time and of which Lord Rothschild was aware, that he was a Soviet spy and the fifth man.*]

The right hon. Gentleman will see that in the motion we ask for the Prime Minister to come before the House to make a statement refuting allegations that have been made against Lord Rothschild, and to deal with innuendos which have been circulating over the past five years about his activities.

Is it not true that, if the Prime Minister had made a statement in reply to the motion tabled by my hon. Friends and myself, Lord Rothschild would never have been embarrassed in the way that he has? Is it not strange that it is only today, after the intervention of Lord Rothschild in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, that the Prime Minister has been dragged to the Dispatch Box? Yet even now she refuses to make the statement that my hon. Friends the Members for Hackney, South and Shoreditch and for Bolsover and myself demanded of her two weeks ago. Will she now make a full statement at the Dispatch Box?

Mr. Biffen: The remarks made about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister by the hon. Gentleman, and the tone and terms in which they are made, tell the House more about him than they do about any other matter.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Has my right hon. Friend had time to read Monday's *Hansard*, which contains the report of a debate that took place on the EEC dairy industry? If he has done so, he will have noted that a number of hon. Members who wished to participate in a debate on an important subject were unable to do so. Is there any chance of him finding some time in the near future for a further debate to take place on this important issue?

Mr. Biffen: In this imperfect world I think that my hon. Friend will do best to vest his interests and ambitions in the proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Is the Leader of the House aware that there is considerable speculation that the Government will make an announcement imminently in the form of a statement to the House on prescribing needles and syringes for drug addicts as part of their programme in their fight against AIDS? Given the public opposition expressed to this proposal by the Scottish Office Minister who has responsibilities for health matters, may I have an assurance from the right hon. Gentleman that if a statement is made there will be a separate statement from the Scottish Office Minister?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot confirm the hon. Gentleman's speculation, but I shall draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to the interest that he has shown in a statement being made.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, notwithstanding last Tuesday's Supply day it would be illuminating for the House to have a further debate on insider dealing? It has become apparent that it is the attitude of the Leader of the Labour party and his staff, by colluding with Mr. Turnbull in Australia, that they believe only in dealing, quite rightly, with insider trading in the City and not with that which involves the secrets and security of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says, but I shall confine myself to the narrower issue of whether we can have a further debate on insider trading. I am sure that it is a topic that could be considered in the Christmas Adjournment debate or in the proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill. I must tell my hon. Friend that I do not believe that there is any prospect of an early debate in Government time on this subject, important though it be.

Consolidated Fund Bill

Mr. Speaker: I have a short statement to make about arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment that will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund Bill on Monday 15 December. Members should submit their subjects to my office not later than 9 am on Thursday 11 December. A list showing the subjects and the times will be published later that day. Normally the time allotted will not exceed one and a half hours, but I propose to exercise a discretion to allow one or two debates rather more time, up to a maximum of three hours. Where identical or similar subjects have been submitted by different Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will appear on the list. As some debates may not last the full time allotted to them, it is the responsibility of Members to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn.

Points of Order

4.6 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to apologise for raising this matter, but I did not hear your answer to my earlier point of order. We are not under the same pressure now, however. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition wanted to make a statement on Friday. He could not do that and he wrote a letter to you. It appears that it was a letter to you, because at the end of it he asked for your permission to circulate it elsewhere. As the Leader of the Opposition is writing to you and is in correspondence with you, Mr. Speaker, is it proper to ask you questions about that correspondence?

Mr. Speaker: I have dealt with this, and I did so the other day as well. There is no mystery about this matter. The Leader of the Opposition wrote to me and I replied to him by telephone. I spoke to him on the telephone to say that there was no reason why he should not issue in the form of a press release the letter which he had written to me. No hon. Member should send to the press letters that he has written to Mr. Speaker any more than Mr. Speaker would send the press copies of his replies. Every hon. Member has the right to issue a press statement if he so wishes, and most hon. Members do.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: What can arise on it?

Mr. Marlow: My further point of order concerns telecommunications from the House, Mr. Speaker. Can you say what phone calls there have been from the House to Australia, when they ceased——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot do that. That is an entirely different matter and not one for which I have responsibility.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order relates to something that was said by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and reported in *Hansard* on 28 November, when he made an unpleasant comment about Miss Helene Hayman, who is an ex-Member. She has written to the hon. Gentleman asking him to apologise. He made a wounding statement and got the name of the person concerned wrong as well. The hon. Gentleman is known for his rather aggressive stand in this place. He has referred to me—this has been reported in *Hansard*—as a worm and I have referred to him—it is reported — as a witless moron. There is no love lost between us. I do feel, Mr. Speaker, that an ex-Member of this place is entitled to an apology from the hon. Gentleman, and I invite him to withdraw.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that you are aware of this situation. It is correct that I used the wrong name, and I apologise to the lady in question for using the wrong name. I think that you are aware that I have apologised for that, Mr. Speaker. My remark was based on wrong information. When Opposition Members make accusations against others without foundation, I wish that they too would have the guts and the grace to apologise to the House.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that many Back Benchers were pleased at the introduction of the ten minute rule. It enables more hon. Members to speak. But will you examine the length of debating time taken by Members on the Front Benches? Recently, we had a three-hour debate, over two hours of which were taken up by speakers from the Front Bench. It left little or no time for Back-Bench Members.

Mr. Speaker: The whole House is concerned about this matter. We proceed here by voluntary disciplines. I have no authority to limit the length of speeches made by Members on the Front Bench. It is a matter of sensitivity in a three-hour debate. We should all tune our speeches to the number of other hon. Members who may wish to speak. I have no control over it at the moment.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You helped the House a week or so ago on the subject of early-day motions. You said that, if the Procedure Committee were to examine the matter, you would be pleased to give evidence. Since then, the motions appearing on the Order Paper that have been referred to today make insinuations against an hon. Member. It is intolerable that this should take place. It should be within your powers to state that motions of that kind, if they appear on the Order Paper, should be debated forthwith, so that hon. Members who have put these motions on the Order Paper can tell the House what they have in mind.

Mr. Speaker: The only way in which it is possible to criticise an hon. Member is by way of motion. I am not certain that I can do anything about that at this time. It is true that the Procedure Committee is looking into this matter. No doubt it will bring forward its report, which will be considered by the House. If the rules are then changed, of course I shall apply them.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Sheep and Goats (Removal to Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Motion made, and Question put,

That, in the course of its consideration of the matter of Agriculture and Fishing in Scotland, the Scottish Grand Committee may meet in Edinburgh on Monday 8th December at half-past Ten o'clock.—*[Mr. Cope.]*

Not fewer than twenty Members having risen in their places and signified their objection thereto, MR. SPEAKER *declared that the Noes had it, pursuant to Standing Order No. 94 (Scottish Grand Committee).*

Orders of the Day

Advance Petroleum Revenue Tax Bill

Considered in Committee

[MR. ERNEST ARMSTRONG *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

REPAYMENT OF APRT WHERE NET PROFIT PERIOD NOT YET REACHED

4.12 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 7, leave out from beginning to 'who' in line 10.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 2, in page 1, leave out lines 14 to 16.

No. 4, in page 3, line 1, leave out schedule.

Mr. Gould: As my hon. Friends and I made clear on Second Reading, we support the general purpose of the Bill, although we made it equally clear that there may be some perhaps not minor but technical matters on which we should like some further elucidation. This group of amendments is designed to secure precisely that elucidation. We are happy that whatever help may be available should be targeted as accurately as possible to those who need it. I pass over for the time being the matter of how much help might be available, because I shall ask the Minister about it later.

On the assumption that we are dealing with a finite sum —most people, including the Government, assume that it is likely to amount to £310 million—it is important and desirable that it is directed to those smaller companies that need help rather more obviously and immediately than larger oil companies. I do not mean to suggest that we can take the larger companies for granted, but in the present climate they are better able to look after themselves. Nothing in the Bill—indeed, nothing that is practicable in terms of a tax regime—will make much difference to the immediate level of oil production from the North sea. Nor do I believe—the Minister went some way towards accepting the point on Second Reading —that anything in the Bill will do very much to stimulate the exploration and development that is sorely needed by the Scottish offshore industry.

The point that the Minister made and which we, at least in substance, accept is that there is a case in equity for doing something for smaller companies which, when oil prices were high, found themselves, by virtue of the advance petroleum revenue tax, making a forced interest-free loan to the Government. Now that oil prices have fallen, they find themselves with that loan still outstanding, and still some time to wait before it is to be repaid. Because of the lower oil price, some of them at any rate presumably find that they have cash flow difficulties.

If the basis of this measure is fairness, equity and justice as between the Government and the oil companies, it also follows that some attempt should be made to do justice as between some of those companies that might notionally expect to fall within the group that would be helped by this

[Mr. Gould]

measure. I do not say for a moment that the Government have been blind to that consideration. They did what they could in what is inevitably a blunt and crude way to identify the companies that deserve this help.

It would be unfortunate if the outcome were that some fields and companies are to be judged by criteria that are inappropriate for the purpose and find themselves excluded, whereas other companies in a similar situation, by virtue of the vagaries of the application of the criteria, find that they benefit. The Government have chosen to use as their criterion for winnowing out those who qualify for help and those who do not whether or not payback has been reached by a certain date—that is, by 1 July of this year. Presumably, the thinking is that, in the case of a field in regard to which payback has been reached, almost by definition it should mean that the companies with interests in that field ought to have overcome, for the time being, their cash flow problems because the field ought to generate sufficient income to enable them to overcome any short-term problems.

That rough and ready measure — that criterion — seems to work, at least in most cases. In other words, virtually all the fields in which there is still a substantial amount of unrelieved APRT will meet the criterion that the Government have singled out. Companies such as Britoil and Enterprise Oil will benefit as a consequence, and that is to be welcomed.

I am sure that the Minister is well aware, as indeed we all are, that there appears to be one exception. That is the point to which the amendment is directed, and we hope that it will enable the Minister to elucidate. The one field that appears to fall outside the criteria contained in the Bill is the Maureen field. In that field, there is still a large amount of unrelieved APRT, but no relief can be offered under the Bill because payback was reached before 1 July 1986. It was reached in various parts of the field, and in respect of varying interests in the field, some time towards the end of 1985 and, in some cases, early 1986.

That means that, whereas some companies such as Britoil and Enterprise benefit from the Bill, other companies with interests in Maureen do not. They are companies such as Phillips and Petrofina. It is estimated that Petrofina may be owed £38 million of APRT and that Phillips may be owed perhaps £45 million. I hasten to say that these are estimates. We do not know the details of the accounts of these companies. Other small, independent British companies have interests in the Maureen field but are excluded from help simply by virtue of the payback criterion. It is not my purpose to act in any sense as a spokesperson for any of these companies, but there seems to be an anomaly. It is curious. Why hit on a criterion which, miraculously, excludes those fields whereas other, perhaps better, fields fall within the net?

The Minister may argue that the date of payback is the best guide to the profitability of the fields which may qualify for relief. I believe, and analysts in the City believe, that on any reasonable measure of profitability Maureen is by no means less profitable than other fields brought within the net. Magnus, for example, qualifies for relief —the limitation on relief is imposed by the £15 million per field requirement—although it is bigger, has greater potential output and a better likely rate of return than Maureen.

Nor can it be argued that, if the Minister were to rearrange the criteria to bring Maureen within the area of relief, somehow we would hand out money to large foreign oil companies. If Maureen were to qualify for relief, it is estimated that it would attract for small British independent companies 25 per cent. of the money available, whereas if the £310 million is left to be distributed as is currently planned that percentage in favour of small British independents is only 23 per cent. Therefore, there is no argument on the basis of the incidence of help to British companies, as opposed to foreign companies, to justify the exclusion of Maureen.

If this small group of amendments were passed, it would do great violence to the Bill in terms of the number of lines that would remain. In tabling them, I am not seriously proposing that the Bill should be amended in precisely that way. For a start, it would be necessary to make further adjustments, if the Minister accepted my case that payback defined in this way is not the most appropriate criterion. We may have to think of another form of limitation, for example, limiting the relief to fields which are in safeguard. Whatever consequential amendments may be required, if the Minister accepts this argument, it would be useful to the House and the industry if he were to explain how it is that payback was selected, why it has been selected to operate in this way and how the exclusion of Maureen can be justified when other fields which look less in need of relief are to be included.

The Financial Secretary of the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) for the way in which he has proposed the amendments, for reiterating the Opposition's support for the Bill and for emphasising that the purpose of the amendments is to elucidate the thinking behind the Government's claim to be targeting help in the Bill. Obviously, I shall endeavour to answer his questions, but he will understand if I do not get drawn into talk about individual taxpayers. Nevertheless, I hope that my remarks will explain our philosophy and that he can draw his conclusions about how that might or might not apply to individual companies and fields.

The amendments would delete the payback qualifications for early APRT repayments under the Bill. Any company with outstanding APRT would thus qualify for accelerated repayments, whether or not that field, giving rise to that repayment, is not yet generating net cash flows.

I shall come to talk about the philosophy, but I should like to point out that if these three amendments were taken in conjunction with amendment No. 3, which raises the ceiling on the early APRT repayment to a company in respect of a particular field from £15 million to £20 million, the whole package would cost £210 million. In other words, that would increase the total reduction in 1986-87 tax take from £310 million to £520 million. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman was not necessarily supporting that and that he was merely probing with his amendments.

It is legitimate for me to point out that that would be the effect of the amendments because, obviously, the Government have had to consider that effect in deciding what action to take. Even if one did not take all the amendments together and the Opposition intended the present £15 million ceiling to remain, the removal of the payback qualification alone would cost some £160 million.

Obviously, those are substantial sums and we would argue that spent in that way they would not represent money well spent.

As I made clear on Second Reading, the Bill, at least for the immediate future, is all about development. In particular, we are concerned that certain key developments are not held up because the companies involved are prevented from pressing ahead because of cash flow shortages. To achieve that, some targeting has been necessary; that is why the early APRT repayments have been designed to home in on companies in fields which have not yet begun to generate net cash flows and which may thus be expected to have particular difficulty in continuing to finance activity on the various North sea developments in which they are involved. In other words, by concentrating on fields and companies which have the possibility of a cash constraint, we shall concentrate on companies which are likely to be constrained financially in deciding whether or not to proceed with a development.

As I explained in the previous debate, that has had the result that the lion's share of the benefits has gone to independent, medium-sized and small companies. I cannot go into the case of individual companies, but I have quoted a figure of 75 per cent. going to independent, medium-sized and small companies. Perhaps it would interest the hon. Gentleman if I enlarged on that. In total £230 million of the repayments under the Bill will accrue to the benefit of the independent, medium-sized and small companies. Of that, over half will go to independent companies with no downstream activities, 40 per cent. to independent companies which are integrated, and the remainder, that is, less than 10 per cent., to foreign companies.

In terms of developments, targeting in this way should result in a significant proportion of the total repayments going to companies at present involved in key developments. They are developments which we see as particularly important to the prospects of the North sea, especially to the offshore supplies industry. Those projects, as well as being important purely in terms of development, are of particular importance because of their likely timing. With prospective start dates all coming shortly, they have the potential to generate the sorts of orders which in this particularly difficult period for the offshore supplies industry could be of assistance to it. Under the measure, some 70 per cent. of the total benefits would accrue to companies in such key developments.

If we removed the payback qualification, it would undermine, indeed one could say destroy, that targeting. I accept that the hon. Member for Dagenham has stated that his opposition to this proposal is intended to assist small companies. However, there is a choice of mechanisms by which we can assist them and we must consider the alternatives.

Under the alternative that the Opposition are putting forward, admittedly only for discussion, it is not just the smaller companies that would benefit. No less than £40 million of the additional £160 million would accrue to the majors if we followed the suggestion of the hon. Member for Dagenham. Precisely the same proportion of the extra cash provided by these amendments would go to the majors as would repayments under the terms of the Bill as it stands. I do not say that the Opposition amendments would make matters worse, but in that respect it would not do any better. Even those beneficiaries that are not majors are in many cases large companies, often foreign owned, with diversified interests.

4.30 pm

The amendments would involve spending a large amount of money to achieve a relatively small addition to the total sum of early APRT payments going to the genuinely small company. If the Opposition intend to aid small companies, it is difficult to understand why they propose altering the ceiling from £15 million to £20 million.

We are conscious of the important contribution made over many years by the smaller British independents. As I said earlier, the purpose of the measure is not to foster a specific category of company. Rather, the purpose is to give help where it is most needed and where we believe that help will encourage companies to go ahead with developments that might otherwise be restrained by cash shortages. By targeting on those companies involved in fields which have not yet reached the position of payback, we believe that we are targeting those companies that are likely to have to make decisions about developments in the near future.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Is it beyond the wit of the Treasury to devise a revision of the proposed scheme to assist other British independent companies that are truly not as well benefited by the measure? My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) mentioned the contrast between the Magnus and Maureen fields, which are operated by independent British companies. Although the Minister has criticised our proposal, can he produce a revised suggestion to assist the cases that we have put to him since Second Reading?

Mr. Lamont: It is a fair criterion to aim relief at those companies involved in developments which have not reached payback. As the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) acknowledged, it is not an argument about profitability; it is an argument about cash flow. Where cash flow is a constraint, it is most likely to endanger development. Our proposals are routed to deal with that problem.

It would make no sense to introduce a measure that would help all companies regardless of whether they had gone beyond payback. The hon. Member for Dagenham referred to fields that have gone beyond the payback position — companies that are profitable but perhaps only moderately so, or profitable in a low sense. We have targeted the proposals on companies that have specifically not reached payback because we believe that that is the correct way to proceed to help the key developments that may or may not go ahead.

I would like to enlarge on the distribution of the benefits of the measures as proposed in the Bill. Only 24 per cent. of the repayments will go to the majors. The hon. Member for Dagenham would have to agree that, seen in the context of the majors' share of outstanding APRT—that is, 50 per cent. of the total—the fact that they are receiving 24 per cent. of the repayments does not seem unreasonable. The smaller independent companies—that is, excluding the majors and integrated companies—will receive 40 per cent. of the benefit as compared with their share of the total APRT outstanding of 22 per cent. That illustrates the distribution of the benefits in the Bill.

The Opposition's suggestion would result in benefits ceasing to be channelled primarily towards companies in key developments where cash flow is likely to be a factor that will put at risk further development activity. By our reckoning, little of the additional £160 million repayment

[Mr. Lamont]

provided by this group of amendments would go to companies and developments in that position. The same is true of the extra benefits flowing from raising the ceiling from £15 million to £20 million. Instead of the near 70 per cent. being directed towards these developments that might or might not go ahead, under our proposals less than half would accrue to companies in such developments were the payback qualification to be removed.

I must respectfully tell the hon. Member for Dagenham that his proposal is in essence a scatter-gun approach. We cannot simply reach out for an abstract perfect solution. We must choose between the different solutions that have been proposed. The amount of resources consumed under the hon. Gentleman's proposal would be out of all proportion to the results. I am sure that it is not his intention to give such a part of the cost of the amendment to the major oil companies that are not so key to the developments in the North sea that we are anxious should proceed in the near future.

I do not believe that the hon. Member for Dagenham has proposed an alternative basis for a more targeted approach. I commend to him the conclusions that we have reached as being most targeted on those developments that will or may be constrained by cash flow. Those are the developments that are most likely to benefit the offshore supplies industry.

That is very much our concern. We are not simply concerned about the oil companies; we are concerned about the companies supplying the offshore developments. The hon. Member for Dagenham will be aware of that from his constituency experience. As I said on Second Reading, that has been a major part of our motive in bringing the measure forward. I recommend the Bill as it stands to the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Here we are on a Thursday afternoon discussing this new Bill about Government intervention. This is a far cry from 1979, when we were told that the Government believed in the entrepreneurial society. One would have thought that the oil companies in particular would not have to be bailed out in 1986 with £310 million of taxpayers' money, but that will be the financial effect of the Bill.

Here we are discussing what can loosely be termed a probing amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). We are discussing the question of £310 million being taken out of the taxpayers' pocket. That would have been provided by the oil companies in a different form, but they are being relieved of payment in 1986-87, with resulting losses to the taxpayer of some £120 million in succeeding years.

It crossed my mind that it is a little strange that the Minister can intervene so easily on such a scale. I do not know whether the Prime Minister is aware of what is happening. Is she altogether happy that £310 million is being taken from the money that would otherwise be in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's chest? That is what the Bill means.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham has proposed an alternative. I will not go into the pros and cons of that argument. All I would say on behalf of my hon. Friend, without regard to the amendments, is that he is doing no different from what Ridley has done in wanting to change the rate support grant for the various authorities. My hon. Friend is putting forward a different argument—*[Interruption.]* What is wrong with my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham? I thought that I heard someone shout, "Order."

The First Deputy Chairman (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to refer to the Secretary of State for the Environment, he should refer to him by that title.

Mr. Skinner: If—*[Interruption.]* I do not need your help. You have plenty on in Northern Ireland with the Hillsborough agreement. If you can sort that out——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman must address the Chair.

Mr. Skinner: I was telling my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham that I do not need his help. He has plenty of balls in the air, none of which he can catch, in respect of Northern Ireland because he decided to back the Hillsborough agreement and now he cannot handle it. Frankly, I do not need anyone's help on this. When I talk about the Ridley plan, I mean the Ridley plan and that is what I shall call it. The Ridley plan means that Derbyshire county council, or more correctly Derbyshire ratepayers, lost £23 million at a stroke of the pen by the Secretary of State for the Environment yesterday. When my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham talks about having a different set of figures and doing the same thing in a different way, he is putting forward the same type of proposition as the Secretary of State for the Environment.

I rise principally because this Bill follows the Coal Industry Bill. The Department of Energy, the Prime Minister and every other Tory Minister say that pits with extremely narrow seams of coal must be closed because they are uneconomic and they are losing money. Yet when it comes to narrow seams of oil in the private sector, this Government who are supposed to believe in market forces do not tell the oil companies to close down uneconomic fields. Instead, they offer the oil companies £310 million in tax relief so that they can put more money into the Tory party coffers ready for the general election.

If the Government can intervene in the oil industry to that extent, they have a duty to do the same for other industries such as the coal industry. I am not knocking the idea that narrow seams of oil should be exploited, but the Government must be consistent and apply the same principle to the coalfields so that we can exploit the 300 years' worth of coal under the ground. When we run into narrow seams and geologically difficult strata, the Government should do the same for the coal industry as they are doing for the oil industry.

That is the essence of the matter, and that is why I rose to speak. The Government should be consistent. They should not have one attitude to the private sector and a completely different attitude to the coal industry and the public sector generally.

Mr. Gould: I was interested in the Minister's reply to my opening speech in support of the amendment, but puzzled about two points.

The Minister said that the cost of the amendment would be £160 million. Perhaps he could explain in broad terms how he arrives at that figure. My briefing may be inadequate, but the City analysts certainly seem to believe that Maureen is the only major field that has reached payback but still has substantial unrelieved APRT,

estimated at £132 million. Even adding some of the smaller fields, it is hard to see how the Minister can arrive at his figure when one takes into account the £15 million per field limitation.

Secondly, I fully understand why the Minister will not talk about the tax affairs of individual companies, but I am still not clear why the criterion that he identifies has to apply in such a way as to produce this result, especially in relation to the Maureen field. If the Minister is unhappy about getting rid of payback, why has he fixed the date in such a way as to exclude Maureen? If we compare the treatment of Maureen and Magnus, two roughly comparable fields, one qualifying for relief and the other not, the Government save money in respect of Magnus by virtue not of the payback criterion but of the £15 million per field limitation. If that is what the Minister wants to do, that is acceptable and will work perfectly well, but why can he not do the same for Maureen? If Maureen were allowed to qualify by overcoming the payback problem, the same £15 million per field limit could be applied, thus ensuring that a valuable sum of money went to some of the smaller independent United Kingdom companies which very much need that help. I am still not clear why the Minister's criterion means that Maureen should be treated in such a very different way.

4.45 pm

Mr. Rowlands: I do not think that the Minister described the development process in practical terms. As he knows, although there may be a major company at the top of a licence group, often a large number of other participators have to fork out their percentage if a given development is to go ahead. Such development requires the support and ability of smaller interest groups within the licence, so the cash flows of smaller independent British companies are often vital to the whole operation of the larger partner. The smaller members of the group must agree to put in their share, so their cash flows are vital to the success of the development, even when there is a bigger company at the top of the licence list. If the smaller companies cannot finance a project, it will be slowed down. That is the point illustrated by Maureen and Magnus.

I have no financial interest in those individual British independent companies. I am interested in jobs and development in Scotland and elsewhere. We are desperately worried that there may be a hiatus in development. Following what my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has said, on top of the problems of the coal industry we fear a crisis in oil development jobs. The two problems together could have a fateful impact as about 25 per cent. of industrial investment in the past three or four years has been in the oil industry. Many of us who represent communities far away from the oil development areas have not seen the effects of that development filtering into the wider economy, and we sometimes benefit from lower oil prices. Nevertheless, on top of all the other problems, we fear a major hiatus in the development of marginal oilfields as a result of possibly temporary variations in price.

It is important that the Minister should understand the process of development. I shall not name individual companies, but some British companies are considering cutting their investment. We have not yet seen the full impact of the change in oil prices on development and jobs. Many existing obligations were in place and work and development was being undertaken. Companies will not cut their budgets this year, but they will cut them next year when they come out of obligation and into choice, and in the process of decision making they will not be compelled by existing obligations of one kind or another to spend money.

One company, which I shall not name, has been spending about £35 million on development, but in the next 18 months it will be looking at ways of reducing development expenditure to about £20 million. If the Treasury or Parliament can devise a mechanism whereby companies like that can resume development, that might prevent a dramatic drop in development expenditure of the kind that I have outlined. Despite the arguments that we would give too much away to the big boys as a result of modification, I do not accept the suggestion by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). He should try to come up with some other variation to ensure that small British companies of the kind that we spoke about on Second Reading, and which want to go ahead with development, have their cash flows helped by repayment. After all, it is an enforced loan being paid back at a date earlier than the one originally decided.

Often, the success of a major development, led by a major British company or even by a multinational, depends upon the cash flows and economics of small companies in that field. The Minister must target on those small companies as well as on the case that he made to my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) pressed me on the figure of £160 million. I cannot elaborate on that because to do so would lead me into a discussion about individual fields. However, I can tell him that by going beyond the payback criteria, on our reckoning it would not just be Maureen that would be brought in, because companies in six different fields would benefit. That is what lies behind the figure of £160 million.

Mr. Gould: I have difficulty in understanding that figure. The figures that I have seen may be wildly inaccurate. However, they were produced by very good analysts in the City and show that the total amount of unrelieved advance petroleum revenue tax excluded by the Minister's payback criterion does not amount to £160 million, quite apart from the £15 million limit. That is why I am puzzled by his figure, and it would be helpful if he could give us some idea of what consonance there is between his set of figures and the figures by which most people outside are operating.

Mr. Lamont: I am not sure about what greater detail I can go into, but I shall see whether I can give the hon. Gentleman more detail later. Quite often an analyst's view of tax payable in respect of oil companies in aggregate differs from official estimates. That is not entirely unknown or wholly incomprehensible. I have given the hon. Gentleman the best estimate that I have, and I have explained the basis upon which it has been calculated. I have told him the number of fields in development that would be included if we did precisely what he has suggested. He has suggested going beyond payback and into the safeguard area. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) have considerable knowledge of this subject and will know precisely what I mean by the safeguard provision.

[Mr. Lamont]

As I have explained on several occasions, the aim of the Bill is to remedy cash flows and cash flow shortages, which are a brake on developments that might have gone ahead. Safeguard bears no such direct relation to the problem that the Bill addresses, but is simply an arbitrary point in time. The cash flows of companies in a particular field at the time when safeguard runs out is likely to vary markedly depending on which field one is looking at. In practice, extending repayments under the Bill by reference to the point in time at which safeguard runs out would be expensive.

Perhaps I might now deal with the interesting and trenchant intervention by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I am always grateful to the hon. Gentleman for trying to keep us on the straight and narrow. He is the bearer of the convenant of rectitude. He accused the Government of giving way to interventionism. Altering the tax rate because of the economic climate is not unknown, but we are not doing that. As his hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney said, we are repaying earlier an enforced loan. We are not altering the tax rate, but repaying earlier advance petroleum revenue tax which would have been set off against mainstream petroleum revenue tax. The companies would have got it back anyway, but we are paying it back earlier because it is an enforced loan. It seems entirely equitable and right in present conditions, when many of these companies will not even pay petroleum revenue tax, that that enforced loan should be repaid.

The hon. Member for Bolsover talked about the economics of oilfields, compared them to the economics of coal mines and spoke about what was happening in uneconomic pits. One of the specific points that I made on Second Reading, and which I have made on a number of other occasions, and with which Opposition Members choose to disagree, is that it is no purpose of our fiscal policy on the oil industry to try to transform an oilfield that is uneconomic in pre-tax terms into one that is economic in post-tax terms. The hon. Member for Bolsover is quite right when he says that if we did that we would be wholly wrong. We are not doing that, and that will not be a consequence of the Bill.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lamont: I shall be delighted to give way in a moment. A project that is uneconomic in pre-tax terms will not be made economic in post-tax terms as a result of the Bill. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bolsover for trying to keep us confined to the straight and narrow, but we are on the straight and narrow anyway.

Mr. Skinner: I am not trying to keep the right hon. Gentleman on the straight and narrow of market forces. I am delighted that the Government's philosophy has been shown up for what it is and that it cannot be controlled any longer. I remind the Minister that the Bill is there for any hon. Member who wants to read it. The effect of the Bill will be that in the financial year 1986-87 revenue receipts of up to £310 million will be lost to the Treasury. Certain other sums will be lost after that period. The Minister is using various forms of sophistry and trying to suggest that somehow or other the Chancellor of the Exchequer will not be relieved of that amount of money. The petroleum revenue tax system has been designed—not just by this Bill but in the one that we had two or three years ago — to take account of the narrower and shallower pools of oil in the North sea. That is what it will do this year.

Mr. Lamont: That is not the aim of the Bill. It will not make a new sort of project in the North sea economic, and that has been illustrated in the debate. It is about existing deep water developments. The hon. Gentleman says that there will be a cost to the Exchequer of some £310 million, but he omits to say that although there would be that cost now over the next three years the £310 million would have been repaid anyway. The amount will be totally offset in later years. All we propose is a cash flow effect which will be offset in later years. The hon. Gentleman understands that, because he described it as an enforced loan which would be repayable anyway at a later stage. The hon. Gentleman is rebuking us, and his hon. Friends are urging us, with little conviction, to go even further. However, neither of them is entirely right and we are quite content with the provisions as they are.

5 pm

Mr. Rowlands: Will the Minister answer one question? He did not respond to my point that development is dependent upon smaller partners being in a position to finance their share of the development. Therefore, the cash flow of the smaller partners in some of the fields is equally important. That situation has arisen in the Maureen field, which is the example that we gave to the Minister. Can the Minister devise any way to assist that process through the Bill?

Mr. Lamont: I do not wish to be drawn into a discussion on just one field. The hon. Gentleman keeps commenting on one field which has reached the payback stage. He is right in what he has said, in general terms, about the role of the smaller companies within total field development. One of the effects of the measures that we are putting forward will be that the smaller partners within the fields will also benefit from our proposals. They are the ones that may be cash constrained. We should concentrate on those companies and on those fields which have not reached the payback stage. Some of the smaller companies are precisely in the category which the hon. Gentleman has advocated we should help. Nobody is saying that we can help all companies in that situation, but many of the companies to which we are directing our assistance will fall firmly within that category.

Mr. Gould: For the sake of the record, I should re-affirm that my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) and I mentioned a particular field because it is the one field which seems to be treated in a rather extraordinary fashion by the criteria which the Bill identifies. That is the only reason why we have singled it out, and the only reason why I argue that the Minister should have dealt with it. If the Minister had been able to deal with that, perhaps we could have seen rather more clearly how the Bill is meant to work.

We were not, as the Minister suggested, urging him with great enthusiasm to hare off in one direction rather than another. We had hoped to provide an opportunity for the Minister to clarify his mind for us at any rate, if not for himself. I am not sure that we fully succeeded. In my case at any rate, the Minister's thinking remains somewhat opaque. However, we have had a useful debate and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Gould: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 1, line 26, leave out '£15' and insert '£20'.

The amendment is, if anything, even more probing than the previous amendment. It is designed to draw attention to how the Minister decided upon the sum that he felt was available for relief in that way. Did he and his ministerial colleagues decide that there was about £310 million available for that purpose and then hit upon a collection of criteria to split it up in a more or less satisfactory way? Or did he say, no, certain companies in certain categories deserve help at a certain level, and when that was totted up did it happen to come to £310 million? What process did the Minister follow? Is there some rigid control or strategic thinking relating to the way in which the Government's finances are managed? How did the Minister produce that sum? If it is, in the first place, a global sum, are we entirely satisfied that the Minister's proposals are the right way to divide it out? Contrary to the thrust of the amendment, is that a case for putting in a lower limit per field to allow more companies to share in the goodies, albeit at a lower level?

If, on the other hand, there is no global limit and the Minister, out of the goodness of his heart, and because he is concerned about the welfare of those companies, would simply like to help them in some way, why stop short at £15 million per field, and why stop short at £310 million? If it is a good thing, why not, as one of the Minister's hon. Friends said to the Prime Minister recently, have more of the same? Let us have a little more of the £800 million which it is estimated remains outstanding as advance petroleum revenue tax that has not been paid back.

The Minister will see that the amendment is designed to allow him to explain to the Committee exactly how the figure was arrived at and how — assuming that some figure was arrived at—it was then decided to split it up.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and I shall try not to be opaque. Taken in isolation, the effect of the amendment would be to increase from £15 million to £20 million the maximum amount that could be repaid to any company in respect of a particular field. Of course, the effect would be that the same companies would benefit as under the provisions of the Bill as drafted. However, any company with an APRT credit of more than £15 million in respect of a particular field would receive a larger repayment. In fact, less than half the companies qualifying for repayments would benefit from the proposed £5 million increase in the ceiling. We do not have that amount of tax to use up. The revenue effect of the amendment would be to reduce oil tax revenues by a further £35 million in 1986-87, bringing the total reduction in oil tax revenues to £345 million.

The hon. Gentleman asked me whether there was any strategy or precision behind the proposed figure. Several factors were taken into account when we decided where to set the ceiling. One major factor was the revenue effect of the APRT measure, which has to be weighed alongside other competing claims for the Exchequer's resources. The other factor was simply our objective of targeting repayment on companies which might suffer particular cash flow difficulties. It was our judgment that that degree of relief would reduce the risk of cash shortages constraining future development work.

I explained to the hon. Gentleman, in previous amendments and on Second Reading, that we have particular key developments in mind. There are companies involved which operate fields which have not yet reached the payback stage. That could constrain further development. It was our view that that sort of relief would be sufficient. That is our judgment and our view, and it is the best explanation—and I hope not an opaque one—that I can give to the Committee.

Mr. Gould: I am grateful to the Minister for his explanation of the revenue effects of the change that is proposed in the amendment. I hesitate to say that his answer was in any way opaque, but, from his reply to my wider question, I understood that there was no strategic thinking, that it was not the Minister's intention to convey any sense of the part that this measure was to play in the overall pattern that the Government intended to develop for public spending, that it was simply something that had arisen, ad hoc, to be judged on its own merits, and that he decided upon the figure of £310 million by accident. We shall bear that impression in mind when we look at other aspects of the Government's public spending plans, which they will no doubt announce from time to time.

There is a sense in which we are entitled to worry about that a little closer to home, a little closer to the precise point of the Bill. This is simply the beginning of a process whereby the Government, who have been flushed with money derived from North sea oil revenues over recent years, and who have been more flushed with that sort of money than any of their predecessors were fortunate enough to be, are beginning the process of handing back, through the tax mechanism, a good proportion of that money to the oil industry. This is the first stage and the first instalment. There will be further instalments. For example, as abandonment costs rise, tax relief will be given for those. Those chickens will all come home to roost in years to come, when the Minister and his ministerial colleagues will long since have departed those Benches. Nevertheless, we are concerned, and entitled to be concerned, that there should be some strategic thinking about the balance of advantage between the taxpayer and the Government where the flows are considerable.

I suspect that we shall not flush the Minister out any further. We understand how the figure of £310 million was arrived at. At least he has given us a description of that process, and we must be grateful for that small mercy. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

Northern Ireland Appropriation (No. 3)

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Before I call the Minister to move the draft Appropriation (No. 3) (Northern Ireland) Order, I remind the House that the order deals with specific Supplementary Estimates, primarily in respect of three topics: the aircraft and shipbuilding industries, industrial development and energy efficiency. Debates should be confined to the subjects set out in the Supplementary Estimates.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I submit that, as the effect of the order is to maintain the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund, and as the existence of that fund has been one of the topics of each successive debate upon the order, that also is within the scope of the order because, without it, that fund would not be sustainable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are dealing with Supplementary Estimates and they do not call into question the system itself.

Mr. Powell: With respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the necessity for the order is due to the existence of a separate Consolidated Fund for Northern Ireland, and that applies equally to an order which relates to Supplementary Estimates as well as to an order which refers to the main Estimates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am told that the right hon. Gentleman is mistaken, but we shall see how the debate goes, and I shall decide what is in order and what is out of order.

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not always find myself rising in support of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). I fully understand your ruling, with which we shall all comply, but, as I understand it, such rulings are largely to ensure that, when the time of the House is constrained, hon. Members do not spend time on matters which fall outside the orbit of the debate. I suspect that this evening time will not be under quite such a constraint and it may be that you will feel able to be a little more liberal in your interpretation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As I said, I shall give careful consideration to what the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) said, and if, as we move on, I feel that I have to intevene, I shall do so.

5.14 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move,

That the draft Appropriation (No. 3) (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 13th November, be approved.

The order is being made under paragraph 1 of schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Act 1974.

This is the first time I have had the pleasure of opening a Northern Ireland Appropriation debate. On this occasion the debate will be limited as the House is being asked to approve extra funds for only one Vote and my opening remarks will be concentrated on that provision.

The extra funds are being sought for Class II, Vote 3. This covers expenditure by the Department of Economic Development on local enterprise, aircraft and shipbuilding, energy efficiency, mineral exploration, other support services, capital grants, and the new Technology Board for Northern Ireland.

On 10 June last, the House approved the 1986-87 main Estimates which included £77·3 million for this Vote. Today I came to the House to seek a further £50·5 million, taking the total proposed expenditure on this Vote to £127·8 million for the year. The Estimates booklet, which gives full details of the additional expenditure, is available from the Vote Office.

Some £3 million of the increase is for the Local Enterprise Development Unit—Northern Ireland's small business agency. Since its creation in 1971, LEDU has promoted 27,000 jobs in a highly cost-effective manner. I pay warm tribute to the success it continues to achieve. Especially encouraging is the consistently high level of job promotions achieved in recent years. For example, in 1984-85 4,200 jobs were promoted and renewed and in 1985-86 the figure was 4,300. In recognition of the vital part that the Government believe the small firms sector will play in revitalising Northern Ireland's economy, the Government have recently approved an increased of 30 per cent. in LEDU's staffing.

There is an increase of £2 million in support of Short Brothers plc. The Government are naturally disappointed at the recently announced downturn in the company's financial performance in 1985-86, but I hope that the commitment and ability of both the management and the work force will ensure an early return to profitability.

Also in section B hon. Members will note the increase in the provision for Belfast shipbuilders Harland and Wolff from £37 million to £68 million. Part of that increase is to meet the cost of the 800 redundancies announced by the company on 25 November. While any redundancies are to be regretted, Harland and Wolff, like other yards throughout the world, has had to face the severe decline in the availability of new orders. The Government are doing what they can to help those made redundant by earmarking part of the increased provision to fund the setting up of Harland and Wolff Enterprises. This will operate in a similar way to British Shipbuilders Enterprises and will provide redundant workers with practical advice and assistance towards retraining and re-employment.

Hon. Members will see from the Estimates booklet that there are some increases and some reductions in expenditure on energy efficiency and other support services. One of the increases is a figure of £100,000 for the Government's Monergy campaign. Thousands of energy consumers have received domestic, industrial and school information packs and responded to competitions aimed at raising the level of awareness of the real savings that can be achieved through good energy practice.

Already Northern Ireland industry and commerce are achieving savings of almost £4 million per year. Taken alongside the considerable savings which are undoubtedly being made by the domestic consumer, that can only amount to good news for the Northern Ireland economy. A good start has been made, but we must build on the level of awareness which now exists. In the next stage of the campaign we shall be concentrating on turning awareness into action by helping consumers make the right choices for the best energy money savings, comfort and profit. The additional provision that I have mentioned is required to achieve that aim.

Section D of the Vote provides an extra £12 million in this financial year for capital investment grants for industrial development. As some hon. Members will be aware, there was a big increase in the volume of capital grant claims in early 1985. Rather than impose a moratorium on claims, the Government decided to provide extra resources last year on the basis that there would be a corresponding reduction in the total bill in this financial year. However, pressure on the scheme has continued into 1986-87, and although a number of cost-effective changes introduced in March 1985 are now beginning to have their effect, the original estimate for this financial year is likely to be insufficient by £12 million.

The Supplementary Estimate contains a token provision of £1,000 for the purpose of drawing hon. Members' attention to the setting up of the Technology Board for Northern Ireland. This is an important step in the industrial development of the Province. The board's responsibilities include advising the Government on the application of science and technology to economic needs in Northern Ireland, and particularly on the contribution technology can make to the growth and development of the manufacturing and service sectors of industry. The board will assist and advise the Government on those issues which involve more than one Northern Ireland Department; it will advise on areas of policy where there is interaction between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and bring together and represent a distinct Northern Ireland view on technological issues at national level.

That concludes my opening remarks. I will listen with interest to the debate and respond to as many of the points raised as possible. I commend the order to the House.

5.20 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): One of the most interesting aspects of life in this House is its unpredictability. We were expecting to begin this debate at 7 o'clock, and I, at least, was awaiting the arrival of material about which I was hoping to question the Minister. If I find myself speaking from the heart rather than from documentation, it is not because there is no documentation; it is more to do with the way in which the Government's managers manage the business of the House.

I am aware, of course, that we are confined to the matters in the order. In the course of the Appropriation debate on 17 November 1984 the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) referred to these debates as "triennial entertainment". On whether they qualify as entertainment I would not venture an opinion, but as to their value in improving daily life among the people in Northern Ireland, I confess to having an element of doubt. The right hon. Member for South Down was referring to the existence of a separate Consolidated Fund for Northern Ireland, and I, for one, would be happy to discuss that.

It is regrettable that the discussions which began two years ago about the details of the way in which Northern Ireland is governed have run into ground which has been transformed into a quagmire by events which bear little relation to the merits of the financial system, or indeed to direct rule itself. My anxiety is more pragmatic. Time and again, we who take part in these debates raise questions, and the Minister, whoever it may be, duly replies, or, more usually, says that he would have replied to questions if time had permitted. I assume that that will not happen tonight.

Occasionally, one or two of the issues that are raised are followed up elsewhere, or reported in the media, depending on the hour the debate occurred, but nothing changes and things continue on the same course, or they go from bad to worse, and the people of Northern Ireland must go on living with that state of affairs.

We all pay tribute to the Local Enterprise Development Unit, and nothing that I say is intended to cast doubt on its effectiveness or dedication. But five loaves do not always feed a multitude. Unemployment in Northern Ireland is currently running at 19·3 per cent. of the population. That figure represents the whole of the population, and it is a Government figure based on the way in which they currently calculate these things. It is calculated in accordance with, I believe, the eighteenth change in the way in which the Government deal with these figures. It represents those who are claiming benefits, but not, by any means, all those who are desperate for work. The Government's figure for male unemployment is 22·7 per cent. That figure alone means that 130,000 people, excluding school leavers, are seeking work and are being told that they are not wanted. To that figure must be added 3,248 school leavers.

Those are statistics, but they tell a story about human life. They tell the story of youngsters who have been waiting for the experience, known to thousands of their forerunners, of taking home their first wage packet, but who are now brushed aside without any hope. They tell the story of men in their fifties who are told that they are on the scrap heap and that their working lives are probably over. They tell of single women and housewives who, for a few modest luxuries, depend on part-time jobs which have given them the chance of earning some money and a channel into companionship and a structured life. They reflect the story of factories such as Gallaghers of Belfast, Molins in Derry, British Van Heusen in Ballywater and National Supply in Maydown, all of which have formed part of the people's way of life. It is a story of 800 more job losses at Harland and Wolff and of jobs endangered at Shorts.

If we could offer a measure of hope, this debate would be worth while, but we know from the Government's assessment of the next four years at least, and from their submission to the EEC regional fund—we may not have been intended to know—that they accept that they have failed to generate new employment in the manufacturing sector. And the Government have stated:

> "Recent analyses have suggested that, in terms of unemployment alone, the prospect is that a high rate of unemployment is likely to be the norm for some time."

That is the assessment for Northern Ireland. That situation has not arisen because there is no need for human labour, nor that the work is being done by technology. We know of the housing needs of Northern Ireland—I am not ignoring for one moment the achievements of the Housing Executive in recent years—and that the level of unfit houses is still unacceptable. The House will be aware that there is massive unemployment in the construction industry, not because houses are being built by robots, but because they are not being built at all.

School cleaners are troubled by the likelihood that they will lose their jobs if the cleaning is put out to private contract. I have spoken to ladies who are worried about

[Mr. Peter Archer]

the pensions for which they have worked. They had hoped that, whatever their current earnings, their pensions would cushion them against the impact of poverty in their later years, but now they do not know. They are trying to keep the schools clean, but they are afraid that they will not be paid for the same number of hours. If they try to provide the same standard, they might work for hours for which they will not be paid. All this is happening not because the schools are being cleaned by labour-saving devices, but because they are not being cleaned at all. It is the same story for dinner ladies, hospital ancillary staff and many more people. Do the Government believe that there is some curious mechanism which translates privatisation into jobs?

When the Minister replies to the debate, will he turn his attention to section C and tell us about the development and use of lignite, which he mentioned earlier? We are aware that any Government must look at all the options for future energy supplies and I do not pretend that all the arguments are one way. No energy resource arrives without a price tag. The use of lignite will cause serious environmental problems and I assume we all agree that we must not embark upon using it without proper advice and proper consideration of those matters.

We might have thought that this could best be achieved by development under the auspices of the electricity board. Is the interest of local residents more likely to be safeguarded if the only consideration is one of profitability? Is wild life more likely to be protected, and jobs more likely to be generated, if these matters are decided by the accountants? These issues may be better pursued in other debates. I hope that the Government will consider the advantages of using the Northern Ireland Committee, where such matters could be explored in greater detail and perhaps debates more readily attended by hon. Members who have a direct concern with them.

Finally, I wonder whether we might ask the Minister to ask the Government business managers whether we are always condemned to discuss these questions in the closing hours of a Thursday evening when, understandably, many hon. Members are dispersing for the weekend.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): The closing hours?

Mr. Archer: These are unpopular hours by any standards, and on a Thursday evening, when it was not beyond prediction that the House would not be crowded. I am only saying that the people of Northern Ireland may misunderstand the situation. I should not like them to think that hon. Members do not care about people in Northern Ireland. It arises more as a reflection of the priority afforded by the Government's business managers.

Of course, we shall not oppose the Government's motion. I venture to doubt whether this is the best way of maintaining the principle of redress of grievances before Supply or of examining the way in which the Government manage the economy. If we make do with the tools in our hands, it is only because we can do nothing else.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I want to be as tolerant as possible. Because there are hon. Members who were not here when I made my original statement, it might help the House if I say that comments should be related to the purpose for which these Supplementary Estimates are required, and not to the general financial system for Northern Ireland. Right hon. and hon. Members will realise that the same rule applies to Supplementary Estimates on Estimates days relating to the United Kingdom as a whole. There is no special departure for tonight's debate.

5.31 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I should like to follow up a point made by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer). There are many occasions when the House has legitimate cause for complaint about the timing of debates on Northern Ireland, but I do not think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was justified in his complaint against the business managers for the timing of today's debate. As I understand it, mercifully, the debate of this draft order can continue until 10 o'clock, and we are, of course, embarking on the debate at an early hour. I agree with the thrust of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's argument, however, when he implied that, in general, the House discusses Northern Ireland matters much later in the day than is the case today. I also agree that the whole basis on which we discuss proposed legislation for Northern Ireland is most unsatisfactory. It is wrong that we should legislate for one part of the United Kingdom by unamendable Order in Council, whereas for England, Scotland and Wales we legislate by the conventional Bill proceedings.

We are anxious, of course, to follow the ruling that you have given twice during this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to draw the attention of the House to the explanatory note at the end of the draft order. It reminds us that we are asked to authorise the issue out of the Consolidated Fund of Northern Ireland of a further sum for the current financial year. My hon. Friend the Minister of State reminded the House that, in addition to the £50·5 million in schedule 1, the House has already approved expenditure of £70 million.

My hon. Friend has come to the House only two thirds of the way through this financial year to say that that sum which the House has approved already—£70 million—is not enough and to ask us to allocate a further sum of £50·5 million. My hon. Friend the Minister did not dwell sufficiently on the reasons why we are invited in December, only two thirds of the way through this financial year, to agree to such a large additional sum. We are invited to approve this expenditure by the Department of Economic Development.

I have before me the text of an article in *The Times* written just three months ago by the distinguished chairman of the Northern Ireland Economic Council, Sir Charles Carter. It is legitimate for the House to examine some of the reasons why my hon. Friend the Minister seeks approval for further expenditure on such a substantial scale. I believe that Sir Charles was entirely right when he gave his analysis from a position of peculiar—indeed, unique—authority of what has been happening in the Province. He said:

> "Unhappily, the government's initiative in the Anglo-Irish agreement, whatever its political or foreign policy virtues, has made things much worse for the economy. The agreement has stimulated new unrest".

He continued:

"by introducing the novel concept of giving another country a right to be consulted on affairs internal to a part of the United Kingdom, it has created political uncertainty."

I stress the words

"The agreement has stimulated new unrest"

and

"has made things much worse for the economy."

It is partly because the agreement has made things much worse for the economy that my hon. Friend the Minister of State has come before the House. The whole economy of Northern Ireland and the prospects for employment, to which the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West referred, depend to a significant extent on the confidence which those who are potential investors — whether from within or from without the United Kingdom — have in the political stability of the Province.

There is not a single hon. Member who believes that there is greater stability than before the Anglo-Irish agreement. The House will remember that the purpose of the Anglo-Irish agreement—a purpose which I shared—was to bring peace, stability and reconciliation. Instead of peace, there has been strife. Instead of stability, there has been turmoil. Instead of reconciliation, there has been increased sectarian suspicion.

It is against that background that the House is asked to approve the sum of £50·5 million. One of the adverse consequences of the Anglo-Irish agreement is that there is no prospect, in my judgment, of a diminution in the evil of unemployment — unemployment in the Province is higher than in any other part of the United Kingdom—and no prospect of substantial increased investment from the private sector in the Province, unless we can achieve greater peace and stability. It is a direct consequence of the Anglo-Irish agreement that my hon. Friend the Minister is asking so early in the financial year for this additional Vote. I believe that he did not deal in sufficient detail with the causes that brought him to the House.

There will be other occasions when the House will want to devote its attention to how better Northern Ireland may be governed and how better that peace, stability and reconciliation which we seek may be achieved. But this evening I am afraid that it is a sign—I disagree on this point with the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West — of the tragic lack of interest of the House in Northern Ireland that so few hon. Members are in the Chamber at what is, after all, a very early hour.

I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies he will explain how he believes that in future there will be less of a burden upon the Exchequer, because I fear that the economic and employment prospects for the Province will remain bleak as long as the Anglo-Irish agreement is in force.

5.40 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): In moving the order, the Minister of State referred to the fact that it is the first such order which it has fallen to him to lay before the House. There has been a certain repetitiveness in the debates we have had on these triannual orders over preceding years. If I refer to that matter I hope that I shall receive the same tolerance as you extended, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) and the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) for it is a matter upon which new enlightenment has been cast in a relatively new environment which scarcely existed only a year ago.

In each of those debates we have found ourselves asking —it is a question we have to ask if we are to say "Aye" or "No" when the motion is eventually put — why we have to have this order. Be it an order embodying a Supplementary Estimate or not, it is an order, as the hon. Member for Eastbourne pointed out, which authorises a transaction on the Consolidated Fund of a part of the United Kingdom that is constantly kept completely separate from the Consolidated Fund of the United Kingdom as a whole and from the procedures which attach to the management of that fund.

There is no lack of desire expressed in the House that we should find a way of avoiding that and thus avoiding the demand upon the time of the House which an order such as this one imposes. There has been no lack of those suggestions that the differentiation between the administration of Northern Ireland and that of the rest of the kingdom is unnecessary and undesirable. We know that the Patronage Secretary would be very glad to find a way of dispensing with this piece of ritual; and we know too, because he has said so on a number of occasions, that the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West also believes that we should have been devoting our minds to that question.

Yet, after all these orders and all these years, we find ourselves confronting the same negative and sterile repetition of the same procedure as one order follows another. At first that seemed difficult to understand. Some of us addressed reasoned arguments to the Minister on the Front Bench or sent reasoned arguments to the Patronage Secretary through his representatives, who are invariably on the Front Bench; some of us sought, so far as there were fellow hon. Members in the House, to convince them that it was quite unnecessary for them to be thus engaged.

The reason for the brick wall has not, however, been a secret: the reason for the brick wall in the face of all our pleas has been on the record for some years. As it happens, it was placed on the record on 29 June 1982 in the course of deliberations upon the Northern Ireland Bill at that time when reference was made to the fact that, in the view of the advisers of the Government, we

"could not break certain undertakings we have given to the Irish Government over the constitutional future of Northern Ireland."—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1982; Vol. 26, c. 770.]

It was a statement which, if true, was perfectly adequate to explain the determination and the deftness with which one Minister and one Administration after another continued to maintain upon the statute book and operate, at whatever inconvenience, the relics and symbolism of separate self-governing institutions in Northern Ireland.

At the time, my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) placed the evidence at the disposal of the Prime Minister and invited her to investigate the truth of the matter. That created a severe difficulty for the Prime Minister who, in my belief, had known the facts two or three years before. If she were to admit the existence of such "undertakings", questions would necessarily arise as to the nature of those undertakings and the reasons why the Government had entered into them. Those questions in turn would lead into the forbidden territory of national security.

She was in a quandary, and she resolved that quandary in a way that is now not unfamiliar to us. At the request of the then Secretary of State — that, too, does not surprise—she entrusted the investigation of the truth of the matter to—I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

not normal for hon. Members addressing you to indulge in a guessing game and I have no intention of doing so. Nevertheless, if such a question had been put to you as, "Guess who—one guess is allowed—was entrusted with the investigation?", I am sure that you would have arrived at the right answer and said, without hesitation, "Sir Robert Armstrong." Indeed, it was Sir Robert Armstrong.

Upon the basis of the investigation—if that is the correct description—that he carried out, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland assured the House in a written answer on the day before the House rose for the summer recess not that the subject matter of the assertion was untrue, but that the evidence for it was insecure.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Is it not the case that the old penalty of transportation to Australia has been revived in the case of Sir Robert Armstrong?

Mr. Powell: I was hoping to work into my few remaining remarks, of course not in entirely uncomplimentary fashion, some allusion to the antipodean gladiatorial performances of the Cabinet Secretary. This is a matter that still requires to be probed and who better to probe it in the correct context than the Cabinet Secretary? One day he will be back from his travels. Perhaps then the Prime Minister will invite him to renew his effort to establish the truth of the matter which was submitted to him for investigation those four years ago, which still maintains its clammy grip upon everything that concerns Northern Ireland, and of which the memory has been renewed sharply and acridly in the minds of many of us by the Anglo-Irish agreement, to which the hon. Member for Eastbourne referred.

I believe that neither this House nor the British people, who have in recent weeks had quite an education in the sort of things that happen behind their backs, ought to be content to leave this matter where it lies. I have done my best. I did my best when in August and September 1982 I made a number of speeches outside the House and therefore without the protection of any privilege. The hon. Member for Eastbourne will confirm, and I put on record, that on that occasion I invited Sir Robert Armstrong to bring the matter to the courts if any wrong had been done by my assertions either to him or to any other person.

We need to know the truth about the nature of that compulsion which continuously constrains the Government of the United Kingdom to behave towards Northern Ireland in a manner quite incompatible with their alleged objectives, in a manner quite incompatible with the welfare of the people of that Province and with the duties that the Government and the House owe to it.

We have before us tonight only the hem of the garment of that constraint: the constraint to carry out "undertakings" given to a foreign Government and a foreign power, which dominates our governance of the Province of Northern Ireland. The time is ripe. The enlightenment and the inquisitiveness of the people are aroused now for an examination of this matter to get to the root of it, to get at the truth. What were the "undertakings"? What are the commitments that had been made all along by the Government of the United Kingdom which, among other consequences, have landed us in maintaining an obsolete form of financial administration of Northern Ireland, necessitating this debate upon the order this evening?

5.50 pm

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the Minister of State and to the House for having arrived a few moments late for this debate. I was at a meeting with the chairman of the Northern Ireland tourist board. He told me that his industry, among others, has not done so well during the last year. But I must not speak about tourism. I am mindful of the admonition that you gave the House and that you repeated for the benefit of late arrivals. I shall concentrate my remarks upon class II and upon the words

"For expenditure by the Department of Economic Development on local enterprise".

I understand that the words "local enterprise" do not apply only to the Local Enterprise Development Unit, that admirable organisation, because when I turn to the subheadings I find the words

"Other local enterprise initiatives. To meet the increasing response from several organisations to measures to stimulate local enterprise."

I am not quite clear what those words mean. I should be grateful if the Minister of State could explain them to me and if he could tell me what are the separate organisations that are there mentioned.

Is there any connection at all between the Department of Economic Development's expenditure on local enterprise and the intended disbursement from the international fund for Ireland? Approximately three quarters of the resources of that fund, we are told, are to be spent in Northern Ireland. If so, is the principle of additionality to be applied? When shall we have the opportunity to discuss the international fund for Ireland and its relevance to local enterprise?

A statement was made in another place on 5 November by my noble Friend Baroness Hooper, but surely it is in the House of Commons that we should apply our minds to financial matters. This agreement was signed in Washington. To many of us, this agreement is deeply objectionable as part of the price of the Anglo-Irish agreement. It may amuse Ministers on the Treasury Bench that we are incensed by this agreement, but a number of my hon. Friends and I regret that Her Majesty's Government should have stooped to its acceptance.

5.53 pm

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): I had not intended to begin my speech by referring to the Anglo-Irish agreement, because I should welcome a full-scale debate on the subject. However, I was appalled by the remarks of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). I have said to him before that he presents a very good Unionist case in this House, but he never addresses his mind to the problem that we are trying to solve—the deep division within a community in which there is more than one point of view. It is easy to argue for the maintenance of a Unionist tradition, except that those who live in Northern Ireland know that it has never made a positive contribution to peace and stability. Instead, it is one of the factors that has led us into the situation in which we find ourselves today.

To suggest, as the hon. Member for Eastbourne suggested, that the economic situation is worse because of the Anglo-Irish agreement is a travesty of the truth. The hon. Gentleman talks softly in this House in defence and in support of people who, outside this House, have engaged in a deliberate campaign of blackmail against the decision of this Government and of this House—a

campaign that has resulted, among other things, in the throwing of petrol bombs into the homes of policemen and into the homes of innocent Catholics in an attempt to force this Government and House to back down. That is the nature of the campaign. It has been organised to frighten people off.

Has the hon. Gentleman ever considered the consequences for the economy and for peace and stability if this House were to listen to him and to his friends outside the House and to surrender to such blackmail? Does he not believe that the net result wold be to give massive encouragement to those who say that the democratic process is a waste of time, particularly when people are forced to back down because of the sort of blackmail that he is softly defending in this House?

Mr. Gow: I think that the hon. Gentleman will have heard me speak in this House and outside, but, in case he has not, I repeat what I have said both within and without this place. I condemn at all times and in all circumstances, for today, for tomorrow and for ever, all unlawful and all unconstitutional action in the Province. It follows from that that I condemn even more strongly all violent action —notably, of course, the action against the police to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I hope, therefore, that he will withdraw any implication that I have ever at any time done other than advocate only lawful and constitutional opposition to the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I said that I wanted to be tolerant, and I shall allow the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) to reply to the comments of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). However, I hope that the hon. Member will relate his remarks to the order that is before the House.

Mr. Hume: Yes, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am aware of the public position on violence and violent acts that the hon. Member for Eastbourne adopts. However, the net effect of the case that he is making is to invite the House and the Government to back down in the face of blackmail and violence. If the Government were foolish enough to listen to him, it would lead to the complete undermining of the democratic process and to the encouragement of those who believe that those kind of methods make Governments change their minds.

I agree that unemployment in Northern Ireland is extremely serious. It has been serious for a very long time, as those of us who live there know. When 44 per cent. of the population is under the age of 25, we are screaming out for action to be taken. In particular, I draw attention to the plight of the rural areas in Northern Ireland. They do not receive very much attention.

Has the Minister of State considered the recently virtually unanimous proposal of the European Parliament, which received a positive response from the European Commission, that there should be an integrated rural programme for Northern Ireland to tackle the problems in the rural areas in a co-ordinated and integrated fashion —not just farming problems but those relating to roads, housing, job creation, tourism, afforestration, and so on? It should also consider new ways of using land, with a view to increasing the number of jobs. I hope that when they have considered that proposal the Government will respond positively to it.

On that same area of job creation, we welcome the setting up of the Co-operative Development Agency as one of the instruments of self-help in Northern Ireland. Last week the Government rightly announced that they were providing £2 million to try to offset the 800 job losses in Harland and Wolff and to help those people find employment with new job creation ideas of their own. When one compares that with the mere £50,000 that has been given to the Co-operative Development Agency, it is hard to take seriously the Government's intentions on co-operative development as being an instrument of self-help and job creation. I ask the Government to examine that issue seriously.

On Tuesday evening I had the privilege of hearing the Secretary of State make a speech in my constituency. It received a remarkably warm reception, because he concentrated on encouraging self-help and promised that the Government would strongly support and encourage it. One area is co-operative development, and that is one of the ways in which other European countries have made a substantial contribution to resolving unemployment problems, especially among young people.

I suggest that a mere £50,000 for the Co-operative Development Agency is not a statement of serious intent.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I make the emollient observation that the hon. Gentleman has played a part in that sphere in Derry.

Mr. Hume: I like to think that I played a major part in starting co-operatives in my constituency and throughout Ireland. I was involved in the most successful co-operative in the history of Ireland—I am very modest about that —the Credit Union Movement. That organisation has helped thousands of people. One out of four people in Ireland are involved in it. I have such faith in self-help because it is one of the few ways in which people in that part of the world can get to grips with the serious economic problems that face them.

I suggest to the Minister, when talking about LEDU and IDB and the instruments of job creation, that not enough attention is paid to marketing as an instrument for creating new jobs in Northern Ireland. Heavy finance goes into attracting inward investment, but we must rely more and more on our own small and medium sized enterprises. Helping them to grow would be one way forward. One way of doing that would be to devote more attention and resources to developing marketing on behalf of small and medium sized enterprises.

I should like to mention several other issues related to job creation, such as housing, but I understand there will be an opportunity to debate those matters on another occasion.

6.2 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I apologise for not being present at the beginning of the debate.

I wish to intercede on this Appropriation order on two smallish but fundamental matters. Not long ago I asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State what had happened to the money that the American Government were forcing upon this Parliament whether it wanted it or not. Will there be an opportunity to debate that? I understood from his reply that the matter was on ice and that there would be an opportunity to debate it. I wondered whether that international sum of money was being slipped in without the House debating it. In consequence, I should like a clear answer whether

[Mr. Richard Holt]

Parliament will have the opportunity to debate whether it wants American blood money. I strongly support the Anglo-Irish agreement. Perhaps I should not say American blood money, but American vote-buying money. I wonder whether Admiral Poindexter was the adviser to the American Government at that time. But leaving that aside, I want to know whether the Government have yet made a decision on behalf of the country to accept that money, and whether Parliament will have an opportunity of debating how it will be treated and handled. Will it be in excess or in place of all the other moneys which go to Northern Ireland?

On the thick piece of paper of this order the word "shipbuilding" appears. We are all aware of the dialogue that has taken place over shipyards in the north-east of England, which have been desperately competing against Harland and Wolff. We were told that decisions both now and in the future would be taken on a purely economic basis. The order contains the possibility of additional moneys being made available to Northern Ireland. Will that be taken into consideration by the Government when deciding on the economic fairness of bids for ships by Swan Hunter and Harland and Wolff? In my naivety I did not think, when the Government accepted the American money, that it would be used to the possible detriment of my constituents and others in the north-east of England. We already suffer severely enough. I know that Northern Ireland also suffers from unemployment, but it will not help if the people of Northern Ireland benefit from the American money to the detriment of my constituents.

I wish it to be made absolutely clear that, first, none of that money has been used or appropriated and that we shall have the opportunity of debating it; and, secondly, if and when that comes about and if shipbuilding is one of the subjects, whether decisions in that respect will take account of unemployment in the north-east of England and the fact that jobs are needed just as much there as in Northern Ireland.

6.6 pm

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) made a relevant point. The Government now face the problem of how to deal with the shipbuilding industry in the private and public sectors, and in respect of Harland and Wolff in the months and years ahead. Problems in shipbuilding do not exist just in the north-east. In Southampton, Vosper Thornycroft, a modern yard, is desperate for orders.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) made an unbelievable speech. He blamed much of the present unemployment and many of the economic problems of Northern Ireland on the Anglo-Irish agreement. The biggest sum of money in the order is £31 million, to be spent on Harland and Wolff. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is aware of the decline in shipbuilding worldwide. However, at present, the Japanese shipyards are losing enormous amounts of money. One shipyard alone is losing 19 billion yen. In 1945, when I was in Japan, the yen was worth 4p, but now it is worth very much more. I do not know what that sum of money amounts to when translated into sterling, but it is a large sum of money. There is no question that some countries are busy subsidising their yards to a much greater extent than we are. That is why orders are still going to Malta and other places. There is no way in which we can compete when countries are prepared to pour so much money into the kitty to keep their yards afloat. It is a difficult position. I do not know the answer, but it has nothing to do with the Anglo-Irish agreement and it is absolutely daft to say that it has.

Sir John Biggs-Davison *rose*——

Mr. Ross: I was referring to the hon. Member for Eastbourne, but I shall give way.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Does the hon. Gentleman dissent from the views expressed by the chairman of the Northern Ireland Economic Council on this matter?

Mr. Ross: I was about to mention the chairman of the Northern Ireland Economic Council, because I have read some of his reports. I shall, if the hon. Gentleman will allow me, make some comments later. As I understand it, however, the chairman of the Northern Ireland Economic Council gave evidence to the New Ireland Forum, and was very much in favour of the forum report. The article that he wrote seemed to be contrary to what he has been quoted as saying by the hon. Member for Eastbourne.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I appeared before the New Ireland Forum on the same day as Sir Charles Carter. He lent no comfort to any such idea. I refer the hon. Gentleman to his article in *The Times*.

Mr. Ross: The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) tells me that Sir Charles Carter was in favour of joint authority. I do, however, congratulate the hon. Gentleman on giving evidence before the Forum. That was a brave and noble step, and I welcome the fact that he took it. I also promise to read the article in *The Times*.

I welcome the additional moneys being made available to the LEDU. That organisation deserves enormous praise. I wish to goodness that we had something like it in the Isle of Wight. We have many problems, and the unemployment rate is likely to reach 18 per cent. later this month. I believe that the LEDU has done a great job. I also congratulate it on the form of its annual report, which is at least encouraging.

I do not visit Northern Ireland often, because the Government do not finance me to that extent. Therefore, I speak with some trepidation, as I do not have any great knowledge of this subject. Moreover, I very much regret that there are not more Northern Ireland Members present, as they could speak with much more knowledge than me. I happen to sell its products, so I asked to go to Tyrone Glass in Dungannon and to Belleek, a world famous pottery factory in Fermanagh. Both of those companies have gone through difficult times. However, it was a pleasure to go to Tyrone Glass and to see a lot of young people turning out a high quality product. The same is true of Belleek. That company sells throughout the world, particularly in the United States and, I should add, in the Isle of Wight. If anyone visits the Isle of Wight and wants to buy some of its products, I should be pleased to accommodate them. That company has gone through difficult times, but it has risen from the ashes, largely due to the help of a Manchester businessman who settled in Dublin. That is at least one example that goes across the border.

Those things have happened because the LEDU and the Northern Ireland Development Board have played a part. In 1980, they assisted 600 companies, and in 1986

they assisted 1,500 companies. A substantial number of them were new businesses. Thus, not all is gloom. They see the future area of concern as involving helping existing businessess to improve productivity more through the supply of expertise than injections of capital sums. They say that they want a little more money, but that they do not require all that much. That is at least something on the positive side.

I turn now to aircraft and shipbuilding. I have enormous respect for Sir Phillip Foreman and John Parker. I am told that once again things are not all gloomy, because Short Brothers is taking on staff. It has a very useful order from Fokker, which I believe has an order for about 100 aircraft. Short Brothers is doing the wings, and quite a lot of sub-contract work for Boeing. It also has the Tucano. I feel somewhat divided about that. I happen to have a big constituency interest in the matter, and I had hoped that the PC9 would prove to be the winner in that competition. However, I accept that the Tucano is now with Short Brothers. The other day Sir Phillip Foreman assured hon. Members, during a meeting in the other place, that it was a successful aircraft and that the RAF would be well pleased with its new trainer.

It is tragic that Harland and Wolff, probably the most modern and up-to-date shipyard in western Europe, has had to lay off 800 men. That is where most of the money is sought. Nevertheless, we are right to continue to show confidence in Harland and Wolff, because its expertise is very great, and one can hope only that there will be an upturn in the shipbuilding industry, in the not too distant future. At least that yard has some work, which is more than others can say. It is tragic that in Northern Ireland the cigarette industry the synthetic fibre industry and shipbuilding, which have been the main sources of employment for years, should all be on the decline.

I shall not sign an early-day motion saying that we should ban cigarette smoking in certain premises in Northern Ireland. Although I am an anti-smoker, I cannot put another nail in the coffin of the poor old cigarette industry, and so jeopardise jobs in Gallaher and elsewhere.

I welcome the extra money for energy efficiency, particularly given the high energy costs in Northern Ireland. Although electricity costs have fallen slightly recently, due to the fall in the price of oil, costs are still substantially higher than in the rest of the United Kingdom.

I also welcome the new technology board. It is a step in the right direction.

I hope that the Minister takes notice of the reports of the Northern Ireland Economic Council which land on our desks with fair regularity. In the report for October 1986, the report points out that in the past 10 years unemployment has doubled, the proportion of long-term unemployed in the 20 to 24-year-old age group has regrettably doubled, and employment in manufacturing and construction have declined in each case by one third. Moreover, the gap between the average gross domestic product per head of population in Northern Ireland and Great Britain has been enlarged, and the opportunities for argument about the distribution of fresh growth are few. As we also know, emigration from both north and south is extremely high.

The council asked the Government to consider its recommendations. I shall mention three or four of them. It wants greater involvement by the LEDU in the attraction from overseas of small companies. I agree with the hon. Member for Foyle that the only hope for Northern Ireland, or for places such as the Isle of Wight, lies in smaller businesses getting off the ground through co-operatives and so on. The hon. Member for Foyle has been much more successful than me. I tried to get a co-operative off the ground in the Isle of Wight, but failed abysmally. Nevertheless, I believe that the only hope for the country as a whole lies in smaller firms getting started. They need to be helped in the first two or three years. High interest rates of, say, 15 per cent. are crippling to small industries. However, that is the growth area. If the LEDU can become involved in attracting companies from overseas, all well and good.

The council also wants the development of a common strategic framework with the industrial development institutions and the setting of job targets for the three-year public expenditure programme. Moreover, it wants some mechanism to be introduced for carrying over into the following year unused expenditure on industrial development. That is always a problem for local and central Government, but such a mechanism would seem to be common sense. Perhaps the Minister will comment on those recommendations.

I very much regret that the situation in Northern Ireland is still declining. I believe that Northern Ireland's best hope for the future lies not just in the creation of small industries but in co-operation with the rest of the United Kingdom and across borders. It makes all the sense in the world to me if both north and south can work closely together for the good of their own future.

6.16 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I apologise to the Minister for not being in the Chamber for his opening remarks. I was somewhat taken by surprise when I saw that this debate on Northern Ireland had started before 6 pm. If I had been a little later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would have avoided your strictures over the limits of this debate.

However, I shall concentrate first on the international fund, which the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) called the American fund. He said that it could be slipped in without any reference to the House. But I assure the Minister that if he feels like slipping it into my constituency, in either small or large doses, I should be very pleased—whether or not there is any reference to the House.

Much has been said about Sir Charles Carter and the reports of the Northern Ireland Economic Council. It is difficult to debate the matter without referring to this year's report. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) rightly referred to those reports. However, I suggest that we should look at self-help in Northern Ireland in terms of promoting self-employment. Unless we can produce more self-employed people, we shall not be able to cope with our massive problems. Other than in small areas and in small ways, that can be done only by stimulating the construction industry. Last year alone, another 2,500 jobs in that industry were lost. According to the council's report, more than half the 1984 labour force will have been shed before the end of the decade.

I believe that self-help schemes should be geared towards stimulating the construction industry. In the last analysis, the north of Ireland relies on two natural resources: grass and agricultural products, which I am not

[Mr. Seamus Mallon]

allowed to discuss now, and its able and willing work force, which has been geared towards the construction industry for some time.

I welcome the additional moneys that will go to the Local Enterprise Development Unit, Harland and Wolff and the Industrial Development Board. The House will know that there are more people unemployed who worked in the manufacturing sector than there are those who are employed in it, and Northern Ireland is the only region in the European Economic Community where that position prevails. When we consider that stark and startling statistic and while trying to promote manufacturing industries, we must consider also how we can create new options. We shall never have the conditions of yesteryear. In future we shall not be able to provide the type of employment that once was available, and that means that we must look for other options.

I suggest that one lies in the notion of self-help, which could be extended to self-employment that is geared towards the construction industry, which is so important in the Northern Ireland economy, and agricultural equipment. It should not be forgotten that the largest industry in Northern Ireland is agriculture and that much of the machinery and many of the tools that the farmers use have been imported. The self-help programme could be geared in both directions.

Gas conversion schemes are being implemented in many towns in Northern Ireland. The schemes have been forced upon Northern Ireland because of the absence of natural gas, and I represent an area which is suffering greatly from this problem. I ask the Minister with responsibilities for economic development to reconsider his attitude towards grants for the conversion schemes. I believe that the grant on offer is £238 for what is termed the cheapest safe alternative. It is remarkable that this alternative is not used by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive because it deems it not to be safe. It knows that one person was killed quite recently as a result of an explosion in Portadown following the implementation of the cheapest safe alternative. I have made approaches at ministerial level because it is clearly a serious matter.

The subsidy that is provided for conversion schemes must be reconsidered. The one in question is not safe and if we continue with it it will be extremely expensive in the last analysis. For example, last week in Newry a mortar attack was planned. If the mortars had exploded, there would have been many more explosions than those in the main centre of explosions. The cheapest alternative within the gas conversion scheme may be cheap now but I suggest that it will be an expensive experiment in the long run.

I wish to make one final plea. Perhaps you will rule me out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall not object to that because I have almost completed my contribution to the debate.

One of the consequences of the conversion schemes is that the people of Northern Ireland are being forced to have heating systems in their homes that they do not want and cannot afford. The stage has been reached when they cannot have an open fire over Christmas. Indeed, they will not be able to have an open fire for 365 days of the year, because some great mind has decided that room heaters are the answer.

I ask the Minister to reconsider this approach. There is unemployment and poverty in the north of Ireland, yet those who are in receipt of benefit are being asked to pay up to £10 a week to heat their homes. They cannot afford that sort of expenditure and it is nonsense that they are being forced into that position. It would be much more sensible to spend a little more money to allow people to heat their homes with open fires.

It should be realised that there is a 30 per cent. differential between the price of electricity here and the price in Northern Ireland, but the Minister with responsibilities for health and social welfare has refused to take that fact into account when calculating benefits. I ask the Minister of State to take that differential on board and ensure through the actions of the Department of Economic Development and those of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that the people of Northern Ireland are able to heat their homes and provide themselves with basic necessities.

6.26 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate so early in the evening. The pace at which we have proceeded could be enough to give me an asthma attack. I am glad to see that the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), is in her place. If I do become ill, I am sure that she will be glad to help me out.

Within the framework of the debate that you have set for us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall comment briefly on what has been said. I shall begin with the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). We have always welcomed the hon. Gentleman's contributions to our debates on the Anglo-Irish agreement and to the debates that touch upon the island of Ireland as a whole. We have welcomed his many contributions since he resigned from his position in the Government.

The Anglo-Irish agreement is never far from our thoughts, not even when we discuss Estimates and Appropriations for Northern Ireland. The Government may well regret that there were not more consultations prior to the signing of what, after all, was a modest agreement. I urge the hon. Gentleman to turn his positive attention and thoughts to what will happen following 15 November 1985, rather than drawing attention to the vices, as he sees them, of the agreement. It is the Opposition's submission that the agreement is here to stay. A future Labour Government will not tear it up. Therefore, we and the people of Northern Ireland must come to terms with the agreement, as we must all come to terms with the measure that is before us.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) graces our debates with his cleverly thought out and logical contributions and with the way in which he advances his arguments. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) referred in last year's debate to the comments of the right hon. Gentleman being a form of triennial entertainment. The right hon. Gentleman said also that we go through a sort of pantomime at this time of year. That phrase was a nice one, but it should be said that he treats these matters with the utmost seriousness. The right hon. Member for South Down said that he had done his best, and I am sure that his constituents in Northern Ireland will agree with that. He has done his best from his vantage point, in the interests of his people, in putting forward his views.

The hon. Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) referred to the international fund. We welcome the fund, a remark which turns me to the contribution of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), who I am glad to see in his place. It should be said that he was present for the Appropriation debate last year. We were not necessarily happy with the concept of foreign money, or United States money, but we have come to terms with that. Most of us can come to terms with $50 million. It is a pleasant sum to have for the island of Ireland. The question to be asked is, "Where is the European Economic Community money?"

Can we not have a positive approach to the border? Can we not set up an industrial zone or development zone along the border to cover that area of devastation over the past few years? Is it not sensible to suggest that the international fund direct its operations to those areas? Although we accept the decision of the United States Congress with regard to this money, we are concerned that it is to be directed to profitable but private enterprises. Although we understand the doctrine behind that decision, we consider that a more common use of the money, through local authorities and through Government-inspired schemes, may be more appropriate. We accept the fact that this is a first tranche at $50 million. A further $100 million is to come. If we welcome the first $50 million, most assuredly we shall welcome the rest. Therefore, we wish well the international fund and the board.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne also referred to the lateness of the hour at which we discuss these matters. Tonight, we are a little ahead of ourselves. We endorse his view that the way in which we conduct the business of the House as it relates to Northern Ireland is nothing short of farcical. I do not blame the Minister of State, or his colleague the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, but, of course, it is a travesty that we should discuss important matters dealing with Northern Ireland, which has a population of 1·5 million people, in this way. A future Labour Government will examine these matters with the utmost care. We do not see any progress or improvement in the nature of the business as it comes before the House.

We are always glad to make promises well ahead of a general election. We accepted the Government's decision that Stormont should be abolished. There was a withdrawal of democratic function from the Stormont Assembly and there was no longer a democratic mechanism to study Orders in Council. We welcomed the scrutinising role of the Northern Irish Assembly in relation to Orders in Council. Now that it is no longer performing that scrutiny, Orders in Council may be affirmed or negatived, but cannot be altered, even if they contain the most glaring administrative errors. We shall examine very carefully the setting up of a Standing Committee on which the Government of the day have a majority. There could be proper debates on orders, and valid points could be made by Members of Parliament. Those valid points could be incorporated into the text of any legislation dealing with Northern Ireland. There is already a Committee that considers Northern Ireland affairs, but it does not exist in the form that we envisage.

We also envisage the creation of a Select Committee for Northern Ireland, with power to review not only the Anglo-Irish agreement, which will be of interest to the hon. Members for Eastbourne and for Epping Forest, but various aspects of the Northern Ireland Committee. Such a Committee might have the powers of the customary Commons Select Committee. It may examine the order that we have before us. We might consider how to incorporate this order and the various elements of it into the workings of a Select Committee. That Select Committee might also be able to cross-examine witnesses, ranging from the Secretary of State down, and call for documents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman's remarks are going wide of the issue before the House. He should come back to it.

Mr. Bell: It is rather like Sunday cricket. The rules for wides are somewhat different from those for cricket during the week. I shall bring the debate within the purview, as you have so rightly said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the order.

Although we are debating the order, debates on Northern Ireland issues could be held at regular intervals on the Floor of the House, and in waking hours, rather than late at night. That point was made by the hon. Member for Eastbourne, and by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West. We shall look for foresight and diplomatic skill on the part of the Unionist leadership. It might lead them to understand that, as Ernest Marples once said to me, "A time of crisis is a time of opportunity". We look forward to the day when the Unionists feel that the time of crisis has passed and the time of opportunity is at hand.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh mentioned shipbuilding carried out by Harland and Wolff. He and I have constituents who have suffered from the closure of Smith's Dock. We understand the nature of the local economy and the impact of this type of decision. The hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) mentioned Japanese shipping. We do not absolve the Government of their responsibility of creating the conditions in the shipbuilding industry that have led to redundancies. After all, a Conservative Government hived off Navy shipbuilding from civil shipbuilding. A Conservative Government also allowed British shipowners to build most of their merchant vessels abroad. Therefore, the Government cannot abdicate their responsibility for those matters.

On the subject of Harland and Wolff, which is within the purview of the order, I note the absence of the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson). I dislike criticising those who are absent, but it is fair, apparently, for the hon. Gentleman to strut his moment on the stage of the Republic of Ireland, but not to grace our proceedings with his presence when we deal with the future of Harland and Wolff and the loss of 800 jobs in his constituency.

We associate ourselves with the remarks made by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume). He said that the co-operative agency received £50,000. That amount is not sufficient. We shall press the Government for a more liberal financial approach to the problems that face the co-operative agency.

On Tuesday, I was glad to sit on the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments which dealt with Enterprise Ulster. Enterprise Ulster was renewed. We are grateful to the present Minister of State and his colleagues on the Front Bench who are responsible for Northern Ireland affairs. The note that we received clearly stated that the

[Mr. Bell]

former Minister of State looked upon Enterprise Ulster with a view to putting it to sleep. More than 1,800 jobs were at stake as a consequence of the review. I am glad that the Government did not take that view. The powers of Enterprise Ulster were extended and 1,800 jobs have been saved. I welcome the efforts of the Minister of State and his team in ensuring that those jobs were saved.

In the context of the order, we see a clear understanding on the part of the Government about the nature of the mixed economy. The frontiers of the mixed economy in Northern Ireland are not so far to the right as they are in the rest of the United Kingdom. We welcome the importance that the Government give to the shipbuilding and aircraft industries, as is reflected in the order.

I notice that, so far, the Government's drive for privatisation has not included Shorts. If Sid has been seen anywhere at all of late, it has not been in Northern Ireland. Each year, for the past few years—certainly since 1981—we have been told that Shorts will soon be privatised. A specialist firm was appointed which advised the Government on the prospects of selling Shorts Brothers to the private sector. The former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the present Home Secretary, at one time hoped that there would be a share flotation similar to that of British Telecom. Tonight, the Minister referred to the sudden fall in Shorts' profitability. The 1985-86 results, which were published recently, show such a massive drop that the *Belfast Telegraph* described them as

"a massive reversal of the trend towards full profitability".

The losses amounted to £35 million. We take no comfort from those figures. Short Brothers should not be privatised. We welcome the clear delineation of the mixed economy frontier of it as applies to Shorts. We wish the firm well in the development of its business in aircraft, air structures and guided missiles.

The Secretary of State, in a recent written answer, told us how the Government have authorised an external funding limit of £36 million to cover the period 1 April 1986 to 31 March 1987. He also stated the Government's concern at the downturn in Shorts' financial performance in 1985-86. Tonight the Minister of State wished Shorts an early return to profitability.

The Secretary of State also said in his written answer that the Government would be reviewing shortly the strategic plans for the business of Shorts. While the Minister of State could not be expected to give a reply tonight, I am sure that he would wish to take an early opportunity to inform the House of the results and consequences of that review.

We welcome the statement of Sir Philip Foreman that Shorts is committed to the affirmative action programme monitored by the Fair Employment Agency. I should say in parenthesis that we welcome the issuing of rules of conduct for firms falling within the purview of that agency.

Sir Philip Foreman is anxious to demonstrate that Shorts' employment policy is fair and on an equitable basis. However, I disagree with him when he states that the time that management spend on proving that point detracts from the company's overall sales effort. With the utmost respect to him, I should point out that, as W. Somerset Maugham once wrote in a book called "Catalina", the wise man takes the world as it is and not as it might be.

The wise man must take into account in the United States the Irish National Caucus, which recently sought to compel the United States air force to cancel options on 48 Shorts Sherpa aircraft. No hon. Member believes that the way to tackle the problem of discrimination in Northern Ireland is to reduce order books there and to induce further discrimination — the discrimination between those in work and those out of work. That is not the proper course of action to fight discrimination in Shorts.

The worst discrimination is where people are made unemployed by policies which may be made by the Government or exterior forces. That kind of discrimination is as bad as the religious discrimination that we see in Northern Ireland. Therefore, our message to Shorts is to seek an early return to profitability, to continue the expansion of its order book, to maintain a high profile in rooting out discrimination and to continue as one of its goals the attack on discrimination. We in the Labour party will certainly press and probe the company and the Government on that issue.

If I understood the Minister correctly, there is a provision in the order to cover the cost of the 800 job losses at Harland and Wolff. We understand the nature of the downturn in world shipping, to which the hon. Member for Isle of Wight referred. No one understands better than me and the hon. Member for Langbaurgh the consequences of redundancy for ordinary people who in their working lives have acquired skills and invested hours in their place of work, and who find themselves cast aside with an uncertain future for themselves and their children. We would be most distressed if we felt for a moment that those who lose their work at Harland and Wolff would be condemned to spend the rest of their working lives on street corners, on their hunkers as in the thirties. I am sure that the Minister would not wish that to happen. Therefore, we ask the Government to ensure as best they can the retraining of those who will lose their jobs to find work for them and to give the Northern Ireland community as a whole the feeling that there is something to be gained from their policies.

We in the Labour party cannot, and do not, associate ourselves with the Government's policies overall. We welcome the fact that more money is being spent in Northern Ireland. Certainly, more money goes into Northern Ireland than into the Principality of Wales and Scotland, or, as the hon. Member for Langbaurgh knows and understands, into Cleveland, which we both represent. We shall not bless the Government's monetarist policies or give the Government a sense of relief that they can look forward with equanimity to the next Appropriation order without hostility from the Opposition.

We accept that we in the Opposition have a greater role to play than usual because of the absence of Unionist Members, with the honourable exception of the right hon. Member for South Down. We take on ourselves the burden of responsibility for the people of Northern Ireland in relation to shipbuilding, the aircraft industry, industry in general, the environment and hospitals. We shall continue to press and probe the Government on all those issues with a view to eliciting information, easing the position of those who live there and giving those in Northern Ireland the sense that a future Labour Government would have the competence and confidence to govern Northern Ireland differently from the way in which it is at present governed.

6.44 pm

Mr. Scott: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to reply. Normally my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), would have replied to the debate as he is responsible for the Department of Economic Development. However, he is spending this week in the United States on a tour, meeting industrialists, representatives of the Administration and others, in search of investment and orders on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland.

Some of the points raised, especially those raised by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), were particularly for my hon. Friend's consideration and I shall ensure that on his return he has a note of them so that he can turn his attention to them. The hon. Gentleman will notice that for two of his points we have present the Northern Ireland Minister responsible for both the Department of the Environment and the Department of Health and Social Services. No doubt he will have heard what the hon. Gentleman said.

First, I shall deal with the question of why we are having the debate this evening. That matter was touched on by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and at some length by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), who announced his familiar conspiracy theory. Northern Ireland has had a separate Consolidated Fund for over 60 years. There is no secret or hidden reason why the Government persist with that arrangement. Our belief is that Northern Ireland's special needs and problems will be best met by a system of devolved government. I recognise that not every hon. Member accepts that, but it is the Government's view and Parliament as a whole has accepted and embodied it in the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 and the Northern Ireland Act 1982. In that light, the maintenance of a separate Consolidated Fund so that a future devolved Administration can have proper control over the resources they spend is a sensible way to proceed.

Several hon. Members spoke about our legislative arrangements. I shall ensure that the attention of our business managers is drawn to those matters. I have my own feelings about the time at which Northern Ireland business is considered in the House. It is open to hon. Members to make their representations through the usual channels about the handling of business and, perhaps, about the greater use of the Northern Ireland Committee. It is worth recalling that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the leaders of the two Unionist parties when she met them on 25 February that she was ready in particular to discuss the arrangements for handling Northern Ireland business in Parliament. That offer remains open and I urge them to take it up.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West and other hon. Members alluded to the level of unemployment that we must endure in Northern Ireland. We cannot counter unemployment by Government action alone. We need efficient, competitive and innovative employers in Northern Ireland if we are to tackle the problem. I do not see the outlook for unemployment in Northern Ireland as being particularly encouraging at present. There are still industries under threat and they may have to endure further redundancies.

The visit of my hon. Friend the Minister to the United States this week is indicative of our effort to attract inward investment. I absolutely agree that, although we should ever be alert for opportunity to attract inward investment in Northern Ireland, our future thrust of policies should be very much in the area of encouraging small firms, including self-help operations, and depending on them to provide the jobs that Northern Ireland so desperately needs.

Through our policies, we shall aim to encourage more people to set up in business, to facilitate the growth of existing small businesses, and to stimulate economic activity in communities through local enterprise programmes. In addition, we will have to help with special schemes for the retraining of those who become unemployed. The enterprise allowance scheme, action for community employment scheme and others also have a role to play in providing employment for the people of the Province.

I share the concern expressed by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West. However, he is less than fair in his questioning of the Government's commitment to tackle the economic problems facing Northern Ireland. Identifiable public expenditure in Northern Ireland on a per capita basis is some 40 per cent. higher than in the United Kingdom as a whole. It is 39 per cent. higher than in Wales and 21 per cent. higher than in Scotland. That is a level of expenditure that reflects the Government's attempts to meet the real needs of Northern Ireland, and the Government's commitment is commendable.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West referred to lignite. I believe that the development of lignite could have major economic benefits. The right hon. Gentleman knows that we have set up opportunities for consultation and for assessing the benefits that could flow from lignite and the way that these could best be tackled. I can assure him absolutely that, as and when the reports are produced, there will be a public inquiry in East Tyrone into the environmental effects. Apart from the immediate effects of the construction of any minemouth power plant —environmental action could be taken about that—the effect on the surrounding environment is likely to be minimal. That matter must be discussed when a public inquiry is held.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne raised the problems faced by Harland and Wolff. I must stress that these problems have nothing to do with the Anglo-Irish agreement. The bulk of the money is going to Harland and Wolff to reflect the problems encountered by shipbuilders in England, Scotland and throughout western Europe. Even Japan, which has led shipbuilding in the past few years, suffered capacity cuts throughout last year. It is less than fair of my hon. Friend to relate the requirement for Harland and Wolff to the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Gow: I think that my hon. Friend will agree when he reads the *Official Report* tomorrow that at no stage in my speech did I mention Harland and Wolff.

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend claimed that the reason that I had to come to the House today was because of the Anglo-Irish agreement and the unrest. I am simply saying that my purpose in coming to the House today is to find money for Harland and Wolff and other commendable activities. That is not related to the Anglo-Irish agreement.

[Mr. Scott]

The other major service for which funds are being sought is in respect of standard capital grants. Some £12 million is directed there. That is good news because it reflects substantial investment by firms within Northern Ireland in recent times. Nor do I think that high levels of unemployment in Northern Ireland have anything to do with the effects of the Anglo-Irish agreement. Unemployment has consistently been higher in the Province than elsewhere in the United Kingdom. It is also misleading to suggest that industrial output in Northern Ireland has suffered since the agreement. Output has continued to grow over the past 12 months and manufacturing output has now recovered to its 1980 level.

Several hon. Members raised the question of the international fund for Ireland. My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) specifically asked about opportunities to debate that fund. He may be aware that the order establishing the fund was laid before Parliament in the usual way. An Order in Council under the International Organisations Act 1968 went before a Standing Committee where there was an opportunity for debate and the order was debated in the other place.

I would like to consider the question of additionality.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Was it not the case for immunities for those serving on the fund that was brought before the House?

Mr. Scott: There was more than one order connected with the establishment of the fund and one certainly had that effect.

I can give an absolute assurance that any disbursements from the international fund will be completely additional to public expenditure in the Province. The purpose to which the fund will be used is a matter for the board of the fund and that is an independent body. Let me make it absolutely clear that the Government have welcomed the establishment of the fund and the degree of international support attracted by the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Bell: The question of additionality arises in relation to the Common Market money that is still being negotiated. That issue has attracted the attention of the House. Can the Minister give any comment on the question of additionality in the event of money coming from the European Economic Community?

Mr. Scott: We will have to deal with that problem if and when the European Community decides to make any disbursements. It will depend on the terms upon which any such offer might be made.

No money has yet been allocated out of the international fund. If the board of the fund allocates money in respect of services that are undertaken by central Government, of course I would have to seek agreement of the House to such payments being appropriated in aid of the services in question. That would of course provide an opportunity for debate on such payments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh expressed concern about Harland and Wolff. The provision that is being sought is meant to cover redundancy costs, together with losses of working capital, and to establish Harland and Wolff Enterprises for retraining and re-employment of workers. None of the money is need for the auxiliary oiler replenishment, on which work has not yet commenced. I absolutely assure the House that the tender contained no subsidy whatsoever and that the conditions that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced to the House on 24 April will apply absolutely.

We have had a debate that has ranged somewhat wider than we might have expected on this order. In a sense, the order is peripheral to the main thrust of the economic future of Northen Ireland. We have already announced the global outturn or public expenditure for the coming financial year for Northern Ireland. There will be an increase of 6 per cent. over the existing financial year's provision. That means a 2 per cent. increase, in real terms, for Northern Ireland. That clearly demonstrates the Government's commitment to the Province and to tackling the problems that Northern Ireland faces. Tonight we need money, partly to help Harland and Wolff through a difficult time and partly to reinforce the efforts to provide jobs in Northern Ireland and also to respond to many extra jobs that have already been created. I commend the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Appropriation (No. 3) (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 13th November, be approved.

Health (Northern Ireland)

6.57 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): I beg to move,

That the draft Health and Personal Social Services and Public Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 5th November, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

I am sorry to learn that the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) has had an attack of asthma. I can only hope that it is not so bad that he is now in need of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, because the Minister for Health in England has now left the Chamber and the hon. Member for Middlesbrough would probably have to put up with the Minister with responsibility for health in Northern Ireland. I can understand his worry about that.

The House will appreciate that this order contains a wide range of miscellaneous amendments to legislation concerning the health and personal social services and public health. Articles 3 to 14 of the order make a number of amendments to the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972, dealing with such matters as the dissolution of the Health and Social Services Council, arrangements for medical and dental practitioners who are suspended, and charges for accommodation. I do not propose to describe these amendments individually in my opening remarks, but if any hon. Members wish to raise points I will, of course, try to deal with them during my reply, if I should catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I shall therefore concentrate my remarks on the two remaining aspects of the draft order. The first concerns the tighter controls which we propose to introduce over the sale of tobacco products to children, under article 15. The second concerns the provisions we are introducing in articles 16 to 18 to control the spread of infectious diseases in the Province and bring our legislation into line with that in the remainder of Great Britain.

Article 15 amends the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 and further restricts the sale of tobacco to the young. Many people and organisations have expressed concern at the amount of cigarette smoking by children in the Province. A survey sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Services in conjuction with the Ulster Cancer Foundation and carried out in 1983 showed that children in the Province aged 11 to 15 smoked £2,340,000 worth of cigarettes a year—that is, 39 million cigarettes—and that 24 per cent. of fifth-year pupils at secondary school smoked regularly. Further concern has been aroused by the manufacture and sale of new tobacco products, such as Skoal Bandits, which could be attractive to children and which constitute a considerable health hazard.

Article 15 strengthens controls on the sale of tobacco to young people in three important respects. First, it makes it an offence to sell any tobacco products to children and removes the seller's defence that he did not know that the tobacco was for the youngsters' use. Secondly, the definition of tobacco is extended to include products for sucking, chewing or sniffing. That will cover products such as Skoal Bandits. Thirdly, it increases control over automatic vending machines. In future, if it is proved that a vending machine selling tobacco is being extensively used by children, courts will be required to order the owner to prevent this or to remove the machine. These amendments match the provisions in the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986 which was sponsored by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). I will ensure that these amendments are brought to the attention of the police.

The remaining three articles amend the Public Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 and are intended to strengthen controls available in Northern Ireland to reduce the spread of infectious disease. The main interest to the House will be how these relate to AIDS, and I shall return to that later.

Article 17 gives powers to make regulations dealing with health risks which may arise from the arrival of ships or aircraft. Similar powers were originally contained in United Kingdom legislation, but certain provisions have now become transferred or reserved matters and new powers must be provided in Northern Ireland legislation. Secondly, article 17 gives the Department power to make regulations which could cover notifiable and other diseases.

Article 18 makes provision for the compulsory removal to or detention in hospital of people suffering from notifiable diseases. There are no existing powers, but there may be rare and very exceptional circumstances in which the clinical condition of a patient suffering from a notifiable disease places him in a dangerously infectious state, yet he refuses medical care and admission to hospital or to remain in hospital. In those circumstances, the new provisions in article 18 of the order empower health and social services boards to apply to a resident magistrate to make an order for the removal to or detention in hospital of someone with a notifiable disease if it is considered that there is a serious risk of infection to others.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My hon. Friend said that he would come to the question of AIDS. Is he making a distinction between that and the procedure for notifiable diseases, or is he saying that AIDS is to become a notifiable disease? I did not quite follow his argument.

Mr. Needham: If my hon. Friend will bear with me for a moment, I shall come to the point that he has raised.

The new powers will not be used in respect of the many notifiable diseases which do not present a danger—for example, whooping cough and measles. A resident magistrate will decide, on the application of the health and social services board, whether a person suffering from a notifiable disease presents a serious risk of infection. If the magistrate is satisfied that that is the case, he will make an order removing the person to hospital or detaining him in hospital for a specified period.

I come now to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). Notifiable diseases are specified in the schedule to the Public Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 and all are infectious diseases, such as infective hepatitis, typhoid, dysentery, whooping cough and measles. Various provisions in the 1967 Act enable controls to be applied to restrict the spread of notifiable diseases.

Finally, I should like to deal with the amendments in articles 17 and 18 as they affect AIDS. Those amendments match provisions in the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 and will bring about a common policy within the United Kingdom for the control of AIDS. It is the intention to make regulations under article 17, applying to AIDS some of the controls on notifiable diseases. Among

[Mr. Needham]

these will be the new powers in article 18 for removal to and detention in hospital. The controls applied to AIDS will be similar to those already applying in Great Britain. I must make it clear that this order does not make AIDS a notifiable disease, and it is not the intention to do so. There is a real risk that people suffering from AIDS might be reluctant to seek medical help if the disease were to be made notifiable.

The draft order represents an important contribution to protecting public health in Northern Ireland, not only in terms of additional safeguards against disease but in reducing the risk to children from tobacco. I commend the order to the House.

7.5 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): The Minister, with his customary clarity, has explained that the order has two basic purposes—to bring the law of Northern Ireland more closely into line with that of the United Kingdom and to provide the authorities with the powers to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, together with some of the other matters to which he referred. The whole House will approve both those purposes and, with certain reservations to which I shall refer in a moment, the Opposition welcome the order.

I find article 11 a little puzzling. The explanatory memorandum states:

"Article 11 repeals the statutory obligation of the Department, Board, Central Services Agency and the Training Council to produce annual reports"

but it fails to explain why. The Minister did not explain, either, but that omission may be rectified later. It is easy to argue that there are too many authorities producing too many annual reports and that we are all submerged beneath too much paper.

In this instance, however, we are dealing with a system which is not, in essence, controlled by elected representatives. The boards are not elected. They are not like local authorities in which decisions, achievements and failures are scrutinised by councillors who are themselves liable to be approached by members of the public. Moreover, Northern Ireland is governed by the system of direct rule, if "system" is the appropriate word, so not only are the boards not elected, but they are responsible to or monitored by an authority which itself is not elected. If the public are to have any prospect of knowing what is going on, it is important that those who run the system should at least have to formulate an account of what they have been doing and why. I should have thought that it would be a healthy exercise for them. I hope that the Minister will explain the thinking behind the proposal, if indeed there was any.

The Minister correctly diagnosed that some hon. Members would like to know a little more about articles 16 to 18. I am troubled by the second paragraph of the explanatory memorandum. We are told:

"The main purpose of the draft order is to strengthen the controls available in Northern Ireland to reduce the spread of infectious diseases so that they are more closely comparable with those available elsewhere in the United Kingdom."

So far, so good, but it goes on:

"This would facilitate a common policy for the control of certain diseases, in particular Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)."

That seems to be the thrust behind what is happening. Article 17 empowers the Department to make regulations, "with a view to the treatment of persons affected with any epidemic, endemic or infectious disease and for preventing spread of such diseases".

There is also something about the spread of diseases on vessels. That is a wide power and is vested in some constitutional entity called "the Department" and not in the Secretary of State or in any Minister. It is clear that the Department does not even need to consult the Secretary of State except in relation to regulations affecting vessels. In itself, that is rather a wide power and it affects people in all sorts of ways. Of course we all appreciate the necessity for rules for that purpose.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman fallen into the trap in the 1974 Act and failed to write in "Secretary of State" wherever he reads "Department" in one of these orders?

Mr. Archer: If I have overlooked a provision of that kind, I am grateful for the guidance of the right hon. Gentleman. If he says that "the Department" means "the Secretary of State", I am grateful for his guidance and no doubt he will elaborate on the point later in the debate. But if that is the case, why are we not told "Secretary of State"? That would set everyone's mind at rest and we would not need to refer back to the 1974 Act and would not have all this legislation by reference. Perhaps one day the Department will say what it means.

Mr. Cash: The right hon. and learned Gentleman might care to refer to the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1974 because that will solve his problem.

Mr. Archer: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but a lot of people will have to operate these regulations not in a library with the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1984 and a row of textbooks to hand but out there where it counts. Perhaps the Minister will take this exchange to heart because it would be much easier if the regulations said what they meant and we knew who had power to do what.

We then come to some rather startling words. In article 17, new section 2A(2) of the Public Health Act says:

"Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1), the Department"—

apparently that means the Secretary of State—

"may by any such regulations apply, with or without modifications, to any disease to which the regulations relate any enactment relating to the notification of disease or to notifiable or infectious diseases."

Perhaps there is some other intermediate instrument of construction that I have missed, but, on the face of it, the Department is authorised to decide the diseases to which the regulations are to relate. Clearly, it is intended that the Department shall be entitled to apply those powers to diseases which are not normally thought of as infectious or as notifiable. It also seems to have a wide if not absolute discretion about what diseases they shall be. I would be grateful for the further guidance of the hon. Gentlemen who intervened, but one day there may arise a king who knew not Joseph and we may find some Minister who wants to apply these regulations to something quite outside anything spoken about in this debate. One wonders why the powers must be quite so wide. However, that is not our real worry.

I looked to see what the position is in Britain. As I understand it, the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act

1984 confers wide powers on the Secretary of State and on local authorities to deal with infectious diseases. They may order someone to stay away from work, they may order people to keep their children away from school, they keep children out of places of entertainment, close infectious premises whether they are industrial or used for entertainment, and a justice of the peace is empowered to subject a person to a medical examination whether that person likes it or not or to order the person to be detained in hospital.

All that clearly restricts the freedom of individuals and might subject them to considerable inconvenience. Clearly, there may be good reasons for that and various considerations have to be placed in the balance. The decision must depend upon the nature of the disease and the seriousness of the consequences if it spreads upon the nature of the inhibitions on the freedom of the person concerned for preventing the spread of the disease.

The Public Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 1985 apply a wide range of these powers to deal with acquired immune deficiency syndrome, AIDS. Regulation 3(2) of those regulations provides for the compulsory detention in hospital specifically of someone suffering from AIDS. It does not apply some other power to AIDS, but provides a power which relates only and uniquely to AIDS.

So far as I am able to ascertain, those regulations were not debated. Perhaps the Minister can tell us a little about the powers in those regulations. Have any of them been used and if so in what circumstances? I was told of one case in Manchester of a person in hospital with AIDS being served with the order when apparently all he had sought to do was to spend what would probably be his last weekend on earth in his own home.

I raise these matters because, clearly, some serious considerations arise. If these provisions are effective and make an effective contribution to preventing the spread of AIDS, that is probably a decisive argument in their favour. But AIDS is not what we normally understand by the terms "infectious disease". We are told by those who know that there is no danger of anyone who carries AIDS communicating the disease simply by going about in public places. We are told that no one will contract AIDS simply because he has passed physically close to a carrier.

Why should someone with AIDS be confined to a hospital? If such a person says that he proposes to act in a sexually promiscuous way or if for some psychological reason he wants to spread the disease, it may be a different matter. But in the absence of such a factor, to the great misfortune of a person affected by AIDS we seem to be adding a further misfortune which does not make any obvious contribution to restricting its spread.

Is it proposed that people suffering from AIDS should normally be forcibly removed to hospital in the absence of any other factor? Who will decide who is to be subjected to these powers? Will it be the environmental health officers, for whom I have great respect? If it is, to whom will they be answerable and who will decide if there is a dispute about the matter?

The House would fail to address some important issues affecting the rights of people if it did not ask these questions, especially because the powers are to be conferred in such apparently wide terms. I raise these matters not because they arise directly from this order. Subject to the two matters that I have raised, we have no complaints about the order. But the Government may subsequently have to justify the next step which, according to the Minister and the memorandum, is now being contemplated. We will not divide the House on this issue, but I hope that the Minister can tell us more about the powers, because the argument for the proposal in such wide terms is not self-evident.

7.18 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): This is a miscellaneous order and comment upon it is therefore necessarily also miscellaneous. It may be convenient to the Minister if I designate first those articles with which I am not merely in agreement but in enthusiastic agreement. I will then come to the articles that I do not like and finish with the articles on which I and perhaps the House would welcome further explanation.

First, I shall list the things that I like. I like article 5. It is curious that we have had to wait for article 5 for the registration of common lodging houses to be brought into force. Certainly the registration process in relation to common lodging houses, like that in relation to old people's homes privately provided, is not merely an important safeguard but a gentle kind of instrument which results in the improvement of conditions generally. I am glad that at last article 5 will enable that power to be effectively exercised.

I like article 9. Although it is somewhat obscure, I understand that it will have the effect of facilitating short-term assessments of persons for admission to old people's homes, and also short-term stays in those homes. In so far as it does that, it will certainly be beneficial.

A recurrent tragedy with which hon. Members are confronted in their constituencies is that of old persons, still managing in difficult circumstances and sometimes in isolation, with the self-sacrificing assistance of others, usually relatives, but offering those relatives no relief whatsoever—a situation from which there seemed often no escape for any of the parties.

If short-term stays are rendered easier as a result of the facilitated assessment that the article provides, I hope that it will more often be possible to persuade the old person to enter a home temporarily while those normally responsible for his or her care get some opportunity for recuperation and recovery.

Such a stay may also assist the transition across that awful gulf between one's own home and, what is also known as a home, a residential home. That is a step before which too many elderly people, to their own disadvantage, hesitate for too long. Therefore, I commend and welcome what is achieved by article 9.

I also like article 15, which was one of the two articles to which the Minister referred. I like the fact that it brings in tobacco substitutes and other products, and I especially like the fact that it will be impossible in future for a vendor of those items to say that he "didna ken". It will not be possible for the boy or girl, as the case may be, to say that she "wants it for her mum or dad". The products simply cannot be supplied to a person under the age of 16 without a breach of the law. The only remaining loophole, presumably, will be if the vendor pretends that he does not know the age of the person; but there are means of following up and dealing with that evasion. So a welcome strengthening of the law for the protection of young people has been provided by article 15.

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

That ends my catalogue of enthusiastic approval, not necessarily excluding the articles, which I have not mentioned, but which I recognise as necessary.

I come to those articles that I do not like. I do not like article 6 which is a curious article. A Department is in possession of a piece of land and wishes to dispose of it. It cannot find a ready buyer for that land, except in association with a contiguous — I believe it is called "adjacent" here — piece of land. Therefore, the Department is given power to purchase the adjacent piece of land in order to sell both together, either more easily or more advantageously.

I simply wonder whether that is a necessary provision. It seems a strange one to come from a Government ideologically averse from unnecessary vesting of land: for that is the process we are discussing. I understand that the acquisition of land which is conferred is voluntary; nevertheless, if the Department can voluntarily acquire area B which is adjacent to area A which it already owns, why on earth cannot the potential purchaser of area A understand that he can also buy area B and, therefore, take area A off the hands of the Department? I wonder if this is not a bureaucratic provision that has been put in for convenience and is not strictly necessary. I hope that I shall have the Minister's agreement in saying that, as far as I am concerned, public acquisition of land, unless strictly necessary, is anathema.

My other objection is to article 16, which substitutes departmental determination for prescription by regulation. In general, it is bad practice, where an existing law requires a regulation to be made, to wipe out the regulation-making power and substitute mere determination. It is true that regulations which would be prayable elsewhere are not prayable under the present constitutional arrangements in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, the mere making of a statutory instrument imposes a certain discipline upon those who make it, especially as in Northern Ireland we have an excellent Examiner of Statutory Instruments, whose successive reports we peruse with the same excitement as we once used to peruse the *Boy's Own Paper*. Thanks to that assistance, I have no doubt that the necessity of making a regulation sharpens the minds of officials and Ministers much more than the power just to issue a determination. I do not like article 16, therefore, and I go on record as disliking it.

Now for my questions. I was surprised that the Minister did not offer the House at any rate a brief explanation of article 7, namely, the arrangements for general medical practitioners whose registration is suspended. To the untutored student, it appears as though that makes a provision for general medical practitioners whose registration is suspended to go on operating.

Mr. Needham *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Powell: I am glad to receive a negative signal from the Minister, but I should be grateful — and I suspect that other hon. Members would be grateful — if he could explain at some little length how article 7 will work and why it is necessary.

I now turn to the area traversed by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), covering articles 16 to 18, especially article 17. Studying, as I noticed that he has studied, the explanatory memorandum with more than usual care, I came across a constitutional curiosity, which I hope the Minister can clear up. It is referred to in the words:

> "Since certain public health controls on vessels and aircraft have now become reserved or transferred matters".

I would like to know when and how they became reserved or transferred matters. I think I guess — but guessing is not good enough — that under the old Stormont constitution those powers were not vested in the Government of Northern Ireland and were in consequence exercised under United Kingdom powers. Curiously, it looks as though somehow under the 1973 and 1982 Acts an odd power or two that was not embraced within the capabilities of the Stormont regime got made available for a sort of administration which does not exist and which many of us think it would be better never did exist. Perhaps the Minister could clear up that point of curiosity.

More important is the general operation of the regulations now that they have been rendered uniform with the powers existing in the rest of the United Kingdom. They are extremely onerous upon the individuals to whom they would be occasionally applied as I should like to illustrate by a query for which I should be grateful to have the Minister's answer.

The orders for dentention in hospital are made for a period. That period can be extended. Can it really be the case that an order made for a period could be indefinitely extended? Somewhere in the legislation there must surely be a superior power of appeal or review. I hope that the Minister will have been sufficiently briefed to be able to reassure the House that it will not rest simply with a magistrate making the initial orders and also making the renewal orders provided for in the regulation but that there is available somewhere a superior authority.

Those who are admirers of Surtees will recall how that redoubtable foxhunter, John Jorrocks, once found himself in a mental institution, from which he was liberated only by the visitation powers of the Lord Chancellor. By his replies to questions on foxhunting he succeeded in persuading the Lord Chancellor that he was sane, whereupon the Lord Chancellor, fortunately for him and the rest of us, ordered his release. There must be somebody who, in relation to this order, can perform the same liberating act as the Lord Chancellor did for the redoubtable John Jorrocks.

7.30 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Are there provisions equivalent to those in article 15 for the United Kingdom? In other words, do such provisions already apply in Britain? I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to answer that question sooner or later. That matter raises important questions which could apply to Britain.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his explanation of the difference between those provisions which apply to notifiable diseases and those which apply to AIDS. I recall tabling an early-day motion in 1984 on AIDS and I have followed that subject with some interest and grave anxiety for some time. I have in my constituency a consultant who specialises in sexually transmitted diseases and he was good enough to spend a couple of hours with me on that subject. Therefore, I am glad to discover that the regulations in article 17 will clearly help those in Northern Ireland who tragically suffer from AIDS.

Finally, I want to put it on record that the absence of Members from Northern Ireland—apart from the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon)—when we are discussing a matter such as AIDS which is of such great importance to public health in Northern Ireland is a great shame.

7.32 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I shall confine my comments to three articles in the order.

I welcome article 5 on common lodging houses. When I first began to deal with the problem of common lodging houses I was astounded that such legislation simply did not exist, and when I inquired into it further I was appalled at the Dickensian arrangements that exist. I have details of cases which I shall give privately to the Minister, but in one lodging house in my constituency, for which the DHSS is paying, four women and three children are living in one room. In another, seven men are dwelling in one room. That shows how much that provision is to be welcomed. It is much overdue and must be ruthlessly enforced.

I have one slight reservation. Article 5 says:

"The Department may, by regulations, make provision with respect to common lodging-houses, and any such regulation shall include provisions"—

this is where I have a slight worry—

"for the registration of common lodging-houses by Health and Social Services Boards".

I ask the Minister most sincerely to ensure that such an inspection is thorough and rigorous. It is appalling to realise what public money is being used for. People coming to my surgeries and clinics have told me about the sheer Dickensian—I can only call it that—circumstances in which they live. I hope that the Minister will ensure that the inspection is the most thorough and rigorous possible.

I do not want to stray into another area, but I am concerned about the performance of area boards in assessing medical factors, especially in relation to housing allocations and transfers. There is a distinct lack of thoroughness and rigorousness in establishing a person's medical needs. When this provision is approved, I hope that the Minister will ensure that it sticks, and the only way to do that is for such an inspection to be carried out on at least a quarterly basis. A yearly inspection will not suffice. It should be carried out by someone from the board who has the power to be as ruthless as is humanly possible. Such a person should be supported in every way by the Department to ensure that what is happening today no longer happens.

I also have slight worries about article 40*(b)* in relation to rights of appeal. That appears to be the type of appeal that is available to private nursing homes at present. I hope that the Minister will tell me if that is the case. I am worried about some private nursing homes, the way in which they operate, and the way in which they are able to win their cases. From cases in the courts it is clear that the wool has been pulled over the eyes of the people from the health boards, and there is even more opportunity for that in relation to lodging houses.

I am slightly worried and confused about article 9—the limitation of charge for accommodation to minimum rate in relation to the intervening period. I understand and appreciate the points made by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). Looking at it from the other end of the spectrum, I am worried about the number of homeless young people who live in lodging houses. That number is increasing enormously. Two weeks ago there was a substantial lobby of Parliament by the young homeless. I wonder how their position will be affected by article 9. I may be reading it wrongly and being slightly too pessimistic, but there is a growing problem with the young homeless, for whom this provision may not be able to cater in the way that it caters for old people and those who may have to enter residential homes for a period.

With regard to article 11, I fail to understand how we can avoid having the type of annual report that we have always had in the past. There may be some substitute. I do not know.

I should like to leave the Minister with one thought that I trust he will take on board. During the past five weeks in my constituency there have been five different explosions—five different attacks. On one day during that period no acute emergency ambulance service was available. We have discussed this problem in great depth with the area board and those responsible for the ambulance service. This lack of provision has been substantiated by the unions, and it is causing them and myself great concern. If we cannot ensure that we have proper ambulance cover in this type of situation, I cannot for the life of me understand how we can do away with the annual report. It provides the only basis on which to assess the situation in relation to those problems.

7.40 pm

Mr. Needham: One of the joys of my present job is to reply to a number of detailed and highly articulate questions put on unamendable orders, covering miscellaneous provisions stretching from here to infinity. It is an intellectual test for which my predecessor, with his Balliol background, was perhaps better equipped than I am with the university of life degree as the only degree around my shoulders. I shall try to wade through as best I can and I am sure that hon. Members will interrupt me as I go on if they feel I have not adequately answered their questions.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) questioned why, under article 11, the Government are suggesting that annual reports should not be produced. We have decided not to continue these reports because they require a great deal of work. Those right hon. and hon. Members who have read reports will be aware of just how much detail goes into them, and that is a waste of resources.

I hope that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) will not mind my saying that if no ambulance cover had been available last week when tragic events took place in Newry I do not believe that the annual report would necessarily highlight that problem. Some effective administrative and technical action would have to be taken to make sure that that service was provided at all times.

Mr. Mallon: I think that there is some confusion. I was not talking about the events of last week. I should like to take the opportunity to compliment the ambulance service, the fire brigade and all the emergency services on the tremendous job that they did during the events of last week. What I said was that during the past five weeks there had been five explosions and that on one specific night there was no ambulance cover.

Mr. Needham: I am sorry if I misunderstood the hon. Gentleman. However, that does not alter the fact that I am not convinced that annual reports are necessarily the best way in which to publicise such a problem. I feel that the hon. Gentleman would be a much better publicist of that problem than would any annual report.

It is necessary to point out how the health boards make facts and statistics available to the public. The Department has a regional strategic plan which, as right hon. and hon. Members will be aware, is in the process of consultation. That plan is reviewed every three years. The Department publishes strategic plans, and these are updated. We wish to put the information that is issued by the boards into a modified format. I am sure that many of the boards will continue to publish annual reports of some sort, but they will not be published in the same detailed and structured way as those of the past. Of course, the Department will continue to want to receive sufficient information from the boards to ensure that departmental strategy can be fulfilled.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West said the boards were not elected, but he will be aware that some of the members of the boards are elected representatives. I hope that the elected representatives will not resign from these boards because they have an important part to play. The presence of those representatives on the boards, and the proposals in the order, will bring the boards into line with practice in the rest of the United Kingdom.

I am conscious of the need to make available as much background information and statistics as possible to the public. However, I am not convinced that the present form of annual reports has been either the most efficient or the most effective way of doing that. I do not believe that the annual reports of the Southern board are the main source of reading for a Saturday night in the bars and clubs in the constituency of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh —much as I wish that they were.

Mr. Archer: May I offer the Minister a deal? If we may have more debates, at more convenient times, we will dispense with the annual reports.

Mr. Needham: The right hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that the power to make such arrangements lies further down the Front Bench. However, I assure him that, in view of my lack of practice, I should be only too happy to have many more debates, with a better attendance, so that there will be some hon. Members present who will actually remember who I am and where I come from.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman, together with the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), raised a fundamental question concerning article 17. The key to that article is the risk to public health. The right hon. Member for South Down was absolutely correct to say that, for this purpose, the Department is the equivalent of the Secretary of State. The key point is that the Department is empowered to make regulations under article 18 to detain in, or to remove to hospital, someone who is considered to be a risk to public health because he is suffering from a notifiable or infectious disease.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West discussed the problem of AIDS, but I do not intend to get into an argument about whether AIDS is an infectious disease. I hope that the House accepts the serious nature of this disease. If, and for the reasons mentioned by the right hon. and learned Gentleman, someone with this disease could be a danger to public health, it is necessary for the Department to be able to go before a resident magistrate and ask for an order to be made to detain that person in, or remove him to, hospital.

I cannot give the right hon. and learned Gentleman the details for which he asked concerning the Manchester case. The fundamental question is not whether the regulation should apply to somebody who wants to go home for the weekend or for two or three days. The point is whether he is a risk to public health. If there were not that risk, it is inconceivable that a resident magistrate would say that that person should be detained in hospital over that period. I am sure the right hon. and learned Gentleman will accept that, in those circumstances, the court would show good sense.

The right hon. Member for South Down asked whether there was an appeal to this process. There is no provision for appeal in the Public Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1967. There is the general right of appeal against the decision of a magistrates court under article 143 of the Magistrates Court (Northern Ireland Order) 1981. In contrast, there is a specific right of appeal in Great Britain. I was not aware of that and it must be properly considered. I am sure the right hon. Gentleman will agree that the nature of these diseases is such — I am thinking particularly of the problems that we face with AIDS— that if someone suffering from one of them refuses to behave responsibly and reasonably and puts public health at risk, the Government and the Department must act in the interests of public health.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: I am sure that the House is indebted to the hon. Gentleman for the candour with which he has recognised what I think we would all see as a deficiency in the order as it has been presented to us. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that this is yet another illustration of the general proposition that there is no substitute for making law by Bill.

Mr. Needham: We have debated this matter before. The present system of dealing in the House with unamendable legislation affecting Northern Ireland cannot be considered satisfactory. I think that I will stray from the point if I return to a debate in a previous Session in which hon. Members who gave reasons for that system were called to order. But it is fair to the House to state the present position.

The right hon. Member for South Down referred to the acquisition and disposal of land. The Department does not have the power to purchase land beside land which it occupies and which, if purchased, would make the total package much more valuable. The right hon. Gentleman referred to package A and package B. I can understand that a person might want to buy the Department's land —say package B—to put it with package A and then sell it. Surely it cannot be argued—I am sure that the right hon. Member for South Down would not dispute this —that when the Department owns package B and the addition of package A would make the two packages much more valuable, it would not be sensible to give the Department the right to purchase package A, put the two packages on the market and obtain the best value for the public purse.

We advocate article 16 to make a delicate matter simpler and less complicated. I appreciate that the right

hon. Member for South Down is an avid reader of the proceedings of the Committee on the order. In terms of providing a certificate for a fee, it is administratively more sensible to proceed along the lines that we have suggested.

There are several reasons for allowing practitioners who are suspended to maintain their practices. Suspension does not mean that a practitioner is necessarily unfit to control his practice or that he will not return actively to take part in it. Suspension might be due to preliminary hearings concerning professional misconduct, but, if investigations show that there is no case to answer, the practitioner can be reinstated. Clearly, it would be extremely unfair in the meantime if the practice has been allowed to run down.

Suspension might be due to a general practitioner suffering from a mental or physical illness. Normally, a GP who is ill can arrange for his practice to be maintained and return to it after his illness. Sometimes, that may not be possible. He may be involved in a motor accident which leaves him with an impairment from which he eventually recovers and he could be reinstated. In those circumstances, it would be unfair to let the practice suffer.

Will the patients be properly protected under the arrangements? When a member of a practice is suspended, the service to the patients will be provided by properly qualified and registered doctors. In addition, when suspension is because of ill health, the General Medical Council and the General Dental Council have the power to impose further requirements on the practice for the protection of patients.

The proposals will enable the Department to remunerate doctors and dentists who have been suspended on grounds of ill health, but we make no provision for the remuneration of doctors and dentists suspended under the direction of the professional conduct committee, respectively, the General Medical Council and the General Dental Council. If suspension fell under that category, the order would not take effect. The corresponding provisions in Great Britain to articles 7 and 8 are sections 14, 15 and 16 and schedule 6 to the Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudication Act 1983.

The right hon. Member for South Down asked why it was necessary in article 17 to have new regulatory powers in respect of public health risks from ships and aircraft and asked what had happened. I suspected that he would pick up that point. These matters were not reserved for or transferred to the old Stormont Government, but were covered by section 143(1) to (7) of the Public Health Act 1936, which was United Kingdom legislation. However, they were transferred to Northern Ireland under the Northern Ireland Act 1974. Because the regulations for control of certain diseases have continued to be made under the Public Health Act 1936, the time has come to bring the legislation into line and, if necessary, to alter it to include it in the transferred and reserved matters. That is why this aspect has been dealt with under the order.

I am afraid that I was so busy making notes to keep up with the right hon. Member for South Down that I missed the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), except when he said that he felt it was unfortunate that there were no Northern Ireland Members present to join the debate. I agree with him. I shall, of course, study *Hansard* tomorrow and write in full to my hon. Friend.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh referred to common lodging houses. I feel strongly about this matter. I give him an undertaking that there will be rigorous and proper inspection of those houses. I have been concerned about the extent of rigorous and proper inspection of residential homes in Northern Ireland—I am not talking about common lodging houses—and I have asked the Southern board and other boards how they undertake visits to ensure that inspection is carried out properly and satisfactorily. There are now many more such residential homes than in the past. I shall continue to ensure that inspection is carried out properly and satisfactorily. Obviously, that will apply to common lodging houses as well.

I do not believe that article 9, to which the right hon. Member for South Down referred, covers the younger homeless. The right hon. Gentleman put forward the reasons for introducing that article. It does not make boards assist in the provision of respite care, but gives them the opportunity to give assistance to those people who want to go into such care. I hope that the boards can take advantage of that article, for the important reasons put forward by the right hon. Member for South Down.

I hope that, having dealt with these miscellaneous provisions in a miscellaneous way, I have answered most of the points raised by right hon. and hon. Members and that the order will receive the approval of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Health and Personal Social Services and Public Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 5th November, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

TEACHERS' PAY AND CONDITIONS BILL

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a Second time.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

PETITION

Diego Garcia

7.59 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I beg to ask leave to present a petition. It was received yesterday by me and the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen). The petition is signed by 1,400 petitioners from every part of the United Kingdom. It relates to the treatment of the Ilois of Diego Garcia island. They are petitioning because they think that the Government and Parliament have not treated those people correctly. Therefore, they are asking for compensation over and above what has been paid. In addition, they are asking for meetings to take place between the Ilois, the British Government and Mauritius to decide matters such as work, housing and resettlement. The petitioners are very disturbed about the situation in the Indian Ocean.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Temporary Medical and Nursing Care

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

8.00 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): My purpose in speaking on the motion for the Adjournment is to draw the Government's attention to a very worrying problem of comparatively recent origin: the heavy cost to health authorities of providing temporary medical and nursing cover in our hospitals. That is resulting in health authorities having to use expensive agency staff to fill the gap caused by a shortage of junior hospital doctors and nursing staff. The problem is a national one. It may be more acute in the North-West Thames and South-West Thames areas but I suspect that it also exists in other parts of the country such as Manchester.

I am greatly concerned about the effect it is having in Hillingdon, in which my constituency is situated. The Hillingdon health authority is currently facing an excess of expenditure of around £350,000 as a result of the extra cost of using agency doctors and nurses. As a result, two wards have had to be closed, one in Hillingdon hospital and another in Mount Vernon hospital situated in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson). My hon. Friend would have been present for the debate had it started later, as most of us had expected. I know that his absence from it at this early hour does not suggest a lack of interest. He is greatly concerned about the position in Mount Vernon hospital and so are his constituents in Ruislip-Northwood.

The closures are temporary, but had they not been implemented Hillingdon would have overshot its budget by £500,000 by the end of this year. In Hillingdon's case, an overshoot of £500,000 might have been manageable were it not for the fact that the authority is carrying over a debt of £1 million accumulated over the past two years. That is the result of the transfer of resources away from the Thames regions to other parts of the country under the resource allocation working party procedure adopted by the previous Labour Government when the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) was the health Minister. I am glad that, as a result of the many representations made by London Members, a review of the RAWP formula is now in progress. I hope that the review will soon be completed and that as a result less money will be taken away from the Thames regions and proper account will be taken of their requirements.

Transitional problems arising from resource allocation have, I am pleased to note, been recognised by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In his autumn statement he allocated £30 million for easing transitional problems in London. I hope that, when my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State replies, she will give me an assurance that some of that £30 million will soon be coming to North-West Thames, Hillingdon health authority in particular.

My duty as the Member for Uxbridge is to leave my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State in no doubt about my concern and that of my constituents and the medical staff as to the seriousness of closing down those two wards. That concern has been powerfully reinforced by the chairman of the district medical committee, Dr. Diana Rimmer, whose views I have communicated to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State.

In a letter that Dr. Rimmer has written to me on this problem, she said:

"The results of these closures are all too easy to predict. Within no time, the general surgeons of both hospitals will be treating emergencies only. Little or no 'cold' surgery will be performed — there will be no beds for such patients and waiting lists will escalate. In addition to the implications for the waiting lists, continued closure of these two wards into January and February 1987 will lead to even greater problems. During the January/February period, as you must be aware, the demand on medical beds increases enormously. It is common practice for medical patients to occupy surgical beds at this time. We have no reason to believe that in this respect the situation this winter will differ from previous years."

It can be seen that it is a matter of considerable concern to the district medical committee.

In addition, the chairman of the Hillingdon community health council, Mrs. Shirley Court, has also expressed her concern to me. I ask my hon. Friend to take careful note of the fears that the council expresses. It was for the reasons expressed by the health authority, the district medical committee and the community health council that my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood and I had an urgent meeting with the Minister for Health on 6 November. He was most helpful and, as a result of our discussion, it quickly became clear that the National Health Service is facing new problems of national dimensions.

That was well reported in an excellent article by Jill Sherman in *The Times* on 24 November. She said:

"Health authorities are being forced to pay huge sums to private locum agencies providing temporary medical cover as more doctors opt for high private rates. Hospitals are paying up to three times the amount they would pay for doctors under the National Health Service system and the charges are spiralling. One health authority said that agency fees had completely wiped out all the saving it had made through putting other services out to tender."

That illustrates very quickly the national nature of the problem.

In looking at the difficulty of recruiting doctors to provide temporary medical cover there are several factors which immediately come to notice. I am told that more doctors today are going into general practice earlier because the financial rewards are greater. They are doing that because it is more attractive than if they work in a hospital as a senior house officer. Although straight salary comparisons are difficult, my research has shown that, after a few years in general practice, a doctor would have a net income of £25,080, perhaps more. A senior house officer or registrar earns less. The average salary for doctors on the first two points of the registrar scale and the first three points of the senior registrar scale are between £16,206 and £19,484. Therefore, the incentive for working in hospitals is, and always has been, the prospect of ultimately becoming a consultant. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of consultancy posts. That prevents regional health authorities from putting them forward for approval. That is due to the diversion of resources from the south-east and the Thames regions in particular. Because of that, an authority such as mine, Hillingdon, has to spend more than it should on junior hospital doctors. It simply cannot pay more consultants.

The shortage of junior hospital doctors would have been evident much earlier had it not been for the extensive employment of overseas doctors in NHS hospitals. However, since 1 April 1985, the Department of Health and Social Security has imposed new restrictions on the employment of those doctors who now have to obtain a work permit in order to practise in the United Kingdom.

The result is that the pool of locums has been greatly reduced. Overseas doctors can now come to the United Kingdom only if they are to work in approved training posts. Traditionally, temporary medical cover has been provided by a pool of United Kingdom doctors who are willing to do agency work, but for the past six or seven years Britain has relied increasingly on the pool of overseas doctors to do the job. That, perhaps, has been an unwise practice, particularly as that pool has now dried up.

Therefore, the drift to general practice and the drying up of the overseas doctors pool has created a severe shortage of medical manpower. The shortage is being overcome by using medical agencies, some of which I understand are single doctor agencies, which charge much higher fees than health authorities would normally pay. They also charge a substantial commission, which I am told is of the order of 20 per cent. The fee is as much as 200 per cent. higher than the National Health Service figure in some instances. Let me give a few examples.

Whereas the National Health Service would expect to pay a doctor £332 for one week's work, one of these agencies would charge £612 for the same week's work. At the top of the scale, whereas the National Health Service would normally pay £500 for one week, the agencies are charging £900. One agency I know is offering a junior doctor £500 for one weekend's work. No wonder my local health authority is overspent.

As I said earlier, this is not exclusively a North-West Thames problem. I am told that other health authorities around Manchester and Birmingham have tried to fill the gap in temporary medical cover by recruiting doctors from other countries within the European Community. Apparently, doctors recruited from these countries have only to pass a language test. What we are seeing, in fact, is a violent swing away from service in National Health Service hospitals to general practice. If this trend continues, I am told that there will eventually be a shortage of opportunities to serve in general practice.

I wonder whether my hon. Friend can give me any assurance that those general practitioners who want one will be able to find a job in general practice in, say, three years' time. I ask this question because many people in the National Health Service now feel that what is needed is a properly organised flow of doctors into NHS hospitals and into general practice and an avoidance of these violent swings from one extreme to another. If that is to be achieved, something must be done about the remuneration of doctors in the hospital service.

What, then, is the solution to this complex, multi-factorial problem as it affects doctors? I believe that there are some steps that would go quite a long way towards solving the problem in the short term. First, better planning of how many doctors go into general practice and how many go into NHS hospitals would be an enormous step forward. I shall be interested to know whether my hon. Friend has it in mind to bring forward any proposals to make such organisation possible.

Secondly, I believe that the Government should consider the regulation of medical agency fees to stop them overcharging the National Health Service. Out of the £500 which an agency charges a National Health Service hospital for a weekend's work from a junior doctor, the

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

agency commission is certainly in the region of £100 or more. What, I ask, is the difference between having a pharmaceutical price regulation scheme to govern the cost of pharmaceutical products supplied to the National Health Service and the regulation of the fees that are charged by agencies to supply doctors to the National Health Service?

A third step that would help would be an improvement in London weighting. At the moment it is far from satisfactory, bearing in mind the very high cost of housing in London and the south-east. Accommodation is a very real problem. I hope, therefore, that the Government will encourage the further sale of surplus land owned by the National Health Service, so that it can invest in better accommodation for staff.

In this respect I am pleased to be able to tell my hon. Friend that, once again, Hillingdon is leading the way. Following the sale of land at Harefield hospital, it will be able to provide 12 new units for medical staff, financed entirely from the proceeds of the sale. In short, we need good quality accommodation for medical and nursing staff. This can be provided if a deal is done with the developers when land is sold off. I hope very much that my hon. Friend will press other health authorities to do more in this regard.

Fourth, more flexibility is required to create senior house officer jobs in National Health Service hospitals. This problem was referred in the Department of Health and Social Security publication entitled "Achieving the Balance", to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Hayhoe) paid so much attention when he was Minister for Health.

I turn to the problem of providing temporary nursing cover. The principal problem is the availability of young people to train as student nurses. There is real difficulty in 1986 in attracting sufficient students to enter nursing. The problem of availability is illustrated by the number of 18-year-olds who will be available as potential entrants over the next few years. By 1994, for example, the number will decrease by 25 per cent. This is due to demographic factors — to the drop in the birth rate. Looked at another way, there will be a drop of 25 per cent. by 1994 in the number of students with five O-levels to whom this country will look to provide sufficient students to enter the nursing profession.

Another problem affecting nursing today is that career options have widened considerably over the past 10 years. There is much more competition for the available students from other careers, such as the police force, the teaching profession, industry and commerce, and so on. Undoubtedly, pay is a major problem. Few hon. Members will deny that nursing is not particularly well paid. The figures speak for themselves.

A staff nurse, after training at the age of 21, will receive £7,200 a year. A policeman, or a woman police constable, at the age of 21 will receive £7,752, but a year later, at the age of 22, will receive £9,756, plus London weighting and the London allowance, giving the very substantial figure of £11,700 for a 22-year-old officer.

I am not saying that the police should not be well paid for the difficult and dangerous task that they perform, but I make the point that many nurses also perform difficult and dangerous jobs. Several of them have lost their lives in recent years when dealing with violent patients, and many of them work in hospitals in inner London areas where safety in the streets is not all that we should like it to be.

If, therefore, we look at the comparisons, a staff nurse of 22 will be receiving £4,500 less than a policewoman of the same age. The improved prospects for teachers' pay and the opportunities available in many other fields make powerful competitors against the nursing profession. In my judgment, the problem is that low pay for nurses has now become part of folklore. I am told that some teachers advise against nursing as a career because of this factor.

As with doctors, accommodation is also a problem. The cost of local housing is a major factor in the North-West Thames region. I am told that the accommodation of learner nurses is subsidised when they are living outside hospital, but that every time they receive a pay rise the subsidy drops. What is needed, then, is an allowance for accommodation that does not vary during the training period.

Another problem that needs to be faced is the condition of residential accommodation, which is often poor and which acts as a disincentive to recruitment. I urge my hon. Friend to ensure that money from land sales is used to upgrade sub-standard accommodation. A major improvement programme is needed for nurses' accommodation. This should be widely publicised. I believe that it would be a major factor in aiding recruitment.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider the possibility of encouraging local health authorities to co-operate with building societies and form housing associations to enable nurses to gain entry to the purchase of accommodation through equity sharing schemes. Even if a nurse bought only 25 per cent. of the equity in a flat or maisonette it would help her if she moved to another part of the country. She could sell her share and have a useful nest egg to help in purchasing accommodation elsewhere.

The United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting has developed a new framework known as Project 2000 which involves the introduction of a level of nurse to be called a registered nurse. Such a nurse is likely to be someone with five O-levels or someone who, although not having the necessary O-levels, can pass an entrance test. I wish to pay tribute to the sterling work that enrolled nurses have given to the National Health Service. It is important that the Project 2000 proposals, ambitious though they are, ensure that enrolled nurses have a continuing role to play.

Shortly after I was fortunate enough to be offered this Adjournment debate, I received a letter from a Nurse Dawson from Birmingham. He told me that he was glad that I was raising this subject on the Adjournment. He said in his letter:

"Many Enrolled nurses have done S.E.N. training (a) because they do not wish to become involved with management of wards; (b) they want to be seen as a bedside nurse; (c) they do not hold the qualifications to do State registration."

I hope that Project 2000 will do nothing to diminish the recruitment of those excellent bedside nurses on whom so many people depend. I hope that we do not push the academic qualifications too far up the scale and perhaps exclude people from nursing who might otherwise have given the country valuable service.

Another factor which I must mention tonight and which is affecting the supply of nurses dramatically is the

fact that the Australians have run an advertising campaign offering better conditions of work and a new lifestyle which has resulted in 2,000 qualified nurses being attracted away from Britain to work on the other side of the world. That is a very serious matter because all those nurses who have been attracted away from Britain have all been trained at the expense of the British taxpayer.

Information on Australian nurses supplied by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting gives the number of verifications of qualifications issued in respect of United Kingdom nurses, midwives and health visitors seeking to practise in Australia. It shows that from 1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985, 732 nurses went to Australia. But from 1 April 1985 to 31 March 1986, 2,220 nurses went to Australia. The number of nurses, midwives and health visitors from Australia whose applications for registration in the United Kingdom have been accepted was 782 in 1984-1985, roughly balancing the outflow, but in 1985-86 it was only 624.

A major factor in the increase in emigration has been a positive campaign to recruit nurses to go to Australia, following a decision by most of the Australian states to transfer nurses' education from the hospital sector to the advanced education sector. That has diminished the contribution of nursing students as part of the work force and created a need on the part of the Australian authorities to recruit additional qualified staff.

I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies she will say something about the recruitment of our qualified nurses to Australia. That is having a major impact on the ability to retain the nurses that we so badly need in Hillingdon and in other parts of the North-West Thames region. The London weighting allowance should be increased from £876, which is payable on the outer fringes of London, if only to take account of the high cost of accommodation. After tax, £876 is not much money in November 1986. If that sum was increased, it would do much to help overcome the present shortage.

I emphasise that Hillingdon is 10 per cent. down on qualified staff. That means 200 posts. We are 20 per cent. down overall, including learners. That means 400 posts. That position compares with 8 per cent. under establishment on qualified staff and a full complement of learners only two years ago. The drop in numbers is a recent phenomenon and needs urgent action.

As my hon. Friend the Minister must know, Hillingdon has not sat idly by while that position has developed. It has run an advertising campaign in the press and on local radio. It has produced a video programme for schools and has conducted a vigorous recruitment campaign in the Republic of Ireland. I do not know what the Republic of Ireland will have to say about that and I am rather relieved that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) are now no longer in their places or they might have had something to say about our poaching Irish nurses.

But, despite all those efforts, a third of Hillingdon's budget for nursing staff is now paid out in fees for agency nurses. That amounts to £900,000 a year. If the authority did not have to use agency nurses, that sum would be reduced by about £280,000. That is because learner nurses earning £4,325 to £4,875 a year are having to be replaced by agency staff nurses who are paid £8,121 a year and auxiliary nurses who are paid £5,897 a year. Nursing agencies, unlike medical agencies, are restricted on the amount they can charge by way of commission or fees to 11 per cent. That is a desirable measure.

At 30 September 1985 in the North-West Thames region there were 1,060 whole-time equivalent hospital nursing and midwifery agency staff employed. That is a substantial figure and further illustrates the cost of the operation.

Today our nurses are no longer drawn from that pool of young women who were previously subsidised by their parents. Today they must often bring up a family. Many of them are female one-parent families. Others are male nurses who must bring up a family on a nurse's income. Only if conditions of pay and accommodation are improved can their service to the community be properly recognised. We need a full-scale review of nursing as a career and we need to market it with much more vigour in future if the problem is not to get worse.

I have one or two ideas which might alleviate the position still further. Firstly, will my hon. Friend the Minister consider lifting the requirement for the payment of superannuation so that it is not paid for the first five years of employment after qualification? That practice is commonly adopted in the private sector. Secondly, will she make residential allowances more generous? Thirdly, will she consider the possibility of introducing free meals for nursing staff in hospitals? These days, many employees enjoy free or subsidised canteen meals, so why should not nurses have something similar?

I invite my hon. Friend the Minister to consider a major new deal for nurses. Cannot we tell nurses, "The NHS will train you. It will offer you a highly worthwhile and properly paid job. Will you in return agree that when you have qualified you will work in an NHS hospital for X number of years? If you do so, you will receive a gratuity, based on the number of years of active service rendered."? Those years need not be consecutive, as we want to attract women back into nursing after they have interrupted their careers to bring up a family.

That suggestion is based on the service cadetship scheme for medical students, and perhaps it could be applied more widely in the NHS. We must do something like that, because the cost of training an enrolled nurse is now £7,700. The three-year training for a registered general nurse, previously a state registered nurse, costs £11,700. The total cost of training all such nurses in England for the financial year 1985-86 was £449 million. If those very substantial sums are not going to be allowed to run down the plughole to Australia, we must provide some additional incentives for our nurses to remain and help here in Britain.

I repeat that I have raised these matters at greater length than would have been possible in other circumstances because of my grave concern at the possibility that ward closures at Hillingdon hospital and Mount Vernon hospital could become prolonged. That could result in increased waiting lists, which would be quite contrary to everything that my hon. Friend the Minister stands for, as well as to the Government's policy of cutting waiting lists. I have raised this matter at such length only because the need is urgent. I very much hope that my hon. Friend will be able to respond to some of the solutions that I have suggested tonight.

8.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate my hon. friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on raising this most important subject. I agree that it has proved valuable to have had a little more time than might otherwise have been the case, although some right hon. and hon. Friends who may have wanted to attend could not do so, as the debate began earlier than had been expected.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend on the considerable detail that he gave in presenting his several cases. I did not manage to catch everything that he said, and if I do not answer all his points I hope that he will allow me to write to him. I know that he had a recent meeting with my hon. Friend the Minister for Health and with my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) and that he then aired some of the issues which he has raised tonight. He has thus shown the excellent, determined and assiduous way in which he represents his constituents by putting their interests to Ministers. I hope that they have taken note of that and will accord him due credit.

I shall deal first with the national question of agencies and look at some of the background, rules, costs and numbers involved, the reasons for the problems and whether they are exactly as my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge has suggested. I shall also mention some of the suggestions that we have received. I shall then deal with Hillingdon, although I shall mention it in passing before then.

The first question is: why do we employ agency nurses and locum doctors at all? We feel that nursing posts should ideally be filled by directly employed staff, as that will ensure the maximum continuity of patient care, a reduction — we hope — in the number of management and supervision problems, the provision of clinical training and the promotion of team work. Much the same considerations apply to doctors or, indeed, to many of the other staff who work in the Health Service.

The relevant circular HC(83)2 points out that, on the other hand, there are times when agencies provide staff that we need. The first paragraph states:

> "Whilst it is recognised that nursing posts in the NHS should ideally be filled with directly employed full or part-time staff . . . there will inevitably be circumstances where urgent short-term needs arise. In these circumstances qualified staff from nurses agencies can prove valuable provided they are used as part of a planned management of resources. Authorities are reminded that they should take account of their likely need for agency nurses in drawing up their budgets."

The need for cover for doctors is generally greater than it is or should be for nurses, because of study leave and gaps that arise as juniors move through a series of short-term training posts. Doctors are expected to cover colleagues' absences where practicable. Where they are unable to do so, the long-standing practice is to engage locums. Agencies are used for urgent needs, or where a locum is unavailable. Therefore, the situation for doctors and nurses is slightly different.

We estimate the total cost of employing an agency nurse is little different from that for the directly employed nurse with similar qualifications. Directly employed nursing staff are entitled to annual and sick leave, while payments to agency staff are limited to the mid-point of the NHS pay scale and they attract on top of that only the agency fee plus VAT. Those rules are strictly set out in paragraph 9 of the circular.

On that basis, therefore, costs should not be a primary consideration in relation to nurses. Locum doctors are paid on the same basis as regular staff — again on the mid-point of the NHS pay scale. In agreeing terms with agencies, authorities are again required to have regard to NHS locum rates. As a result, in the period between 1979-80 and 1985-86, spending on locums as a proportion of the hospital and community health services medical and dental bill has remained constant at about 3·4 per cent., or approximately £38 million in current terms. But estimated expenditure on medical and dental agency staff is now about £17·5 million, which is approximately 1·55 per cent. of the pay bill compared with about 0·8 per cent. in 1979-80. Thus, we have seen a steady growth in the percentage of the pay bill going on agency medical and dental staff, although it still remains a very small percentage of the overall bill.

How many staff are we talking about? The number of agency nurses fluctuates over the years and, indeed, between the seasons. We are able to take figures only on a quarterly basis, which is not quite as tight as we might like, but those figures at least show that the fluctuation is what would be expected if the agency nurses are being used properly to satisfy urgent needs. About 87 per cent. of agency nurses are employed in four Thames regional health authorities and the postgraduate special health authorities where the authorities share recruitment difficulties for nursing with many employers outside the NHS in a wide range of trades. At September 1985, the number of agency nurses employed in England was 4,120, which is about 1 per cent. of nursing and midwifery staff. Again, the percentage is quite tiny.

It is worth noting that several regions — the Trent region, the Northern region and the North-Western region — do not use agency nursing or midwifery staff at all, and the majority use only a very small number. It is really only the North-West Thames authority that uses agency nurses to any substantial extent.

The proportion of doctors and dentists wholly employed as locums in England, at 3·9 per cent., has remained essentially unchanged for the past five years. The number of doctors and dentists employed as locums in England at September 1985, at 1,802, is not split up in the way that I would like, and I do not have any information on the number of agency staff employed. It may be that until very recently it was not a problem, so the figures were not identified separately.

Is the use of agency staff a problem? To some extent, I take issue with my hon. Friend on this score. Nurses should not present a problem of expense because the cost should be the same. I heard what my hon. Friend said about the difficulties in Hillingdon, but it appears that in Hillingdon qualified nurses employed by the agency are replacing learners employed by the authority. That is not comparing like with like. If we compare qualified nurses employed by the agencies with those employed by the authorities, the cost should be much the same. If through deliberately using agency nurses, or through some weakness or decision of management to do things slightly differently, the nursing mix changes, we shall find, as my hon. Friend has said, that the use of agency nurses will push up the bill. The health authority will be getting

qualified nurses instead of learners—not like for like. There may be a number of reasons why that is or is not appropriate.

Mr. Shersby: I agree with my hon. Friend, but one of the reasons is the shortage of learner nurses.

Mrs. Currie: I shall turn to that issue at a later stage. I am glad that my hon. Friend accepts that if we compare like with like there should not be a problem of excess expenditure.

It must be accepted that most agency staff who work as nurses also work somewhere else. That means that they may become tired or careless when working as agency staff for the National Health Service. That can be the position whether they are working for the Health Service during the day or for another organisation. I have checked, and there is no firm evidence from the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, which is the disciplinary body, that there are difficulties and that tiredness is influencing nursing standards. However, it is something that we shall watch with great care. It would be foolish to take a dim view of agency staff who work for somebody else for part of the time without firm evidence to support that view. If account is taken of patterns of unemployment throughout the country, we may prefer to see two people rather than one person doing two jobs, especially in some parts of the country where there is a problem.

We can learn from the nursing agencies and our use of them that staff often want flexibility, and that is what the agencies are able to offer. There is a problem of continuity, especially if agency staff are being used, where perhaps the management of nursing resources might be slightly better organised. In other words, management has an important input into patterns of employment. It is essential that an agency is not telephoned to fill a gap that management should have directed some attention and thought to filling permanently.

My hon. Friend has accurately identified some of the problems of cost with agency doctors. Doctor agencies are not controlled in the same way as nurse agencies and the rules about the level of fees are not anywhere near as tight as those which apply to nurses. One of the things that worries us is that if medical staff in any numbers start to choose the agency form of employment, they may help to create the gaps that the agencies fill. We would be concerned if there were any evidence that that was happening to any degree. In the absence of the detailed figures that I had hoped to offer my hon. Friend, it is difficult to comment further about that. It is obviously a matter that we shall take carefully into account. I think that my hon. Friend has done a service by raising the question in this form this evening.

It is essential that the patient should not suffer. I would prefer to know that whenever we spend money the patient will benefit. It would be worrying if any health authority were to spend more money, only to offer a weaker service as a result.

It is worth saying that the fundamental cause of the shortage of junior locums and medical staff generally is that demand from the health authorities has outstripped available supply. The supply of medical staff is still increasing slowly, but much of the growth in the Health Service recently has drawn on increasing numbers of doctors. Shortages are occurring in posts that are seen as offering poor career prospects. Unfortunately, some of the explanations that are commonly advanced, such as one or two that my hon. Friend touched upon, seem so far not to fit the facts. For example, the total number of senior house officers—SHOs—in post has been growing. The total increased by 165 between 1983 and 1985, despite widespread reports of recruitment difficulties. The increase in the number of United Kingdom-born doctors has more than offset the reduction in overseas doctors. Immigration controls in April 1985 appear to have had no detectable impact on the previous trends in the inflow and stock of overseas doctors.

Whatever we may feel about the conflict between the role and attraction of the general practitioner compared with the hospital doctor, the GP option is an increasingly popular first choice of career. There are, however, still more than enough doctors for hospital career positions.

One of the possibilities is that a reduction in junior hospital doctors' hours may boost the demand for locums, and that is a factor that we have considered. My hon. Friend will know that the Government have taken positive steps to encourage the reduction in junior doctors' hours. Contracted hours were 91·6 a week in 1976 and they are now down to 86·5, of which 57 are spent working while the rest are on call. I take the view that these hours are still far too high and that more effort must be made to reduce them. Some staff are still extremely hard-pressed, and we expect authorities to keep the need for the most onerous duty rosters under constant review. We need to know why anyone should be working one in two or even anything more onerous than one in three.

It has been suggested that our initiative has boosted locum demand, but that is not borne out by the reports that have been produced by health authorities. For the rotas more onerous than one in three where reductions have been sought, locums were already routinely provided for planned absences in all but a few instances. The gap may have been only about 200 posts, and certainly nothing like the gap filled by locum and perhaps agency doctors. That does not seem to have been a major source of worry. If we are successful in reducing substantially junior hospital doctors' hours, it may be that the gap will widen.

What about shortages of staff? Should we not employ more doctors overall? We are employing more doctors. Under this Government, medical and dental manpower in the hospital and community health services, let alone GP manpower, has grown by about 6,000 full-time equivalents, which is about 13 per cent. I suspect that this is one reason why the gap has begun to open recently in the way that it has.

In Hillingdon, there are supra district and regional specialties, such as plastic surgery, radiotherapy and cardiothoracic surgery, which may mean that slightly greater recruitment difficulties are experienced in Hillingdon than elsewhere in the region. I know that the health authority submitted a request in its short-term programme for additional SHO positions. It has not managed to persuade or convince the management of the necessity for these positions, and it may be that further discussion is required.

Is an increase in doctors' pay necessary? That is a matter for the independent review body, which keeps the relative rewards of hospital doctors and general practitioners under close scrutiny. During the Government's period of office, the pay of doctors and dentists has increased by over 28 per cent. in real terms, and consultants are marginally ahead of GPs.

Mr. Shersby: I am interested in the information that my hon. Friend is giving me, but is she aware of the number of health authorities experiencing difficulty in recruiting senior health officers in each specialty? Of 88 districts which replied to a recent survey undertaken by the National Association of Health Authorities, it seems that 70 per cent. were experiencing difficulty in recruiting orthopaedic specialists; over 40 per cent. were experiencing difficulties in recruiting anaesthetists; and just under 40 per cent. were experiencing the same difficulty in recruiting those who specialise in accident emergencies. I am sure that the figures on a national scale are quite different. I ask my hon. Friend to direct her attention towards some of the problems that occur in the Thames region, where I suspect that we may have the sort of south-east problems that affect many other walks of life.

Mrs. Currie: The pressures on areas of work, such as orthopaedics, are not just pressures or demands for doctors; they are pressures and demands for theatre time and for the full range of services required, mainly because orthopaedics and other areas of work that my hon. Friend mentioned are major success stories of the Health Service. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, in a recent speech, said that we expect the number of hip operation patients to rise from about 28,000, as they were in 1979, to around 50,000. Therefore, resources will be found to ensure that that can be done. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree with me that, as we talk about inputs, one of the things to which we pay attention is output. The problem he identified and the report he mentioned is on my desk for consideration.

It is worth reminding some of those who are considering in which part of the NHS they should make their medical career that a new entrant to hospital services now averages £12,160, and a top consultant can get £57,640, including the maximum distinction award, which is probably more than anybody in the Government gets. In that sense, it is still a well-paid profession, and quite rightly, too, as they are the leaders of the National Health Service.

Possible short-term solutions include using GPs in hospitals on a sessional basis. They enjoy doing it and make a valuable contribution. The possible short-term solutions also include improving the training quality of hard-to-fill posts.

Mr. Shersby: I am fascinated by the comment that general practitioners welcome the opportunity to work in hospitals. Does the Minister say that general practitioners in my constituency will welcome the opportunity to respond to a call to work in Hillingdon hospital after a busy day in general practice? As a Member of Parliament, if, at the end of a busy working week, after my constituency surgery, I asked to put in yet another stint, I should not feel very happy about it. General practitioners are not at all happy about this wonderful opportunity that is being offered to them. I ask the Minister to re-examine the brief that she has been given on that topic. I shall be fascinated to know in how many areas local GPs throw up their hands with joy at the opportunity of being able to work in hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: Knowing my hon. Friend as I do, if he were asked to do an extra stint after he had done his constituency surgery, I am sure that, on behalf of his constituency, he would do just that. The incidence of GPs doing clinical assistant sessions around the country is quite common. On one occasion recently I received a delegation from a group of people in another part of the country who were concerned about a reduction of service in one of their local hospitals. One of the reasons they were concerned was that GPs would lose their opportunity to do clinical assistant sessions. It is important that, where it is done, it is seen as part of a GP's career, an additional interest and use of his or her expertise, and not simply as a way of filling gaps. This system is widely carried out. I understand that GPs thoroughly enjoy doing it and like having the opportunity so to do.

Two other possibilities are including posts in rotation to offer an attractive package of general professional training — as my right hon. Friend correctly said, the main difficulties come up in certain specific areas of work — and, perhaps, increasing the use of cross cover between specialties and firms. I was impressed by an orthopaedic unit in my constituency, because the people in that unit told me with some pride that they never cancel an operation. When I asked them how they managed to do that, they simply said, "If one of us cannot do it, the others will." In other words, if someone is booked in for surgery and perhaps has been waiting a long time, the team operates strictly as a team and someone will ensure that my constituent has her operation on time, as expected. She will never know about it, but I am aware of the amount of management co-operation and mutual trust that goes into ensuring that someone will look after that patient and do a good job for her. It is possible that more co-operation of that kind could enable us to improve the training and the kind of work that doctors are able to do and ensure that some waiting lists are reduced.

We have been asked why we do not set up NHS locum agencies for doctors. Some authorities are doing just that, including North-West Thames region, which covers my hon. Friend's constituency. A medical bureau called Thames Health Personnel was set up in April 1986. It is based in South-West Hertfordshire district. The aim of that bureau is to place all requests for medical locums with one agency to provide a cost-effective and efficient service. There are six user districts of this service, all in North-West Thames, including Hillingdon. It is too early to assess the impact of this initiative on recruitment in the user districts, but we are following this problem with some interest.

In Wales, Locum Bank Wales is attempting to match available doctors on temporary work with vacancies occurring throughout the Principality. Trent regional health authority recently announced a computerised regional locum bank. I understand that Mersey regional health authority has plans for a clearing house for SHO posts. We do not rule out a national data base. So far, there has been no strong demand from the NHS management for such a data base. It may be that regional or inter-regional developments are the right scale for this sort of operation.

We watch all these developments with considerable interest. They increase the freedom of choice of doctors, make use of spare doctor manpower that may not be available on a full-time basis or may be available only on a temporary basis, and enable us to fill gaps in the Health Service as they occur.

It has been suggested that we might ban the use of medical agencies or impose maximum charges. The authorities must manage the local services. Some find that they can dispense with agencies; others do not. If we were

to ban the use of agencies, it would reduce flexibility and the ability of authorities to respond to short-term staffing crises.

Partly as result of this debate, we have asked the health authorities how they would react to fee ceilings. There has been no strong demand for them from NHS management. If we receive evidence of a worsening problem, we shall ask them again, but it would be wrong for us to impose a change if the NHS management system, which we so laboriously set up, does not consider that there is a need. We issued guidance to health authorities on their role in the use of nurse agencies in 1983, and in 1980 we agreed to a code of practice with representatives of medical agencies. If necessary, we will revise it, but at the moment there seems no great pressure on us to do so.

My hon. Friend mentioned some long-term solutions and correctly identified "Hospital Medical Staffing — Achieving a Balance." At the moment, we are consulting on this matter. The consultative document sets out the proposals. The Government are vigorously pursuing these proposals, and we shall take account of responses to the consultation. The ideas are worth considering carefully.

As my hon. Friend will be aware, I was a member of the Social Services Committee at the time it produced its 1984 report on hospital medical staffing. I was signatory to that report. Again, some of the solutions that were proposed are long-term. The Committee's main point was that Ministers should devise an operational plan to bring about agreed changes in hospital staffing structure that would pick up some of the problems that my hon. Friend identified. Following discussions with the health authorities and with the professions, we have published proposals for such a plan. We are consulting and we shall develop a detailed plan for implementation in the light of the response.

The employment prospects for nurses vary region by region. Some authorities still have difficulty in recruiting sufficiently qualified staff in some locations and specialties, particularly mental illness and mental handicap. It is perhaps a matter of sadness that those shortages do not show up so much as the shortages in acute services which may not be nearly as difficult. But shortages also affect acute services, such as operating theatres and intensive and renal care.

At present I have on my desk several proposals from health authorities obliged to reduce the number of beds in hospital wards to release enough nurses to man the intensive therapy units, not because of financial cuts, but because they simply cannot lay hands on the highly skilled and highly qualified people who can do that type of stressful work. Therefore, they feel there is no point in having lots of patients in beds if they cannot provide intensive care. That is an agonising decision for a health authority to take, but sometimes it appears to be necessary.

About 80 per cent. of our national recruitment publicity is directed towards mental illness and mental handicap. It is as much to try to change the image of that type of work and to attract people into this important area as anything else. Authorities have been asked to consider a wide range of possibilities, and, indeed, my hon. Friend is right to draw attention to our worries about the future.

At present we draw the overwhelming bulk of our nurses from young school leavers — 18-year-old girls with O-levels and usually with A-levels, although only O-levels will be the required qualification from 1986 onwards. In 1981, there were 480,000 18-year-old girls. By 1994 there will be only 300,000. That drop gives an idea of the rapid shrinkage of that pool from which nursing and, indeed, the other health care professions, such as physiotherapy, draw their recruits.

I was present today at the launch of the central clearing house for nurse training, which will be a big help in ensuring that we know how many people are applying for nurse training, what their level of qualifications may be, and that they go to nurse training places, so that we do not have too many applications in one place and vacancies in another. But among the other things that we are looking at seriously is an alternative to the traditional recruitment markets—men and mature entrants—and possibly to the qualifications for entrance to see whether they have become a barrier rather than a door, making sure that we do not exclude people who have all the right talents and abilities who are perhaps deterred, as my hon. Friend rightly said in the case of the nurse who had written to him, by the way in which some of the most senior nursing training is presented.

We are most concerned to reduce the wastage of learners and qualified staff. We cannot afford to lose nurses as we have been doing. That means finding out why people leave and whether there is some way in which we can encourage people to stay. That means, instead of insisting on established and traditional ways of working within a hospital, asking whether the qualified personnel, to whom we have access, might want to work in a slightly different way. That means encouraging qualified staff to come back to nursing, looking at what they want and how they would like to work.

It is curious that there are no recruitment difficulties in certain areas, such as in recruiting practice nurses to work in a GP's surgery. That seems to be the kind of work that these good people want to have, in which case it is not for us to say that they are wrong, but to find out what would suit them and encourage them to come back into nursing in one way or another.

We need to examine the skill mix and deployment of qualified and less qualified staff and to establish the right skill mixes where they are most needed. There is a difference between an intensive therapy ward and a ward which is looking after people recovering from minor surgery. It is important to get that mix right and to ensure that we use our expensive and increasingly scarce personnel in the right way.

It is important that we should reduce levels of absence that can be avoided. Obviously, there are absences that cannot be avoided, such as when nurses are training. We should consider sickness and the extent to which nurses find aspects of the stress of the job difficult to take. It may be that by looking after our staff just a little bit better —or even a darn sight better—we may encourage them to stay and have a rather higher percentage of them available to us and to our patients than we have at present.

My hon. Friend mentioned Project 2000. He knows that it will not be published until January, and he will understand, therefore, if I do not comment further on it. But his remarks about SENs, which will be welcome to them, have been carefully noted.

What are we going to do about all this? My hon. Friend mentioned the more experienced nurses and the importance of paying them properly. That, as we know, is being looked at now. The management and staff sides of the nurses and midwives staff negotiating council have

[Mrs. Currie]

begun a review of the clinical grading structure. The review will examine the duties and responsibilities of nurses over the range of jobs, including specialised areas. We hope that once a new grading structure is agreed it will be possible for the review body to recommend appropriate pay levels. The council aims to complete its work in time for the 1988 pay review. It will be some time before we see the benefit of that, but its proposals may be far reaching and will, I hope, take up some of the problems raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge.

My hon. Friend also asked about Australia. I do not need to quote the figures again, as I provided them in a written answer. My hon. Friend is quite correct. This year we have lost almost 2,000 girls and gained about 600. It is probably worth remembering that the campaign in Australia has been the result of serious shortages of nurses. That was caused by a switch to using academic students instead of trainee nurses on the wards. That caused a loss of service commitment. We must be aware of the possible dangers of that and also of the possible attractions. I shall make no further comments on that.

The recent experience is not entirely unhappy. Recent experience in recruiting, training and keeping nurses has been worthy of note. For example, the numbers discontinuing nurse training have dropped. There has been a reduction in the number of nurse learners discontinuing training as a proportion of the average number in nurse training. It was nearly 9 per cent. in the year ending 31 March 1980. It was about 5·6 per cent. in the year ended 31 March 1986. That figure should be reduced further if possible, and any reform of nurse education should have that as an objective.

We have also been able to recruit increasing numbers of nurses despite the comments that have been made. The total number of nursing and midwifery staff, including learners, unqualified and agency staff—bearing in mind that agency staff are only 2 per cent. of the total—by 30 September 1985 was 401,200 in whole-time equivalent terms. In other words, there were even more bodies than that. That was an increase of 42,700 over the figure in September 1979.

An estimated 24,000 of that increase was accounted for by additional staff necessary to maintain the level of service as a result of a reduction in working hours from 40 to 37·5. That still leaves an increase of almost 19,000 for service expansion. At the same time, the proportion of qualified nursing midwifery staff increased from about 54 per cent. in 1979 to 59 per cent. in 1985. I would hazard a guess that, if my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge asked his local district health authority to calculate the proportion of qualified staff that it now employs, he would discover that some of the increase in spending on the nursing budget is accounted for by whether they are employed by the agency or the Health Service direct. That trend has been followed throughout the country. I am sure that my hon. Friend would agree that that is a welcome trend. We want qualified staff on the wards; that is what we pay and train them for.

The number of nurse learners entering training has also been very satisfactory. From information supplied by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, I can tell my hon. Friend that 23,705 entered training in England in the year ended 31 March 1986. Most of the change in recent years has been the result of the drop of 19·2 per cent. in enrolled nurse training, perhaps for the reasons mentioned by my hon. Friend. The numbers entering registered nurse training decreased by only 3·2 per cent. over that period.

Dr. Bendall, the director of the English national board, may allow me to quote her again. When we were discussing this matter at lunchtime at a press conference, she said that she felt that some of the drop in SEN enrolments was the result of comments made in some of the discussion about Project 2000. She said:

"I think that we have shot ourselves in the foot on that."

That is the view of a most distinguished servant of the nursing profession. It is obvious that sometimes lessons are learned in difficult circumstances.

Should we improve pay for nurses? We are doing just that. Since 1984, nurses' pay has increased by more than 11 per cent. in real terms. That is a significant total increase that many other staff groups would welcome, as would others in the private sector. The scale maxima for sisters and staff nurses have risen since 1984 from £8,103 and £6,094 to £10,800 and £7,750 respectively. In addition, there are premium payments for nights, weekends, overtime, certain specialties and London working. As a Trent Member, I should point out that the pay levels are better than women in some parts of the country could expect for other types of work, so some of the difficulties correctly identified today are problems of London.

Should there be a contractual obligation on nurses to continue in NHS employment for two years or some other period?

Mr. Shersby: In talking about a contractual obligation, I had in mind the provision of an incentive linked with an understanding or an agreement.

Mrs. Currie: I take that point. In fact, I have tried it in another incarnation. When I was chairman of the Birmingham social services committee I was keen to increase the proportion of trained staff substantially. At one stage, in the mid-1970s, only about 30 per cent. of our social workers were trained and qualified. We therefore entered into a commitment with staff who undertook training for the certificate of qualification in social work whereby they were to work for us for two years after their training. It worked a treat, but after the two years they left so one was merely postponing the time at which staff might go if they had strong reasons for doing so. I believe, therefore, that we need to identify why people leave, widen the pool from which we recruit them and make it possible for them to stay. Some of the incentives mentioned by my hon. Friend would then be marginal rather than central to the argument.

It is also worth pointing out that as nurse training is the major training for the caring professions one would expect to train a large number of people who then go on to other things. Many go into other caring professions, such as social service departments, which do not train nurses. They also go to work in the private sector which, with one or two exceptions, does not train nurses. I believe that for some time to come we must regard ourselves as the major training engine generating a supply of qualified caring staff for the most important of professions. In other words, we should not expect them all to be working in the Health Service. It is important to bear in mind the wider input that the training expenditure helps to provide.

My hon. Friend mentioned accommodation and asked whether health authorities were encouraged to sell off land

and property to provide better facilities. They are indeed encouraged to do that, and also to improve property needed for residential accommodation. There are two circulars outstanding—HC(85)19 and HC(86)8—both of which stress that the improvement of residential accommodation should be the first charge on proceeds of sale, exactly as my hon. Friend has suggested.

In fact, Hillingdon is relatively well provided with staff accommodation. According to action plans submitted last year, the district has 1,070 units, of which only 840 were occupied. Half the occupation was by professional trainees and half by other staff. Proposals were made to reduce holdings for other staff by 200, leaving trainee accommodation untouched, which would result in a holding of about 645 units. Health authorities are not now required to implement those proposals if they judge it necessary to do otherwise so as to attract staff. The NHS management board has been looking urgently at the problems of recruitment in London, taking into account a wide range of issues, of which accommodation is one.

I did not manage to catch all the suggestions that my hon. Friend made, but I shall read the *Official Report* with great care. I think it highly unlikely that we shall start giving free meals to nurses, as he suggests. Indeed, the pressure is on us—rightly, in my view—to reduce the subsidy on staff food rather than to increase it. I am sure my hon. Friend will agree that we wish to pay our staff in cash and not in kind. That principle runs through the social security reform and we have removed from large numbers of people the right to free school meals and have given them cash instead so that they benefit not just when the children are at school and eating school meals but for the whole year. Similarly, I would prefer nurses to have cash and not simply a benefit on the occasions when they choose to eat in the staff dining room, whether or not there is a healthy eating policy there.

Mr. Shersby: I agree with my hon. Friend. The major review that is now in the pipeline should certainly help to solve that problem.

Mrs. Currie: I take note of that.

I should now like to turn to Hillingdon. My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge might like to stay for the Adjournment debate that follows this one because my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and I serve this nation in a part of Britain which was a major beneficiary from RAWP. I look forward to hearing what my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough has to say.

The Government are committed to RAWP. We are reviewing it and looking hard at some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge. He is right when he says that an extra £30 million has been set aside for the RAWP bridging fund, and we are waiting to see what the health authorities propose to do with that money. I cannot give my hon. Friend the commitment that he seeks, but I have no doubt that his health authority has taken note and will make an appropriate bid.

In Hillingdon, as in every other health authority area, the amount of revenue that has gone in has increased. In 1982-83, the amount was £46 million and it went up to £54 million this year. There has been a hike of £3·5 million to Hillingdon in the last 12 months. That is a substantial increase and, on top of that, £6·8 million has gone in in capital spending in the last four years. I am sure that that will be of considerable benefit to local people.

We have been talking about input, but the output is patients. I note with interest that the number of in-patients treated in Hillingdon, despite that extra money, has remained virtually static, at 40,000 a year. The number of day cases treated has also remained static, at about 3,000 a year, which is a tiny percentage of the overall level of work. It is less than 10 per cent. and many local authorities are treating 20 or 25 per cent. day cases; in some ways that may be a much cheaper method of looking after patients and increasing throughput.

The number of out-patient attendances has risen from 224,000 to 231,000 in the last four years. That increase is welcome and it is important to put it on record. My hon. Friend is quite right when he says that the Hillingdon health authority has overspent. At the end of September it was overspent by about £800,000 and its projected year end overspend is approximately £1·6 million — if it carries on as it has been doing until September. However, the district has given the region a guarantee that it will not be overspent in broad terms by the end of the financial year.

I am informed that Hillingdon health authority is doing something quite wise. It is holding a reserve in excess of £1 million to offset any unforeseen expenditure over the winter months and to meet any capital expenditure that the health authority may wish to undertake. It may well be that, with careful management of its resources, it can keep the promise made to the region without damaging patient services too much. I am sure that the authority will be grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that matter in this debate.

We all recognise that Hillingdon has serious problems about waiting lists. The waiting list for general surgery, trauma and orthopaedics and urology went up between March 1985 and March 1986. The worst waiting list is for plastic surgery, where over 2,700 people are waiting. That list has been coming down, but by a long way it is still the worst one of the authority's waiting lists. My hon. Friend will know that a waiting list fund has been set up for the two years from April which will allocate £50 million nationally to accommodate problems like that. We are expecting bids from the regional health authorities for this money and I understand that the North-West Thames regional health authority will give Hillingdon priority management attention. That is the order of the day. If that is not a hint, I do not know what is. At the very least, we expect to see some bids coming in, and after that it is a question of how much money is available for the national bids.

I hope that I have dealt with at least some of the problems identified by my hon. Friend. I shall write to him about those that I have missed. The locums and the agencies literally help to fill a gap. They generally do a good job and I wish them to know that we value the work that they do. On that basis, I am glad to respond to my hon. Friend.

Trent Regional Health Authority

9.20 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I congratulate my hon. *Friend the Under*-Secretary of State on the stamina that she is showing tonight. She gave a concise and telling reply to the earlier debate, and we are grateful for the fact that she has undertaken at this hour to discuss our special problems in the east midlands, of which she has had adequate notice.

I want to raise with my hon. Friend the application of RAWP in the east midlands to the Trent regional and Leicestershire health authorities. I have addressed a succession of Ministers on this subject over a number of years and, whether Labour or Conservative, their replies have always been kind, conciliatory, well-intentioned and encouraging. However, I cannot think of a single Minister who has had the practical experience of my hon. Friend and I know that she will probably appreciate better than some of her predecessors the telling importance of my remarks.

In the Trent regional and Leicestershire health authorities, RAWP is 96 per cent. of national average. In fact, Trent region is 96 per cent. of national average and, within Trent region, the Leicestershire health authority has 96 per cent. of the allotment for Trent. My colleagues in the House and elsewhere in the constituency say that that is good because when I first raised the matter, well over 20 years ago, the Leicestershire health authority was languishing at the bottom of the heap with only 73 per cent. of RAWP. I am not encouraged, because, although we are 96 per cent. of RAWP today, that is 96 per cent. of a figure which has massively increased over the past 20 or 25 years. It is not all that much different from 73 per cent. of a much more modest sum in the 1960s when other Members of Parliament and I repeatedly tried to raise the matter.

The fact remains that 25 years ago the Leicestershire health authority, with 73 per cent. of the national average, was bottom of the league. Even though today it sounds much better to say 96 per cent., it is still bottom of the league. There has been consistent underfunding.

At a meeting in the House of Commons which was attended by a number of my colleagues in the House, the Leicestershire health authority, its chairman and senior officials, a fortnight ago—I am glad to see my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) here—keen representations were made about what is regarded as a unique tragedy for the Leicestershire health authority — the continuing and consistent underfunding.

As I told the Minister only last week, unless RAWP is improved for the current financial year, before March 1987 there will have to be cuts. Spending within the Trent and Leicestershire health authorities is running about 5 per cent. above their allocations, despite stringent economies and the best use of centrally made provisions.

During the past week I was lucky enough to visit Leicester general hospital and I was kindly received by Mr. Inman, who is the general manager. I am sure the Minister will confirm that that hospital is almost like a town. The general manager is responsible for a wages bill of over £20 million per annum.

Leicester general hospital has certain specialties, including its renal and bone transplant units, and it is one of the leading hospitals for hip transplant operations. Apart from having a close look at Leicester general—I was not able to see it all in the time allotted and I hope to go back for a much longer visit shortly—I went along because of complaints that I had received.

One such complaint concerned one of my constituents who was admitted to Leicester general hospital. It does not have an accident or casualty reception, but it does have important and busy operating theatres. There are constant arranged admissions but certain emergency cases are admitted if a patient requires immediate attention. In this case the patient was wheeled out of the ambulance and on to a stretcher. Unfortunately, he was left for up to 10 minutes before somebody could be called to move him to the theatre, where he needed the urgent attention of the doctor. As a result of this wait, despite the presence of relatives and friends, the man caught a chill and as a result died.

This problem could be eradicated if the entrance hall at Leicester general were cleared and an annex built where patients could be placed on a stretcher while they waited for a porter to transport them. There is over half a mile of corridors on the ground floor alone. Such an annex would enable a patient to be kept warm at modest expense. It is that sort of improvement to the existing facilties at Leicester general that is necessary to preserve the lives of constituents.

What impresses me most—notwithstanding the fact that there are not so many now — are the regular complaints that I receive at my surgery and from constituents' letters about the long waiting time for admission. I was interested to hear the reply that my hon. Friend the Minister gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). It is important that we, as a Government, are determined to try to eradicate the waiting times wherever possible. Of course, a reasonable amount of time must elapse so that patients get the most efficient treatment available. It is not right, however, that there should be delays of perhaps three or four months before there is a consultation, followed by a further wait of several months for some specialty treatment. I welcome the remarks made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State the other day about the Government's effort to make a big drive in the immediate future to reduce the waiting lists at NHS hospitals.

In raising the matter of the application of RAWP to the Trent regional and Leicestershire health authorities, I should like to touch on a matter in which I know my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will be interested. Does she share the view, which has been expressed by some regional health authorities, that bigger is best? The idea is that there will be the massive general hospital in Leicester or Nottingham with the latest machines and highly skilled professional staff. To many people it is common sense to centralise all local medical services. The temptation seems to be to centralise all the specialised medical services in Leicester. I am not sure that that is a good inclination for health authorities to follow.

Often, in country towns, long-established cottage hospitals which are much smaller than the great city professional institutions have for generations been playing a vital and proud role in the fabric of the National Health Service. I think that they can feel sure that they will have an equally important role to play in the future. These smaller hospitals, which are outside the big city centres, specialise in, for example, maternity services.

In Market Harborough, in my constituency, there is a cottage hospital with an excellent maternity service. It has one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the country—indeed, much better than the national average. It is a centre of excellence. I find it difficult to appreciate that the current Leicestershire health authority's long-term plan will not involve the expansion of that centre of excellence for which one would hope. The plan does not even imagine the continuance in the next 10 or 15 years of the same level of maternity services. The hospital is due for a substantial downgrading and a big percentage cut in assistance. It is difficult to understand that policy, which applies not only to Market Harborough but to many small country towns, such as Melton Mowbray and Loughborough, where for generations there have been excellently run hospitals with a small but adequate number of beds. They have been held in high regard by local townsfolk.

Of course, we need the big centres in the cities for complex cases. They should always exist, and I hope that they will always continue to be funded adequately, but many mothers and would-be mothers to whom I have talked feel that they should not have to undertake a journey of 20 or 25 miles from the town in which they live to Leicester or Nottingham, unless there is a severe complication. In Market Harborough, in particular—I shall not mention the names of the thousands of people who have signed a petition to this effect—there is a tremendous attachment to the local little cottage hospital. The people are proud of their hospital. It is spotless and the staff are very professional. I hope that the Conservative party and, through it, the Government will continue to encourage these little centres of excellence all over the country. The Conservative party must seek to preserve and enhance treasures such as the cottage hospital in Market Harborough, rather than see their role eroded.

We are lucky in Leicestershire, in that over the past two years a new district general hospital has been opened. It is beginning to play a very big role in the health of those in the area. Indeed, phase 1 has been opened and phase 2 is due to be opened shortly. It is important that we should continue to have specialty hospitals near city centres and do our best to fund them and see that they are properly maintained and, at the same time, keep our local country hospitals viable as well.

In the Leicester area we are very proud of the NHS and the feeling of my constituents is that they wish to see a thriving NHS which continues to provide as good a care as can be found or bought anywhere. I am impressed by the plans of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister to engage in a big building programme and for the improvement and recruitment of staff. We should speed that work, but not at the expense of smaller centres of excellence such as the Market Harborough cottage hospital.

9.36 pm

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): When my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State was in Leicester recently, speaking about a specific project, she said that it was up to the Leicester Members of Parliament to fight for the money. We are trying to live up to her injunction tonight. I apologise if we have taken her advice too literally and detained her rather longer tonight than she anticipated.

Glenfield general hospital opened relatively recently in Leicester. It is a jewel in the health care service. One of my constituents who was treated there recently said that it gave him "five-star treatment". If only those who criticise the closure of outdated and outworn health service facilities spent as much time glorifying what has actually been built, they would do a service to the community.

In 1987-88 there will be new capital expenditure in the Leicestershire health authority amounting to £1·4 million. There will be an increase in revenue expenditure of £3·8 million and 274 full-time equivalent posts will be added to those already employed by the Health Service.

We are talking about success. Just because we are here tonight like Oliver Twist with our hands extended for more money does not mean that we are anything other than anxious to reveal and proclaim how successful the increase in spending in Leicestershire has been in order to raise it so far up the league in the way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) has already shown.

Four projects are planned over the next four years at at the Leicester Royal infirmary, each with a capital value in excess of £1 million. At the Leicester general hospital, there are two such projects and at the Glenfield general hospital we have not stood still. In addition to the scheme to which my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) referred, there is to be a new cardiothoracic department. Work is due to start on it in the winter of 1990.

What, therefore, we are saying to my hon. Friend the Minister is set against the background of very great achievement and budgeted growth for the next four years, especially on the capital side. It is in marked distinction to what we saw under the Labour Government of the 1970s. Let nobody forget that for a moment.

The next feature against which we set the background of our plea is the impressive record of cost improvement programmes and Rayner scrutinies in which the authority has indulged. It has rolled up its sleeves and put out a variety of its services to competitive tendering, which in the years 1985-86 and 1986-87 will result in a cost saving of approximately £1·4 million. It is saving about £37,000 for recruitment advertising, £60,000 on fuel cost savings, £150,000 on nurse shift arrangements and £100,000 on management costs. It is not only a question of more money being spent; it is also a question of more money being spent better. The authority also intends to put out more of its services to competitive tendering. In the year 1987-88 that should result in a further saving of £750,000, which means that more money will be available for patient care.

My hon. Friend could therefore be forgiven if she were to say, "What are you grumbling about? Surely you have done very well indeed." As she will know, coming as she does from the east midlands, we are not easily satisfied. Good is not good enough. We want to be the best. That is why we are here tonight.

I want to add my voice to what has already been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough, but also to direct attention to the problems in my constituency, especially to the burdens that are placed upon it by the fact that, in part, it is an inner-city seat.

First, a considerable problem is the high incidence of coronary disease among the Asian population in Leicester, where there are at least 45,000 people of Asian origin. There is proven evidence of a high incidence of coronary complaints in that community. That has been recognised by the authority, and it has already put forward bids for two separate projects under the inner area programme to

[Mr. Derek Spencer]

the Department of the Environment. We await in hope the outcome of those submissions. Even if they were to be granted, as we hope they will, that does not distract attention from the fact that they are symptomatic of the special problem under which the Health Service in Leicester has to labour.

Secondly, when the Asian community first came to Leicester in any significant numbers, about 20 years ago, virtually all the women were of child-bearing age. But those people are now a little older. In the years to come, there will be a considerable bulge in the number of old people in Leicester of Asian origin who will require treatment from the services that concentrate on the elderly. Thus, once again, we shall be placing a greater burden on existing facilities. We should have an eye to that now, and should be planning for it, instead of letting ourselves be overtaken by events.

We have other problems that merely reflect problems that every constituency has to bear. For example, the health authority has already laid down a programme to deal with AIDS. An agenda has been drawn up, and various counselling services have been put into place. The infectious diseases unit has taken appropriate steps. But yet again, I fear that we must anticipate increased expenditure in the years to come.

Although Leicester is a fair city, and a city of enterprise, not even that city can manage to avoid the effects of drug abuse. We have already had allocated to us the not inconsiderable sum of £94,000 in order to set up facilities, including counselling and advice centres, and a scheme to train volunteers. That money is in the pipeline.

It was in regard to that scheme that my hon. Friend the Minister said that we should fight for the money. When I heard her casting her bread upon the waters, I took advantage of the opportunity that she so propitiously offered, so I apologise for the fact that it has come back to her almost a thousandfold. However, the problem of drug abuse will eventually cast its shadow across our health facilities.

There will also be increased expenditure over the computerisation of records for cervical cytology and the recall scheme. That computerisation has not yet been carried out, but we foresee increased expenditure. The regional specialty services that we are proud to have within the city's bounds were also mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough. We can foresee them expanding in several areas in which they are outstanding.

Only a short time ago, I went to a function put on by Moslem Aid, which is a charity of distinction in Leicester. It was donating a considerable sum to the renal unit and the work that it does, which is work of a high order. Once again, it is a facility where the demand exceeds the supply. There is an increased call for services.

That is the picture that I wish briefly to sketch. There is much more that could be said, which would present a most impressive case on behalf of the area health authority for an even greater complement of resources than that which we have already received. We do not come in any grudging spirit, but in one of optimism. We hope that fighting for the money will pay in the long run.

9.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): It was with great pleasure that I heard that my right hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) had been successful in his request for the second Adjournment debate. It was a great pleasure too to hear my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) supporting my hon. Friend. I thank my hon. Friend and my hon. and learned Friend, but especially my hon. Friend for his kindness to me since I became a Member of this place. No one could have been more kindly, courteous, friendly and helpful to someone arriving here for the first time. It is the greatest pleasure for me to be able to put that on record.

I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks about my experience before coming to the House. I must tell him that being a chairman of a health authority for some years before coming here does not make my job any easier. As one's sympathies are often already established, and as I have to take decisions for the National Health Service, I think that sometimes my experience makes my job a little harder.

My hon. Friend has said that he has been raising the issue of NHS funding for Leicestershire for about 28 years. I asked him who had responded to the first Adjournment debate that he raised on the matter 28 years ago, and it seems that the Minister's name has been lost in the mists of obscurity. I hope that the same thing will not happen tonight.

I share with my hon. Friend and my hon. and learned Friend the privilege of being a Trent Member. As has been said, I visited Leicester recently and saw the Glenfield hospital. I was most impressed. I had an enjoyable and stimulating discussion with members of staff of the different disciplines. I wish to thank and congratulate them on the first-class service that they are providing for the people of Leicestershire and for those further afield.

My hon. and learned Friend spoke about coronary disease among Asians. He may recall that during the most recent Question Time for my Department I answered a question tabled by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on this topic. My hon. and learned Friend might like to read my response to it.

I have seen the results of a survey on heart disease by an organisation that is called the Confederation of Indian Associations, which were published in May. The survey revealed that there is a problem and that there is a high incidence of coronary heart disease among the Asian population. It is higher among Asians than among the population generally. The evidence and the research are patchy and, therefore, it is difficult to establish the pattern of causality. For example, the research on diet that has been undertaken tends to be confined to London. It has tended to concentrate on groups such as Gujaratis, who are substantially vegetarian. It is difficult to establish from their rather good diet whether there is an influence of diet on heart disease.

Against that background, it is not possible to say that Asian communities generally have a better or worse diet than other groups, especially when we think of the delicious samosas, fried foods, pastries and sweet desserts with which I have been delighted to be regaled at the Indian banquets which I have attended.

The report states that there appears to be a high level of heart disease in urban Asian populations thoughout the world. There may be something more serious. We do not know the level of heart disease among the Asian population in the countries from which they come. We cannot tell at the moment whether it is simply a cultural

pattern that they bring with them, or whether their level of heart disease here is higher than at home, or possibly lower than at home. We need to know a lot more about that matter. I am delighted that my hon. Friend has taken the interests of his constituents so much to heart that he has raised this matter tonight. I commend to him the publication that I mentioned.

My hon. Friend also mentioned problems in Leicester, including AIDS, drug abuse and the cervical call and recall scheme. He will know, of course, that overall the Government have put an additional £1 billion into the Health Service for the year starting in April, and that will cover not only hospitals but the full range of health services. Active discussions are going on as to how to allocate that money—first, for top-sliced activities and, secondly, for what is left to the regional health authorities. It will then be for regional health authorities to decide how to allocate money between the districts. In that sense, I regret to say that my three hon. Friends who are here tonight are in competition. The region will decide how to allocate the money between the districts. That is right because of cross-boundary flows and the movement of population that might continue.

My hon. Friend the hon. Member for Harborough raised another important and difficult matter. He asked, "Is bigger best?" I hope he will accept the view that there is no simple formula. No simple rule or pattern of activity could be best. Indeed, if it was best at the time it was planned, it probably would not be best at the time it finally was implemented. By the time it was implemented, needs might have changed. Therefore, it would be foolish to say that one pattern of work is best. A difficult dilemma exists. Within the Health Service there are centripetal and centrifugal forces. The centripetal force — seeking the centre — is that for many of our activities we need expensive equipment and scarce skills. Therefore, they need to be concentrated in magnificent and, very often, modern hospitals.

In those hospitals, staff have to work that much harder to be human. They have to work that much harder to bring things to the human scale and to enable patients to feel that they are not part of the machinery but are being treated, first and foremost, as people. In many parts of the country — Trent is one — this matter is being taken seriously. Staff are being assisted and trained to ensure that the body on the table is regarded, first, as a person and, secondly, as a medical problem.

The centrifugal forces are just as strong as we push for care in the community, as we push for more day cases, which means that a person will go into hospital only for day treatment and then go home and get further assistance at home. We expect our GPs to do more work in their surgeries, and they are willingly doing that. There is a force away from big hospitals. In many parts of the country tremendous efforts are being made not only to keep cottage hospitals but to build more community hospitals. Elsewhere in Trent region that is happening. The Ilkeston community hospital will open in 1987. Some money has had to be reallocated to it from districts such as southern Derbyshire to make sure that that happens. It is partly in response to the sorts of needs that my hon. Friend mentioned.

The problem facing smaller units is that they have to work harder to do more intensive and highly skilled work. Increasingly, there are certain areas of work that we would not expect them to do. Paediatrics — the care of sick babies — would probably be one of those areas. It may also include some maternity work, as my hon. Friend mentioned. The trouble with maternity cases is that one does not know that one is high risk until it happens. As a general policy — as a patient I have been dubious about this, but I can see the force of the argument — over a number of years we have brought more and more maternity patients into hospital and more and more into the high tech side of maternity care. Our first consideration must be the baby, and then we should consider the mother. No one speaks for the baby. It is important to bear that in mind.

Sir John Farr: I apologise to my hon. Friend for interrupting her. She has had a trying evening. Does she think that in maternity and geriatric cases the same principle applies, which is that the person much prefers to be fairly near his home town and is probably a much better patient? In that way the patient can have ready access to visitors and his visitors will not have to rely on difficult or non-existent transport.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Mrs. Currie: I take on board entirely what my hon. Friend said. However, I must put it to him—this is a matter with which I have wrestled, having been involved in obstetrics as a member of a major teaching authority —that if we wish to continue our progress in bringing down the death rate of sickly babies, we cannot always do it in the kinds of services and hospitals in which our mothers bore us.

We have been tremendously successful. The perinatal mortality rate per 1,000 live births in the past six years has dropped from 15 per 1,000 to nine. That is a remarkable achievement. With the best will in the world, I am convinced that that could not have been done without the high tech work. Indeed, some of the best perinatal mortality rates in the country are in some of the poorest areas which, nevertheless, have concentrated much of their maternity care on some of the finest hospitals in the world. We must accept that we must consider the results. I hope that I have convinced my hon. Friend that we are alert to the problem of whether bigger or smaller is better. There is no easy answer and the debate will undoubtedly continue for many years.

Both my hon. Friends have clearly pointed to the perennial dilemma of the Health Service — the Oliver Twist syndrome. We have finite resources. The Health Service always has finite resources. But expectations are infinite and increasingly one comes to the conclusion that the possibilities also look infinite. There are operations that we are doing now, such as the heart transplant on a young woman like Debbie Leonard, whom I met in Mr. Speaker's rooms on Monday. She is now fit and well with someone else's heart beating inside her. Kidney patients now achieve a survival rate of 86 per cent. after five years. That is remarkable. The failures in kidney donation are now the rarities and the number of failures is falling all the time. I mentioned the perinatal mortality rate. There are hundreds of life-saving interventions done now that simply were not possible or successful until recently. No doubt as they become standard practice, so we shall find that something else comes up that we all want to do.

[Mrs. Currie]

My hon. Friends asked about the resource allocation working party. They will know that it has been in operation now for 10 years. It was introduced by a Labour Government and espoused by this Government. We looked at it again and we calculated the figures several times, which in some cases has hurt local authorities. Yesterday, for example, I was in south-west Surrey which before 1981 was substantially below its target and now within a space of 12 months is well above it, not because it had much more money, but because the calculations have been done differently. That creates serious management problems which we recognise.

I have said to my hon. Friends that within the region the allocation is a matter for that region. They will accept that I cannot comment further on that, except to say that if one is looking for the bread that is floating on the waters, having a word with the regional health authority is sometimes useful.

My hon. Friend will know that we are now looking hard at the RAWP formula. The purpose of that is that the substantial progress made under RAWP has resulted in all but the two North Thames regions being within 4 per cent. of their target share of resources, so it becomes increasingly important that the target should be accurate and should reflect relative need as far as possible. Therefore, the aim of the review is to look at the scope for refining the RAWP formula—perhaps bringing it up to date a little—and improving its measurement of need.

The variants that are being covered take account of previous criticisms of the formula — for example, morbidity, social deprivation and the special problems of the inner cities, some of which my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South mentioned. We must pay attention to those difficulties, yet they are difficult to grasp. The measurement of the population need is at the heart of the problem. RAWP currently uses standard mortality rates, which are effectively the death rates. That may not tell us very much about what people suffer from, and that might be different from what kills them. If someone dies quickly from a disease, that may cause less drain on the Health Service than if they suffer for a long time from a disease which does not kill them. We are examining that point very carefully.

We must consider whether there are direct links between deprivation and ill-health that we can counter with Health Service resources. We must examine the case of the patient with no family support and inadequate housing who may well be the kind of geriatric patient to which my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough referred, who may need longer in hospital. In certain parts of the country, longer stays may be necessary, not for traditional reasons, but simply to ensure the health needs of that patient and the Health Service may have to do more there than somewhere else.

We have been considering teaching hospital costs which particularly affect the Trent region and we have also considered the teaching hospitals, at Leicester, Nottingham and Sheffield. The costs associated with the teaching of medical students are separately identified and they are protected from redistribution under RAWP. We are considering whether the arrangements could be improved.

We are also concerned about patient flows across regional boundaries and I have already mentioned patient flow across district boundaries. Regions' RAWP targets include an adjustment to allow for patient flows across boundaries. We need to know whether that reflects the costs involved as fairly as possible or whether improvements can be made. Much of that information will become available as the Körner information systems are installed in our regional health authorities and district health authorities.

When I was the chairman of a health authority, I was bedevilled by this problem. Half the time I would ask questions and then be told that the information was simply not available or when it was available, it was available so late as to be less than valuable in terms of planning. It is a major task to improve that supply of information but it is under way. As we improve that, RAWP and its formulae can become more accurate and reflective of genuine need.

The timetable is as follows—the report is to include recommendations on the timing of any proposed changes and the new data that become available through Körner will be introduced in health authorities from 1987-88 onwards. The timing of some changes may be linked to the timetable for the implementation of Körner. That will depend on the best method of implementation from region to region.

I would now like to consider the Trent and Leicester health authorities. Whatever else we are doing, we are sending more money to Trent. The authority is using the money very well to care for more patients. It is worth putting the figures on the record. In 1978-79 Trent received a revenue allocation of £366 million. This year, the figure is £907 million. In cash terms, its allocation has risen nearly three times in the space of a mere six or seven years. That is quite remarkable.

Capita money has increased from £42 million in 1978-79 to £65 million today. A large chunk of that is being spent in Leicester. As a result, we are treating nearly 600,000 in-patients a year in Trent. The exact figure is 579,000 and that is an increase upon the figure of 461,000 in 1978. Out-patient attendances have risen in the same period from 2·8 million a year to 3·35 million a year. If anyone had challenged us to care for 3·35 million out-patients in Trent six years ago, we would not have thought it possible, yet that is what has happened. Day cases have risen, and the numbers of direct care staff — doctors, dentists and midwives — have all increased. That is certainly something of which we can all be very proud. I am especially proud to see the way in which money is being translated into patient care.

Leicestershire district health authority is the largest in the country, caring for a population of more than 800,000, so the size of the figures to some extent reflects the population change. We have to start from 1982, when the boundary changes were made, as figures for earlier years are not strictly comparable. In 1982-83, the authority spent £118 million. This year, the figure is just under £154 million. That is a staggering increase. In real terms, there has been a steady rise which no doubt turns some of our colleagues, including my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), green with envy. RAWP is working, and the money is being allocated to districts in the greatest need.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South identified the most spectacular change. In recent years, the district has been spending capital allocations of more than £10 million per year. As my hon. Friend will know from the previous debate, Hillingdon has spent only

£6·5 million over several years, but Leicestershire, has spent some £45 million since 1982. That, again, is a staggering sum and I was delighted to hear of the ways in which it was being spent. We shall no doubt have other opportunities to hear of further developments being achieved.

A quick calculation on the back of an envelope shows that, size for size, per head of population, on capital alone Leicestershire is spending almost twice what Hillingdon is able to spend. That is what RAWP is all about. It poses problems for colleagues in some parts of the country, of which we must take cognisance, but it means that opportunities are being developed to provide better health care for local people in other parts of the country.

On that basis, I am glad to have had this opportunity to air some of these issues. I am deeply grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough for the courteous way in which he put his points and to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South for the detail that he offered. We look forward to being nudged even further on these issues. I hope that the bread will taste good when it comes in. It is certainly being put to good use in Trent region and in my hon. Friends' constituencies.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 5 December 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the four motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Employment Protection (Variation of Limits) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Unfair Dismissal (Increase of Limits of Basic and Special Awards) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Unfair Dismissal (Increase of Compensation Limit) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1986 (S.I. 1986, No. 1795) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Local Government

9.34 am

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I beg to move,

That this House continues to recognise the importance of local government as a vital part of the British democratic system.

The face of local government in Britain is changing drastically, as a duck from Haringey called Quackers can testify. She was banned from her 22nd appearance at Gerry Cottle's circus because Haringey borough council considered that that was a clear breach of its ban on performing animals. That is an example of the ridiculous things that go on in local government. The old understandings that used to exist between local authorities and central Government are disappearing in many parts of the country. The consensus that used to exist is disappearing quickly. In many places, a conflict exists, cultivated by Labour councillors, between the mandate of central Government and that of local authorities.

Many local councillors see their role as challenging the role of central Government. In many areas, civic pride and community spirit have given way to groups of Left-wing Labour councillors — Trotskyists, Militants and their sympathisers—who see local authorities as mini-Soviets or power bases from which to attack the other political parties and central Government—especially when there is a Conservative Government.

But we must look back at the developments that have taken place in local government. It has been used by extreme Left-wing groups as a method of gaining power. The steps are simple. They enter the Labour party and select an area where it is strong in votes and weak in organisation. The old traditional local party is taken over by activists of a Left-wing persuasion and, slowly but surely, the old traditional Labour councillors are removed from their seats and replaced by Labour councillors who call themselves the broad Left but who are really of a Marxist persuasion. Once in control of the local authority, they propose to put their policies into operation. Once they have done that, they move on, as many Opposition Members can testify, to remove the sitting Member of Parliament, if he is of moderate persuasion, and replace him with a more broad Left candidate by way of deselection.

According to a recent poll, 70 per cent. of the current Labour candidates in the general election would withdraw from NATO and 59 per cent. of the same group do not wish to sell any council houses, despite the U-turn on that policy by the Opposition Front Bench. That is what could happen if a Labour Government got in after the next general election, which I very much doubt.

Unfortunately, the old Labour party of Gaitskell, Attlee, Wilson and Callaghan has disappeared in many parts of the country. It is dead, and after the general election the majority of Labour Members of Parliament will be of the broad Left persuasion. Conservative Members must make the public aware of the massive change that has taken place at local and at national level. The public have not realised that the change has taken place. In local government elections, they vote for the Labour label that they have supported throughout their lives, but in many areas that label has been hijacked by Left-wing activists who have very little in common with the Labour Members of the House who followed Attlee and Wilson.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: Not at the moment.

I turn not only for support but for strong evidence to Mr. Brian Walden, who is a former Labour Member of Parliament. Writing in *The Sunday Times* of 16 November, he said:

"But however many layers of cosmetic are applied to Labour's public face, there is no hiding the fact that the overwhelming majority of its workers are socialists."

In local government, for "workers" we should read "councillors". Mr. Walden continued:

"Most voters have better things to do with their lives than study the intricacies of political ideology. To them a Socialist is someone whose leg they pull in the canteen or the pub. That is why the Labour party is still a contender for power."

The point that we should take most on board is Mr. Walden's final comment:

"If the public understood what most members of the Labour party actually believe then Labour would have no earthly chance of ever winning a general election."

Applying that to the present position in local government, it is fair to say that if most local government voters and ratepayers understood what the modern-day Labour activist believes, he would have no chance of representing them on the local council.

For the purpose of this debate, I shall be honest about the Labour party, as was Mr. Walden in his article. In future, I shall not refer to the Labour party or to Labour councillors. I shall call them Socialist councillors—their true colours—because they are Marxists in ethos and we should recognise them as such.

We must look for the evidence to support that theory. What do those Socialist councillors do when they get hold of local authorities? The first thing that they do is to try to obtain political control of the police force. Conservative Members completely oppose giving to local authorities operational or political control over police forces.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: I shall finish this point first.

The first major change is to set up expensive police units financed from ratepayers' pockets to monitor the behaviour of the police force and to form an active channel through to the Police Complaints Authority. Many of them produce expensive, glossy, anti-police magazines which are sold or given away, again at ratepayers' expense. Many Socialist councillors regard the police as the lackeys of the capitalist state and therefore as a legitimate target for attack. They do not support the police or the development of law and order.

The first such committee that emerged was the GLC police committee. It produced an anti-police video which it circulated to London schools. Its activities were supported by the Inner London education authority, which does not wish police officers even to enter schools to talk to the children.

Mr. Straw: That is completely untrue. Why is the hon. Gentleman peddling such lies? As a parent of children who attend ILEA schools, I know that to be completely untrue.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman must realise that he has used an unparliamentary phrase. I ask him to withdraw it and to rephrase his remarks.

Mr. Straw: Of course I withdraw the suggestion that the hon. Gentleman was lying. Why is the hon. Gentleman peddling such total inaccuracies, which I assume he knows to be inaccurate?

Mr. Hind: I do not accept that my statements are inaccurate. They are true. ILEA had an active policy of discouraging the police from entering schools to talk to children.

Mr. Straw: But the police have been in my child's school.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): Does my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) have any knowledge of Kingsdale school in my constituency, which has occasionally refused admission to the police although it has known that crimes may have been committed?

Mr. Hind: I am much obliged to my hon. Friend for confirming what many of us know to be true.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Labour majority in the London borough of Haringey does not allow the police to enter schools to discuss matters with children and to explain their role in trying to preserve law and order? Is he aware that Bernie Grant described the Blackwater Farm riots as an occasion upon which the police had received "a bloody good hiding"?

Is my hon. Friend aware that the council has set up a research unit to investigate whether Sir Kenneth Newman has ever made what it considers to be racist remarks? Does he know that the council has a police committee to monitor the activities of the police and that it refuses to take part in the police community liaison committee, which represents some residents' organisations? Does that catalogue of events show a pro or anti-police stance by Haringey Labour party?

Mr. Hind: I am much obliged to my hon. Friend. It is also useful to know that 60 oganisations in Haringey are affiliated to the police community liaison committee but the local council does not take part in it.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea) *rose*——

Mr. Allen McKay *rose*——

Mr. Hind: I shall not give way at this stage.

There is an active movement among London councils to try to pervert the operational effectiveness of the police.

Mr. Dubs: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Hind: No, I shall not give way.

For evidence of that, we need only consider the publications produced by some London councils. A publication of Lambeth council's police committee contains a cartoon showing a policeman beating the head of a citizen, which is entitled,

"policeman suddenly remembering human awareness training."

As the policeman beats the citizen, he says:

"Oh—and have a nice day, sir!"

Labour-controlled London boroughs have combined to produce a leaflet entitled "How to make a complaint against the police". It contains a cartoon showing a citizen lying flat on the floor with a policeman's boot on his head. The citizen is scribbling "PC 37" on the ground and the captain reads:

"Note the identity of the police officer."

The trend has extended to Nottingham, where Forest ward Labour party produced a leaflet advertising a police liaison committee meeting. The poster showed a police officer holding a youth in an armlock and the caption saying:

"Come on sonny, let's go and consult."

It has been argued that Labour councils do not have an anti-police bias, but Manchester city council produced an anti-police magazine called "Police Watch" at a cost of more than £200,000. The council has also distributed to children 1,500 cartoon guides on police power. They contain a specific warning to resist threats from police officers. This is a council that is charging £53 to neighbourhood watch schemes that want to put signs advertising their existence on lamp posts in the areas where they operate.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My hon. Friend has started to catalogue the parts of the country where anti-police activities are endemic. I do not want him to overlook Cleveland, where the chief constable had to take six months leave of absence having been harassed by the police authority virtually into a nervous breakdown.

Mr. Hind: My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) referred to Haringey. The chairman of that council's direct labour organisation, Councillor Knowles, following a demonstration of workers at Haringey against the comments of Mr. Bernie Grant that the police got a "bloody good hiding" at the Broadwater Farm riots, demanded the names of those workers who had taken part in the protest march in support of the police. That is another clear example of the attitudes of some of these Labour councillors against the police.

We must regret that Councillor Bernie Grant has now been selected as a candidate for this honourable House. If he is elected, it will be at the expense of the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Atkinson). That would prove to the House my earlier point that deselection is a way of getting rid of a sitting candidate and bringing in one of a more broad Left persuasion, more pliable and in agreement with the new trend.

Mr. Dubs: Just to set the record straight, I would point out that a week ago today London Labour Members of Parliament had a meeting at New Scotland Yard with Sir Kenneth Newman and a number of his senior police officers. We discussed the efforts being made by the police to recruit black members to the police force. The police told us how they were getting the active co-operation of a number of local authorities where they had specific campaigns earlier this year, including Haringey council.

Mr. Hind: I am pleased to hear that. It is a move in the right direction and I hope that the hon. Member will be able to persuade many local authorities to abandon their anti-police stance.

Lambeth has spent £44,800 on extra staff for its police unit to deal with complaints. Councillor Linda Belos, the leader of Lambeth council, said:

"The people of Brixton only want peace. But I think that the police are bent on war."

Lord Scarman, a man for whom most of us have great respect, particularly in regard to his comments about Brixton, said of the Labour Administration's community policy consultative committee:

"One gets the feeling that until they get local government control of the police, they will have no truck with consultation."

I was surprised by what the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) said, and I hope that he will be able to hammer some sense into those authorities. Among those councils there is a movement actively to undermine the police because they wish to take over operational control of the police. That must be prevented at all costs.

I do not wish to go through all the numerous examples of the behaviour of Socialist councils, and Lambeth can be used as a typical example. The lesbian and gay working party there has said that it will not take part in neighbourhood watch schemes as it regards them as divisive in the community and says that they can be used to spy on lesbians and gays. Such a ridiculous obsession with the police and their activities and opposition to any moves within the community that are positive crime prevention measures show that the councils must think again and realise that the way that they are going will not be tolerated or accepted by the public.

Mr. Allen McKay: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: No, I must press on.

Many of these councils have set out deliberately to challenge the authority of the Government in the financing of their activities. They constantly plead a shortage of resources and bleat to the press and their Members of Parliament while they spend hundreds of thousands of pounds on police committees.

Those of us who come from seats in the north of England know that high rates and high unemployment go hand in hand. High rates are the mother and father of unemployment. I have recently come back from the Socialist-controlled Knowsley local authority, where I met couples living in ordinary, modern semi-detached houses with three bedrooms and a through lounge who were having to pay £900 in payable rates. Is it a surprise that, because of those high rates, industry has been driven out of places such as Knowsley and parts of the north-west? We know that industry pays the same in corporation tax as in rates, when taken as a global figure. This factor has to be taken into consideration when it comes to the location of a factory or the creation of new jobs.

One of the best examples of a challenge to Government from such local authorities has to be Liverpool, a local authority that is right on my doorstep and with whose activities I am familiar. In 1985, it deliberately chose to set a budget that would bankrupt the city and make 31,000 people unemployed. I would happily give way to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) on this point, because he went up there to persuade that local authority to drop its ridiculous plans, but failed. That shows that many of these local authorities do not take the slightest bit of notice of the Front Bench of the main Opposition party, and if any members of these councils became Members of Parliament they would not take any notice of the Front Bench either. There would be constant confrontation to carry out genuine Socialist policies.

Liverpool council set a budget of £255 million on an income of £227 million. To create a crisis, it deliberately refused either to make any savings or take advantage of available Government moneys. In particular, thousands of pounds available under the community refurbishment scheme for three schemes in an area about which there had been complaints about the quality of council houses were

[Mr. Hind]

not taken up. The council also did not take £1 million of urban programme location grant given to it by central Government under the inner-city partnership scheme. Despite its so-called housing crisis, it refused money for the Eldonian housing association that would have built 143 houses, in spite of complaints from the local community. I am pleased to say that my hon. Friend the Minister aided the community and the houses have since been built.

That position was condemned at the time as an artificial creation. Archbishop Warlock and Bishop David Shepherd condemned the activities of the Labour council in Liverpool in *The Times* on 1 October 1985 as "a deliberately manufactured crisis". The *Liverpool Echo*, in its editorial, said:

"Let's have no illusions about who is responsible for dragging the city into this disastrous situation — all the blame lies with the Labour council, particularly its militant leaders and militant allies in the Unions."

We know that the Militant Tendency has control of the Liverpool council. But they are not the people whom we worry about. The people whom we worry about are those who do not join Militant but who are its sympathisers and friends — the Trotskyist sympathisers who vote with Militant on commitees, who sit with Militant members on Labour party committees and who vote into office such people as the chairmen of local council committees and Labour party officers in constituencies.

At the root of the problem, as has been pointed out by the *Liverpool Echo* in its editorial, are the unions. Do not let us have any illusions. In Liverpool that means the Transport and General Workers Union, operating from its headquarters in Islington, which provides the resources and the back-up in the constituencies to those Militant and Trotskyist sympathisers, who are the root cause of many of the problems that Liverpool is facing. The former Member for Knowsley, North, Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk, wrote in his book that he was aware that his removal was planned from the headquarters of the TGWU in Liverpool. It was the activists from that union who were behind his removal. They are working on the docks. As long as such people have control of the unions in Liverpool and the council, they will continue as they have been doing to drive jobs and industry out of Liverpool. The people of Liverpool must realise that as long as they have high rates and the trouble that such people bring, they will not get new industries. They will never attack the problems of Liverpool such as unemployment and there will never be an improvement in that part of the north-west region.

Mr. Hatton has now been removed from his post as deputy leader of the Labour group in Liverpool. But has he been thrown out of the Labour party? Has he been removed from his seat? No. He has been thrown out of the Labour party nationally, but Labour councillors in Liverpool still sit with him round the table, still vote with him and still recognise him. In his place they have Mr. Tony Byrne having removed Mr. Atkinson as the leader of their group. Mr. Tony Byrne is a Trotskyist sympathiser who has gone along on the coattails of Militant for years, along with Mr. Mulhearn and half a dozen others whom the Labour party has decided, for forensic reasons and for the sake of appearances, must be thrown out of the Labour party.

Those of us who live and work in the north-west know that until the Labour party starts throwing out thousands, it will never be able to rectify the problems in places such as Liverpool. There are 47 councillors, a number of whom have been thrown out of the Labour party in Liverpool, who are awaiting appeals on orders for disqualification. If the process is dragged out long enough and if the Labour party got into power, it would be able to pay the fines of such people as it is mandated to do by its party conference and restore them to their positions of power and influence in our town halls—positions which have led to much of the disaster that we are seeing in the London boroughs and in places such as Liverpool, Sheffield, Leicester and other authorities.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to interrupt the hon. Gentleman's eloquent flow, but as the appeal of the 47 councillors is still pending, is not the matter sub judice and should not the hon. Gentleman be careful what he says?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If what the hon. Gentleman tells me is correct, and it appears that it may be, the case is sub judice and the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) must not refer to it.

Mr. Hind: I am much obliged, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was going to say no more about it other than to refer to the fact that the appeals are awaiting a hearing.

Much closer than Liverpool to the heart of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) are the tactics that have been adopted in the London boroughs. Many hon. Members will be familiar with the story headlined "London's going broke" in *The London Evening Standard* on 2 December. It arises from the report of Mr. John Banham, the controller of the Audit Commission, last week that London was facing the same problem of collapsing services as New York had faced. He identified three sources of trouble. Those policies are actively being pursued by the Socialist councillors who control those authorities. He referred particularly to Brent, Lambeth, Islington, Haringey and Southwark as being the main guilty parties. The three main causes of that potential collapse were, first, the recalcitrant public sector unions, secondly, political appointments, and, thirdly, creative accounting.

The recalcitrant public sector unions usually take the form of the direct labour organisations which are often more expensive than local private contractors. Bristol recently gave a contract to its direct labour organisation although a private contractor was £60,000 cheaper. We have seen the threat of the cancellation of the contract for the private collection of rubbish in Ealing, a cancellation which the Conservative group on that council calculated would cost ratepayers an extra £1 million.

Haringey's direct labour organisation was closed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, having lost £5·5 million in three years. The direct labour organisation in Newham lost £3·3 million between 1982 and 1985 and was also ordered to be closed by the Secretary of State. Hackney lost £5·7 million on its direct labour organisation between 1983 and 1985 and that direct labour organisation was described by the Public Auditor as having poor production among the work force. No wonder the Government encourage private contractors because we get

better value for money. But no Socialist councillor can tell the unions in the direct labour organisations that the council must go outside for its contractual obligations.

Political appointments were the second point. I do not want to go through the catalogue. Hon. Members will have their own. Basically, there is a creation of jobs for the boys among those local authorities. To keep them in gainful employment, local Labour councillors on other authorities are being given jobs on those local authorities. But they are also known to be people who are sound in doctrine and who will pursue the policies of the current Socialist controlling group.

When the chief executive's job in Hackney was advertised, it was said that the applicant must have at least a broad sympathy with the council's objectives and commitment to the implementation of its policies. That means, in code, that the council was looking for a Socialist who would support its policies.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I am sure that what my hon. Friend says is right. It is confirmed by the fact that in Ealing every job applicant has his application looked at by councillors and carefully vetted. We know that they are looking for political affiliation and the rest.

Is my hon. Friend aware also that in Ealing representatives of the anti-sexist and anti-racist unit, who have no interviewing qualifications, sit in during interviews to watch those who are trained in personnel selection interviewing candidates for positions and observe the body language of applicants? If they are not satisfied with it, they reject the applicant for the appointment. This is blatant politicking of a serious nature.

Mr. Hind: I am obliged to my hon. Friend.

Thirdly, the controller of the Audit Commission drew attention to creative accounting. This means that money is borrowed for the purchase of assets and is used for current expenditure. The money will have to be paid back, which means that our children and grandchildren will have an albatross around their necks. A typical example is the £30 million that the Liverpool council borrowed from a Japanese bank. Islington has borrowed £74 million and the controller has pointed to £600 million of deferred payments that are awaiting repayment by the London boroughs.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: Is my hon. Friend aware that earlier this year the leader of Islington council said:

"This is a high-risk strategy"—

that is, creative accounting—

"because not only does it depend on a change of Government but it also depends on a commitment by the Labour Front Bench to bail us out when they return to power."

Mr. Hind: I take my hon. Friend's point. All this deferred and creative accounting is based upon a future Labour Government bailing out the councils, but that may never happen. In that event, the public will have to bail them out.

We must consider the competence of some councils as reflected in their decisions and the money that they spend. These are the councils that complain that they are provided with insufficient resources. Islington, Southwark, Brent and Manchester have all invested £250,000 of their employees' pension fund in supporting the Left-wing newspaper that is called "*News on Sunday*".

Mr. Greenway: Ealing has too.

Mr. Hind: I apologise to my hon. Friend for not including Ealing. Propaganda and campaigns are items of major expenditure for the councils to which I am referring. Islington spends £500,000 a year in this way. In 1985-86, Lambeth spent £760,000. Southwark, which must be one of the classic examples of abuse among local councils, spent £2,000 on a grant towards ground barriers and a stage and public address system for a "Tories Out" march.

There is a major failure to collect rents and to organise finances properly. There are rent arrears of £5·6 million in Haringey. In Islington, the arrears amount to £6 million. The figure is £5 million in Manchester. Southwark is the "best" of all with £24 million of uncollected rent arrears.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: No, I shall not give way.

Councillor Anne Matthews——

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Hind: I am not giving way.

The leader of Southwark council, Councillor Anne Matthews, said:

"We need to be careful of not hounding people. We must not pursue them too hard for their rents."

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: No.

Islington is an authority that has 3,850 empty properties, of which 1,500 are occupied by squatters.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: No, I am not giving way.

Councillor Matthews said:

"Many have been there for two to three years. It's their home. We've had such bad control over the housing stock, large numbers of empty properties—people are driven to squat."

That is a quotation from *London Labour Briefing*.

Lambeth has 64,000 unprocessed housing benefit claims, and 923 of them are over three years old. What has the council done? It has increased its staff, yet local authorities are complaining about a lack of resources. The Manchester council has increased its staff by 2,000 since 1984. One of the greatest increases in budget spending lies in councillors' allowances. That happens once Left-wing councils come to power.

Councils resist the right to buy council houses by every means open to them. Sheffield levies an amenity charge of £20 on those who want to buy their own council houses. Islington has sold only 716 council houses. It has only one officer to handle the paperwork, and at the time that I prepared my speech that post was not filled. If anyone wants to buy a council house in Islington, he will not have much chance of proceeding with the purchase.

Councils spend money on campaigns against the Government. Sheffield spent £334,000 on opposing rate capping. Lancashire spent £75,000 in campaigning against the Government's proposals for bus operations. Are these campaigns the responsibility of local authorities?

The Government, because of the major changes that have taken place——

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Hind: No, I will not give way. I have given way enough already. The hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to contribute to the debate in due course.

[Mr. Hind]

Faced with the developing and widespread irresponsibility of local councillors, the Government have been forced to act. Rate capping has saved vast sums for voters and ratepayers in areas that are controlled by the Labour party. There has been a need to tighten local government financing, especially through the development of privatisation. There is much sense in the community charge proposals that are contained in the Green Paper and I fully support them. If they do only one thing, they will make everyone who is a ratepayer, even including those who are unemployed, realise the value of the money that is spent by the local authority. Even those in receipt of housing benefit who are unemployed will have to contribute a small amount through the community charge. That will focus the mind and individuals will realise that changes have taken place.

If anyone is complaining about the method of calculation, it must be remembered that nearly half of local authority moneys comes from central Government in the form of rate support grant. That is means-tested by way of income tax, and industry contributes to it. We all walk the streets, however, and send our children to school, and most of us use public parks, for example, and it is only right that we should all contribute to a community charge.

The removal of the industrial rate will give some of the beleaguered areas in the north-west that are controlled by Labour councils an opportunity to revitalise themselves and to introduce new jobs and industries. I hope that the Minister will consider enabling areas of high unemployment to pay a lower industrial charge, as opposed to having one uniform rate throughout the country. That would help to stimulate the areas in which unemployment is high. Perhaps we shall see an M62 corridor, with Manchester international airport at the end of it, as well as the M4 corridor.

A number of other policies are pursued by the councils to which I have referred. There is the ending of protocol. We have seen the abolition of mayors in Bristol, Manchester, and Liverpool. We see active support for nuclear disarmament and the pursuit of nuclear-free zones. Manchester is paying £95,000 for five staff to run a nuclear-free zone unit. It spent £500,000 on nuclear-free Europe propaganda. Half a million pounds would buy a great many school books and improved facilities for the disabled and the elderly, but those considerations were secondary to the policy of nuclear disarmament. The same comments can be made about Labour councils throughout the country where Socialist councillors are in control.

There are councils which support Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland, including Haringey and Hackney, where there have been violent scenes. Support for Sinn Fein has been forthcoming from Camden. Local councils have been addressed by Sinn Fein councillors.

In education we see tampering and indoctrination on every front. Haringey has introduced peace studies and political studies. Many local authorities push the racial divisions within our community, including ILEA. The racialism industry has developed. A classic example is provided by Councillor Morgan of Lambeth. On 31 October 1986, he was quoted in the *South London Press* as saying

"If you're not black, a woman or gay, you don't get a look in on this council."

He was censured by his colleagues and sent on a racism awareness course.

The Minister knows about Brent council with its 177 race commissars proposed for its schools and the trouble that Miss McGoldrick is having in holding on to her job as head teacher of a primary school, despite being hounded by Socialist councillors. Recently, the education director in Brent resigned, and said:

"The politicians won't let us get on with the job—although I'm anti-racist I couldn't discuss issues without being misrepresented."

There are 15 vacant head teacher posts because Socialist councillors are interfering in the education of our children. Attempts have been made by Newham, Haringey, and Ealing councils to remove heterosexist and sexist material from school libraries. Those attempts are costing vast amounts.

Mr. Straw: That is not true.

Mr. Hind: For the hon. Gentleman's information, in Ealing the teachers in every school will be paid to rid bookshelves of sexist or heterosexist materials at a cost of £139,000 to ratepayers.

Mr. Straw: No.

Mr. Hind: The hon. Gentleman may protest, but I foresee that Shakespeare has no chance in Ealing libraries if he is to be read by pupils. I am sure that someone will find heterosexist material in his plays. There are advertisements for schoolteachers, particularly in Ealing, "irrespective of sexual orientation." Do we want gays teaching our primary school and junior school children?

Mr. Straw: Why not?

Mr. Hind: I have great sympathy for those people. They have difficulties. They must discipline themselves. I warn the House that parents throughout the country will be anxious about their children being taught by teachers of gay orientation, who are deliberately encouraged to come into our schools. We are entitled to worry about that.

Mr. Straw: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Hind: No, I shall not give way.

Vast amounts of money are being spent by Haringey, Leicester, Manchester, Sheffield, Hackney, Islington, Camden and Ealing in their promotion of gay rights, policies and groups. They are spending hundreds of thousands of pounds. The test of the virility of a Socialist council is its policies on Nicaragua, El Salvador and South Africa. They are renaming parks and roads after Nelson Mandela and happily twinning with cities in Nicaragua.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), the Labour Front Bench spokesman on these matters, recently described these Socialist councillors as "Fewer than 0·1 per cent." of Labour councillors throughout the country. I found out how many local councillors there are. There are about 9,000 in the country. Is this figure of 0·1 per cent., nine out of Lambeth, nine out of Brent, or nine out of the 86 in Manchester, nine out of the 53 in Hackney, nine out of the 48 in Lancashire, nine out of the 57 in Knowsley, nine out of the 60 in Newham, nine out of the 42 in Haringey, or nine out of the 29 in Nottingham? I have mentioned only 400, and I have not even started. I am only scratching the surface. If we scratch the surface, what do we find? More are coming up. The problems of the Labour party are many.

I shall terminate my remarks by saying — [HON. MEMBERS: "Hooray."] I obviously have got through to Labour Members. The public must think about the change in orientation of these Socialist councillors. Do they honestly think that 26 Labour Members would leave the party and go out into the political wilderness to start a party of their own if they could not recognise the problems that arose in their midst? They must realise that some hon. Members who were members of the Labour party joined the Conservative party because they too could see the way that things were going.

The changes in local government — the smashing of consensus — need to be exposed. The cosmetics must be removed from the faces of these Socialist councillors so that the public can see them in their true light. Only then will the surgeon's knife be applied. The only way it can be applied is by cutting out this cancer from our community. The only people who can do that are those in the electorate. It is up to Conservative Members to show them what the situation is.

10.15 am

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The start of the debate has been disgraceful. It should have been constructive, informative and worth while. [HON. MEMBERS: "It was informative."] It was so informative that the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) mentioned only nine of the 400 councils in this country. He ran a broad brush across all councils and their councillors.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Whitewash.

Mr. McKay: It is not whitewash; it is a fact. I spent 20 years as a councillor. As far as I am aware, the hon. Member for Lancashire, West has never served on a council.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. The majority of local authorities are run by dedicated people who look after the interests of their communities. Does the hon. Gentleman condemn those nine councils for the way in which they behave, or does he say that they should be regarded in the same way as the other councils?

Mr. McKay: I certainly will not condemn those councils, because I do not know sufficient about Brent or Haringey. Those who serve on those authorities will answer for them. I shall answer for the others. I shall answer for the north, the midlands and places such as that — the places that I know and the people I have known over 20 years. They have been taken to task in a manner that they certainly do not deserve.

Mr. Holt: The hon. Gentleman said that he could not speak for Brent, although two of his colleagues were members of Brent council. Perhaps he ought to ask the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson), who was a founding member of Brent council, to participate in this debate.

Mr. McKay: Some of my hon. Friends would know those councils better than I do and no doubt they will participate in the debate.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West spoke about mandates. What is wrong with a local council having a mandate from its people? What is wrong with a council trying to carry out that mandate? That is all that they have done each and every year. Every four or five years we go for a fresh mandate. One third of the council on which I served goes for a mandate each year. Unlike us, local councillors put themselves before the local electorate each year. That is what local government is all about. It is not about central control of local government. Local government must have a measure of freedom, because it is at the grass roots of politics. The Government have said many times that they will put out broad outlines within which industry and trade unions can work. They should put out broad outlines for local government to work within and let them get on with the job.

The start of the debate has done nothing to help the situation. Some councillors have been called Left-wingers, Militants and Trotskyites. I know one or two, but there are certainly many more people who could not be described like that. The hon. Gentleman used the word "Socialist". I am proud to be a Socialist. My father and grandfather were Socialists. The hon. Gentleman may describe me as a Militant or a Trotskyite but that would be far from the truth.

I deplore the fact that the hon. Gentleman, in starting the debate, very much underrated the thinking of the public. What God-given right have hon. Members to think that they know more than the people whom the decisions of the House affect? What God-given right have we to say to the people, "We know better than you"? We do not know better in relation to local elections. Hon. Members must not underestimate and underrate the local electorate, because they are very aware of what is happening in this place. I am a great believer in the persuasive power of the ballot box, where people vote for what they want.

There has been much debate on the sale of council houses, and my view on that is known. I have never wanted to support the sale of council houses, but the Government decided on that course and my local council reluctantly decided that that was the law and that it would abide by the law and sell council houses. When a Labour Government are returned to office, I believe that that policy will be followed. I hope that the Labour Government, unlike this Government, will provide local government with the resources to make up for the loss of the council houses that it has had to sell. The Government's policy is causing problems. The sad thing is that old people's accommodation is also involved. That is a retrograde step.

We have heard a lot about the police. I come from a mining area, so I knew all about the police and their methods during the strike. The police have been criticised. If the hon. Member for Lancashire, West were to talk to the chief superintendent in my area, he would hear a view that differs from the one that he put in respect of local councils.

The hon. Gentleman referred to neighbourhood watch schemes. At the request of the chief superintendent in my area, neighbourhood watch schemes were set up because we thought that they would help the police. The police went along with the idea that a neighbourhood watch scheme should be advertised, not by a bill in the window, because often that is asking for a brick through the window, but by a notice on a lamppost. When hon. Members criticise neighbourhood watch schemes they should be careful, because the police encouraged their setting up.

Central Government are seeking to control local government by fiscal means. Year after year they have reduced the grant to local government. Rates have been

[Mr. McKay]

increased for, in the main, two reasons. One reason is the decrease in grants from central Government to local government as a result of direct Government policy, but that is the business of central Government. That is fair enough, because, if that is what central Government want to do—whatever their political persuasion—that is their right. If they believe that that policy is right, they should go ahead, but they should not then penalise local authorities by saying that they cannot raise rates in other ways. That policy has caused some local authorities to use means which they probably would not have used in normal circumstances to raise sufficient finance to carry on local services.

The Minister knows that it is a two-edged sword. We went to see him, so he knows my views. For a brief few years, South Yorkshire county council supported its industrial estates. The people paid for those estates through their rates, irrespective of where they lived or worked. Now the Government have the brass neck to put those estates out to tender for sale on the private market. To add insult to injury, the Government have suggested to the local authorities that they can buy back those estates if they want to, but the local authorities already own them. They have paid for them. Why are central Government taking it upon themselves to confiscate the industrial estates of South Yorkshire county council and put them on the open market with the proviso that local government can buy back that for which it has already paid? As I have said to the Minister and to my local authority, if the Government follow that policy, I shall stand on a soap box in every part of my constituency and say what is happening to the rates that ratepayers have already paid. The four local authorities concerned agreed among themselves that the fairest and most equitable system for ratepayers would be to divide the estates rather than let central Government sell them through the residuary body.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would like to cast his eyes southward to London, where there are two similar boroughs, Lambeth and Wandsworth. The rates in one borough are almost twice as high, if not higher, than in the other. Wandsworth has succeeded in keeping its rates low and providing good and adequate services. Lambeth has increased rates to exorbitant levels, driving out residents and businesses and providing inferior services.

Mr. McKay: The hon. Gentleman will find, if he looks at the grant from central Government, that the amount that each authority receives is reflected in the differences in rates. Central Government's reduction in grant is one of the main reasons for increased rates.

Another reason for the increase in rates is that industry has suffered tremendously during the Conservative party's period in government. There are about 17,000 bankruptcies in industry a year. That means that those businesses no longer pay rates. The two main causes of increasing rates are the decrease in central Government grant to local government and the reduction in industrial rates. This means that there are fewer people to share the rates burden. I have described it as the rates "burden" because it is a local tax, and no one likes paying taxes, whatever they are.

Reference has been made to the allowance paid to councillors. That allowance should be investigated, because it in no way compensates a councillor for the time and work that he puts into council work. It does not pay him for lack of promotion in his other work. One reason why I was able to attend day-time meetings was that it was accepted that I would not be promoted at work. Lack of promotion affects the family because it is reflected in one's pension.

Yes, there are some occasions on which people wear the yellow jersey, but hon. Members should not treat every Labour councillor alike. They sacrifice a lot, and for what? They do so to look after their local authority and provide for industry in the local authority area because central Government have failed to do so. My local authority area includes perhaps the highest proportion in the country of elderly people and children in care. It has one of the highest rates of bronchitis, emphysema and injury in the country. The burden falls on the local authority because of the lack of funds from central Government.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West should consider the case of rent arrears. It is easy to say that people do not pay rent, because there are a few people who will get on the bandwagon. We all know Tom, Dick and Harry, but they should not be the examples of the hundreds of people who are really in need. Part of the reason for rent arrears may be late payments from the DHSS.

I should like to refer briefly to the future of local government regarding rates at 20 per cent. The Government should re-examine that position, because they have got it wrong. The Government's thinking behind this is to encourage ratepayers to question local authority spending by forcing them to pay for the provision of services. That is poppycock. The Government's scheme will not work because the public have never taken that attitude and never will. The electorate vote for their councillors on the basis of the services that they provide, not on the amount of money that they need to pay for them. Hundreds of thousands of people cannot afford to pay such increased rates. The increases will penalise the disabled, the ill and those who are unable to look after themselves and for whom a local authority has a remit to care.

I hope that the remainder of the debate will concentrate on the worth of local authorities and the relationship between Government and local authorities. I hope that we can consider how we can best help local authorities to carry out their objectives, and how we can bring local and central Government together and overcome the divide that has been created since 1979. Local government is worth while and necessary. Its councillors are worthy people and we should not castigate them, as has happened during the debate.

10.41 am

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on his fortune in the ballot, on his choice of subject and on the way in which he delivered his speech.

It was interesting to note the expression on the faces of some Opposition Members as my hon. Friend recounted a catalogue of activities. It is clear that some Opposition Members simply do not know what is happening in the name of the Labour party. In my brief remarks this morning, I want to attempt to weld together two separate perceptions of local government. The first is the top down approach, based on five years' experience as a Minister at

the Department of the Environment during times of turbulence in the relationship between central and local government, and a fairly active involvement with individual local authorities in the inner cities and local authority associations.

The second perception is more of a bottom up approach, based on six months' experience of a new style Labour council in my constituency. This new council has achieved as many new members for the Conservative party as were achieved through years of knocking on doors by myself. It encapsulates all that is wrong with local government today.

I must make it clear at the outset that I am a believer in local government. I spent six years as a local councillor and made a modest contribution. I favour a society where decisions are decentralised; where local priorities and regional differences can be reflected; and in a society where parliamentary democracy, through elected Members of Parliament, is reinforced, but not challenged, by a local democracy through local councillors. I reject vigorously the alternative which is a centralised society with a monolithic approach to local services run from Whitehall.

My criticisms of local government are not intended to discredit it. I wish to identify what has gone wrong so that we can rehabilitate and reinforce its position. The only people who gain by a refusal to accept that something is wrong with local government are those who, for whatever reason, have an interest in its continued decline.

The continued decline in local government has been taking place for 10 years, with responsibility being removed from local government and placed with central Government. Both Labour and Conservatives have done that and for good reasons. Neither the GLC nor Merseyside county council—both large strategic bodies with access to huge resources—satisfactorily tackled the regeneration of their dockland areas. There was terrible bickering in London between the local authorities involved. Quite rightly, central Government stepped in and set up an urban development corporation. What has happened since then in London has totally justified that decision.

Central Government removed responsibilities from local government and that process is continuing with the establishment of four more UDCs and, again, I support that decision. More recently, the DOE set up an urban housing renewal unit. It was not satisfied, quite rightly, with the approach that some local authorities were making towards their less popular estates. The Department made it clear that if local authorities wanted access to the new money—£50 million this year and happily £75 million next year—they would have to adjust their approach, bring in the private sector where that made sense and reinforce local management. That approach was bitterly resisted by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities as further centralisation. However, the local authorities have beaten a path to the unit's door and it is working very successfully.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir George Young: I will give way shortly to the hon. Gentleman.

The extra money that we have made available for the inner cities has not been made available directly to the local authorities for them to spend as they want through the RSG. It has been channelled through the urban programme, through partnership and the rest. Ministers have retained a tight control of the money. That is a sensible decision and many of the more exciting projects in the inner cities are not those funded by the main programmes of local authorities, but those funded under the inner city partnerships. There is, however, an erosion of local government responsibility.

We have also seen fresh initiatives in the inner cities, such as the city action teams and the task forces. Again, there is fairly tight ministerial control to ensure good value for money. Many councils are no longer free to set their own rates. Quite rightly, we have introduced rate capping and Parliament has exercised its traditional role of protecting the citizen from the unreasonable demands of local barons. There are similar examples in other areas. There is intervention on teachers' salaries and again in transport. I support all those decisions, and I introduced some of them myself when I was a Minister. My point is that there has been a progressive erosion of responsibility from local government to central Government.

I do not expect Opposition Members to carry on nodding at my comments when I say that I believe this is due either to the failures or bloody-mindedness of some local authorities. They have provoked central Government into action. There has been no sinister conspiracy by the Government to remove local government powers. As I made clear earlier, that is not the kind of approach that I or my colleagues wish to see. However, the Government have been pushed into that role because of the actions of some local authorities.

Mr. Tony Banks: Many Opposition Members regret that the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) is not making his speech from the Government Front Bench, and he probably shares that view. Does he admit that it is easy to make extravagant claims for the progress made by the London Docklands Development Corporation because such bodies do not have to apply any of the normal rules of local authorities, specifically with regard to planning? The hon. Gentleman is well aware that no local authority could have proposed the building of Canary Wharf without the Secretary of State holding an inquiry.

Sir George Young: We debated that matter on several occasions when I replied from the Front Bench. The GLC was a planning authority, as were the boroughs. They had access to tremendous resources, yet very little happened. I have total confidence in the response that my hon. Friend the Minister will make to the debate.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Does my hon. Friend agree that the GLC and the then five London boroughs involved spent 15 years disagreeing between themselves about the development of the docklands, each wanting the development that would produce the rateable value and none wanting open spaces? It was only the creation of the UDC that brought that tragic position to an end.

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. As I said a few moments ago, I believe that what has happened in the docklands justified the Government's decision. If we had left the decision with the local authorities, nothing would have happened.

Over the past 10 years things have gone wrong in the relationship between central and local government. I have already touched on one area where responsibility has come

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up to Government. There is general agreement that the financial regime for local government has been less than satisfactory. The Government's financial plans have been consistently dogged by local authority overspending.

In relation to a point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West, the present financial regime for local authorities has been commented upon dramatically by John Banham. I would like to remind the House of what Mr. Banham said recently:

"'We ought to remember that what reduced New York to the point of chaos less than a decade ago was the combination of recalcitrant public sector unions, politicised appointments, insensitive policing and, worst of all, creative accounting. New York got to the stage of, in effect, borrowing to pay its teachers' salaries.

'We sit here thinking it can't happen here. I have to tell you that it is happening here—today.'"

Mr. Banham went on to list a number of authorities with "negotiated deferred purchase arrangements of well over £600 million."

He concluded:

"We are heading exactly down the road blazed ingloriously by New York. At the end of it is this so-called creative accounting, which means loading on the future generations the cost of taking decisions today."

There is some instability with the regime for local government finance.

The difficult relationships I mentioned earlier have caused many problems in the House with the consequent legislative programme. It is no coincidence that the longest sitting since the war, from 2.30 pm on Tuesday 22 May 1984 to 10.43 pm on Wednesday 23 May, was on a local government Bill. The biggest difficulties the Government have had with another place have been on local government legislation, especially the abolition of the GLC. The House has had a rich diet of local government legislation, some of it tastefully presented by myself, but much of it closing in previous legislation loopholes which had been ingeniously opened up by the local authorities.

Another problem has been litigation. I do not think that those of my colleagues whom my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has appointed as Secretary of State for the Environment have been people who have little regard for the law. They have all been highly civilised, law-abiding citizens. However, it is a fact that no one has been taken to court more often in the Government than the holder of that post. That is because of a regrettable growth in the tendency by local government to take matters to the court to try to embarrass, delay and seek propaganda. In most cases the Department of the Environment or the Government have won. However, such action has to be paid for by the ratepayer or the taxpayer and it cannot be right that so much time and energy is dissipated while elected representatives at two levels slog it out in the courts. It did not use to happen and I hope that we can find a way to stop it happening again.

There has also been growing litigation by bodies outside Government. For example, the Audit Commission is quite rightly pursuing through the courts a number of claims of breach of duty by some councillors.

The final ingredient I want to inject at this stage is what I call public disenchantment—the Thamesmead factor. One of the loose ends of the GLC was Thamesmead, the new town built on the outskirts of London by the GLC. When the citizens of Thamesmead were given an option of setting up a private trust under the chairmanship of Clive Thornton with no financial security at all, or a public trust with the local authority standing behind it and run by the councils, they opted, after an interesting and full debate, for the private alternative.

Although the main services such as social services, education and housing are all provided by local government, if one looks at the turn-out for the local elections it is low. Therefore, on top of the problems we have had here there is also the disenchantment of electors. We have a system of local government that has taken a disproportionate amount of time in the House to get on the statute book and which I understand still needs amendment. It is a system which has led increasingly to challenges in the courts, which apparently allows local authorities to steam towards bankruptcy, which has led to the erosion of responsibility from local government, which has not helped the Government's financial objectives, and which I believe is not that popular with the public. That is my analysis.

Why has it happened and what can we do about it? The second theme of my speech is Ealing council. As with the first part of my speech, I made it quite clear that I believe in local government. In this part of my speech I want to make it clear that my disapproval of Ealing council and others is shared by Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) have made it clear to a number of Labour councils who have mortaged their future that they cannot look to a future Labour Government to bail them out. I commend wholeheartedly that disapproval of financial irresponsibility. The Labour party has pursued with vigour its own colleagues on Liverpool city council. The leader of the Labour party addressed the parliamentary Labour party on 19 November. He criticised the

"sensationalism attached to the actions of a few councils."

He went on to say:

"It simply proves yet again that the greatest enemy of radicalism is zelotry."

Incidentally, zealotry was spelt incorrectly.

The hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench have tried to intervene with their colleagues on Brent council to prevent the harassment of Mrs. McGoldrick, a good and popular headmistress who simply wants to go on teaching. They have tried to get those decisions reversed and they have failed. The suggestion that the proposition that the activities of Left-wing councils are helping to destabilise the system is a myth put out by Central Office does not stand up. It is a proposition readily subscribed to by responsible Opposition Members.

In Ealing until recently we had a Conservative council for eight years. It was a good council. Of course, we have also had a Conservative Government for seven years, so the memories of Labour were somewhat remote in Ealing and, last May, the electors of Ealing thought they would give the Labour party a whirl. That is a decision that I think they bitterly regret. If that election was re-run next Thursday the Labour party would lose. It came to power with the votes, amongst others, of the Leader of the Opposition and his wife. Over three weeks ago I wrote to the Leader of the Opposition. I think that it is worth quoting what I said:

"I have to tell you that a number of Labour voters have been embarrassed, disappointed and upset by many of the actions which the Labour Party in Ealing Town hall have taken. Further, when I am asked by potential Labour voters in my constituency what a Labour Government might be like,

I have to tell them that they should only look at Ealing Council to get a full taste of what is, I hope, a very remote possibility . . . I must put to you a direct question; do you support what is now being done in the name of the Labour Party at Ealing Town Hall, or not? In particular, I wonder if you would be good enough to let me know whether you endorse the four following steps taken by the Council.

1. Do you agree that school children in Ealing should be taught that a homosexual lifestyle is as 'equally valid' as a heterosexual one?

2. Do you agree that Sinn Fein councillors should have been invited to Ealing Town Hall to meet the Labour group?

3. Do you support the flying of the SWAPO flag over Ealing Town Hall? If you were in power, would we see it flying over Government Departments?"

Mr. Tony Banks: I hope so.

Sir George Young: I hope that the hon. Gentleman's remark from a sedentary position goes on the record.

Mr. Tony Banks: I do not in any way want it to be said from a sedentary position. I hope that when the Labour Government are elected we will do something about getting South Africa out of Namibia and we will be flying the SWAPO flag—*[Interruption.]*

Sir George Young: I have no doubt that *Hansard* will correctly insert the original intervention of the hon. Gentleman which was in response to a slightly different proposition from that he mentioned when he stood up to intervene. The hon. Gentleman interrupted my interrogation of the leader of the Labour party. My next question was:

"4. The Chairman of the Planning and Economic Development Committee has forecast that the implementation of Labour's local election manifesto will increase the rates by over 100 per cent. Would you welcome such an increase? Your answers to these questions will enable voters in Ealing to judge whether or not Ealing Council is indeed a mirror image of what a Labour Government might be . . . If the opinion polls are right it looks as if you may be paying rates in Ealing for quite a long time."

Mr. Greenway *rose*——

Sir George Young: I put that letter on the board when Parliament opened on 12 November. It is now over three weeks later and I have had no answer from the Leader of the Opposition. I have had an acknowledgment from his executive officer, Mr. Richard Clements. He said:

"I am very sorry about the delay in responding to your letter."

He sent me the text of the PLP speech I referred to earlier. He said:

"As you know Mr. Kinnock is in the United States. I will ask him on his return if he wishes to reply in more detail to your letter."

The *Ealing Gazette* rings me up every day to ask whether the Leader of the Opposition has replied to my questions. The acknowledgment I have had is conspicuous in not answering any of the questions. We really want to know whether what is being done in the name of the Labour party in Ealing is a foretaste of what a Labour Government would do. Are the councillors, two of whom are prospective candidates, standard bearers for the new Labour party, or are they some sort of freak like some uncle or the black sheep of the family to whom one does not refer in front of the childen? We are entitled to answers and I shall go on asking until we get them.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend is a most distinguished Member of Parliament, well respected throughout the borough of Ealing and beyond. Many people in Ealing would like to know whether the leader of the Labour party supports clause 1.4.4 of the council education committee's discussion document on equality, which states that children should be taught that homosexuality and lesbianism are lifestyles quite as valid as heterosexuality and whether he supports the council's placing on school notice boards of the telephone numbers of Lesbian Line and Gay Alliance inviting children to consult those bodies. Should not the leader of the Labour party also say whether he agrees with the chairman of the education committee that every school should have a teacher responsible for sexual equality of that kind, which is apparently more important than learning maths and English?

Sir George Young: It should not be the function of a local education committee to seek to impose its perception of homosexuality — in this case, a minority one — on schoolchildren. The leader of the parents' action group in Ealing has said:

"We are not anti-homosexual, but we don't want rubbish about alternative lifestyles crammed down innocent children's throats."

That sums up the approach.

I could have asked the Leader of the Opposition many other questions. For instance, does he support the banning of *The Sun* and *The Times* from public libraries in Ealing? As an Ealing ratepayer, I shall have to pay part of the costs of the court action taken by the council against legal advice. Does the right hon. Gentleman support the council's refusal to advertise for teachers in *The Times Educational Supplement?* For all I know, Glenys may have got one of her teaching jobs through the TES. Does he support the leasing of the Great Western centre in Ealing at a cost of £3·1 million per year to accommodate the hundreds of new bureaucrats recruited since May mainly to service new committees tangential to the main responsibilities of local government? The council is spending £142,000 per year on a new press unit. I am told that its first publication, which comes out today, consists basically of anti-Government propaganda at the ratepayers' expense.

As well as being dogmatic, the council is inefficient. I understand that it has stopped making returns to the Department of the Environment on progress with the planning applications and that only 20 per cent. of applications are processed within the statutory eight weeks. The council is £8·7 million over budget and eating into money earmarked for teachers' salary increases. Voluntary organisations have been told that they are more likely to obtain funds if they actively recruit gays and lesbians. That news was greeted with alarm by Ealing football club.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) has referred to the quality of sex education in schools, which has been roundly condemned by the Council of Churches in Ealing and has deeply upset the Asian community.

Mr. Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware that six ladies in my constituency, who have been in a club formation for more than 20 years and who are all at least 85 years old, have been asked what provision they make for gays and lesbians in their outfit as a qualification for grant? They, too, are very offended.

Sir George Young: The council is not only upsetting Tory voters—in a sense, one expects it to do that—but it is upsetting Labour voters as well. I suspect that that is

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why Labour Members of Parliament view the goings on with such deep concern. Ealing council has borrowed £100 million on a deferred purchase scheme. Perhaps the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) will tell us whether he supports that and what encouragement he intends to give to Ealing council if he is ever in government. The town clerk was dismissed seven months ago, shortly after the election, and there is unlikely to be a new one until next April. The council also has plans to name streets and public buildings after South African detainees. If buildings are to be named after people, there are hundreds of respectable public citizens in Ealing more deserving of that honour.

Mr. Greenway: Even the Leader of the Opposition?

Sir George Young: I draw the line at that, but there are plenty of good people in Ealing who deserve to have buildings named after them before that honour is afforded to controversial South African detainees.

There are three Members of Parliament for Ealing. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North and I have criticised the council with some vigour, but the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell)—I informed the hon. Gentleman that I intended to refer to him—has been conspicuously silent, rather than defending or even commenting on the more controversial decisions of his colleagues. Given last week's 8 per cent. swing in the by-election in Brent, which has been Conservative since May, I can well understand why the hon. Gentleman feels uneasy.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I, too, have been in correspondence with the Leader of the Opposition asking whether he intends to take any action against my prospective parliamentary opponent in Camden—Mr. Turner, a former leader of the council—who voted to ask Sinn Fein to address not merely the Labour group, but Camden borough council. I have had two evasive acknowledgments from the right hon. Gentleman's office, but nothing more.

Sir George Young: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman's office has adequate resources to cope with correspondence from Members of Parliament. When I was a Minister and the Leader of the Opposition wrote asking for a new car, I responded very quickly. I cannot understand why similar courtesies are not extended to me by the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir George Young: No. I have been generous in giving way and I must bring my remarks to a conclusion.

Mr. Straw: We are all entertained by the hon. Gentleman's speech, but can he put his hand on his heart and say that whenever he received a letter from an Opposition Member he always responded promptly and exactly to the questions asked? My recollection is that his replies were evasive and took a long time coming.

Sir George Young: I am deeply offended by that allegation. I believe that one of my failings as a Minister was that I always gave direct answers, even when they were not welcomed by my colleagues.

I do not wish to spoil a good case by oversimplifying the issue and implying that all the problems in local government are due to the activities of councils. Nevertheless, I believe that that is the single largest cause of some of the problems that I mentioned when I outlined the difficulties in relationships. We have a problem and we know one of the main reasons for it, but what are we to do about it? If I had all the answers I should probably be replying to the debate rather than merely participating in it, but I leave that onerous task in the capable hands of my parliamentary neighbour the Minister for Local Government, my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Dr. Boyson).

Mr. Tony Banks: Such bitterness!

Sir George Young: It follows from my argument that the problems are not structural but political, so the solution does not lie in structural changes such as bringing back the GLC, which I believe would make matters far worse, redistributing functions as between county and district councils, changing the boundaries or bringing back smaller units of local government, however popular that might be. Nor do I think that any magic formula for allocating resources from taxpayer to ratepayer will solve the problems. However the rate support grant system operates, it will be popular with some and unpopular with others. Nor am I yet convinced that the community charge will radically alter the turnout or voting patterns in local elections, although I very much hope that I shall be proved wrong about that.

I do not believe that the system itself is fundamentally flawed. One can spend a great deal of time tinkering with the engine when the problem is the driver. If the problem is political, there is unlikely to be any soluton in the next 12 months, when attitudes will polarise and local government will become more hostile to central Government, but when my party has won the next general election it may like to consider convening a meeting of all local authority association leaders to ask them whether they want the next five years to be like the past five and, if so, whether they appreciate the implications of that for local government. Confronted with that, there may be some modus vivendi that recognises the legitimate political differences between the local authorities and central Government but avoids the litigation and the counter-productivity of endless Bills in this House. That might not work, but the alternative is an erosion of local government and a further consolidation of central Government, which is something I would bitterly regret. I hope that every possible step will be taken to avoid that.

11.10 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I welcome the opportunity of this debate and the way in which the words in the motion for today's debate have been framed by the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind). It is good to have the opportunity to call attention to local government and I believe that, at the end of the debate, we will have learned some worthwhile lessons about how we can, in the words in the motion, continue to

"recognise the importance of local government as a vital part of the British democratic system."

I want to address my remarks substantially to democracy and local government. Before I do so, I wish to pay tribute to the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) who, for the past five years, was greatly respected as Under-Secretary of State for the Environment

—*[Interruption.]* — well, generally greatly respected. I regret the error of judgment during the last Government reshuffle when he was not given promotion, but was sent to the Back Benches to speak about Ealing.

While the hon. Gentleman for Ealing, Acton was discussing correspondence with the Labour party, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), from a sedentary position, said that he was still awaiting a reply to a letter he had sent to the Labour leader a year ago. Obviously the problem does not only afflict opponents of the Labour party.

Mr. Tony Banks: It is obviously non-partisan.

Mr. Hughes: I also congratulate on their appointment to the Government Front Bench in the Environment team the hon. Members for Brent, North (Dr. Boyson) and for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), who is not present at the moment. This is the first local government debate since their appointment.

I shall not today devote my comments principally to Government policy, subject to two important preliminary points to which I hope the Minister will respond. First, I hope that we can soon have a full debate on the Widdicombe report. There has been some Government unease that the report, commissioned by the Government, did not come up with all the answers that the Government would have most liked, and some Labour unease that it did not come up with all the answers that the Labour party would have liked. Probably it produced more answers that my colleagues and I liked. There should be a full debate on the report in Government time. The report raised important issues and a debate would help the formulation of policy for whoever is in government after the next election.

Secondly, I hope that the Government will consider soon signing and ratifying the European Charter of Local Self-Government. That Council of Europe charter was agreed in October 1985. It provides that local government should have a democratic and constitutional position—the other half, as it were, of the central-local government balance. It would be good for Britain's credibility as well as democracy if we joined the majority of our partners in the European Community and other countries in the Council of Europe and subscribed to it soon.

As a last introductory point, I welcome the answer that was given yesterday by the Under-Secretary of State to his hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) that we shall see increased powers for the Ombudsman in the legislation to come this year. That will help to alleviate some of the frustrations of people who, having had maladministration at local authority level, then go to a group of people who have the best intentions in the world and try to do a good job, but often are prevented by law from delivering a quick, prompt and effective remedy.

As I said a moment ago quietly to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), I wish to follow much of the theme of the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton concerning the dangers if the Labour party does not recognise the cancer in its own party in local government—dangers in local government which, if transferred to this place, would make central Government a far more totalitarian regime than Britain has ever seen. I mean that in all seriousness and I shall give very good examples from post-May experience.

My first warning to the Labour party is that if it relies on a system of local government finance where the bulk of the local government revenue comes from central Government, it will always be dependent on Government decisions. That is bad for the financial independence of local government. When the Labour party eventually makes up its mind, I hope that it will support a local government finance system that gives power to local authorities to raise substantial revenue and to spend it. Local government should not be so dependent on central Government decisions.

Secondly, the Labour party must heed the warnings given by its own Front Bench that local government cannot be run on the basis that one day some future godparent Government will bail out local authorities from the mistakes that they have made. It is not acceptable that bad, foolish decisions with ratepayers' money made over the years should be put right later in a sort of buying-off operation for those councils which have acted improperly. There has been extravagant waste of money, and that should be totally unacceptable to any central Government.

Many people in the Labour party are committed to local government and have given a lifetime's service to it —for example, the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay). Many of his colleagues and many Labour authorities have done and do a very good job. But there are others who are perniciously, misleadingly and anti-democratically corrupting local government every day.

The first way in which the Labour party and the Government could make life much better for local government—if they were only brave enough to adopt it without any presumption—is a system of fair elections at local level. I will not argue that case at length today, but it is the shortest way in terms of legislative change—one short piece of legislation would result in many of the extremists disappearing at a stroke.

Mr. Straw: I was listening with care to the hon. Gentleman's speech until he got to that point. One of the many difficulties that I have with proportional representation is the suggestion that it would end extremism. Will the hon. Gentleman explain to me, just this once, how it was that Hitler came to power through a system of proportional representation?

Mr. Hughes: We cannot now have a great debate about that, but Hitler came to power not least because, once he gained a foothold, he distorted information systems and acted anti-democratically. That is just the sort of warning I am trying to give the hon. Member for Blackburn to prevent him and his party——

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: No, I must get on.

I and members of other parties are not alone in our worries about the Labour party. The Fabian Society pamphlet No. 511 of May this year, under the title "Managing Local Socialism" by Alan Alexander—it is a good pamphlet—gives a strong warning:

> "There is a strong case, however, for the Labour Party preparing and publishing a code of conduct which would supplement and clarify the existing Standing Orders for Labour groups. For there is a degree of public disquiet about the way in which some Labour-controlled authorities are being run. No doubt some of that concern is synthetic . . . But there are also genuine reasons to fear that in their zeal to implement socialist policies some local politicians may sometimes give crucial democratic values and processes short shrift."

[Mr. Hughes]

Among the many recommendations of the Widdicombe report, three recommendations,—Nos. 2, 8 and 24 in the chapter on the decision-making process—are worthy of the Minister's attention. The first recommendation is that the composition of committees and sub-committees should reflect, as it does here, the balance of people in the local authorities. That does not happen in many local authorities, in which committee balance is distorted to give a ridiculous imbalance in favour of the already majority group.

Secondly, it recommends that standing orders and local conventions are adapted to make sure that there is appropriate time for minority party business, as there is here. Thirdly, it recommends that party groups be prevented from influencing local authorities in the future in the way they often do now, particularly in Labour-controlled authorities.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: What about the attitude of Southwark borough council? It has 70 per cent. of the representation and the opposition have 30 per cent. membership of the council, yet the ruling party will give only 10 per cent. of committee places to the opposition.

Mr. Hughes: That is a matter about which I have written to the leader of the Labour party. It will not surprise the House to know that several months ago I had from him a short holding reply in which he said that it was not his responsibility and that he had referred the matter to Labour party headquarters. However, I have received no reply since.

Until May 1986, the balance in the last administration was 54 to 10. Committee places were shared out according to that balance. Since May, when the Labour party lost a substantial number of seats to my Liberal colleagues and to my brother, who is a Social Democrat—for which I forgive him — the balance has been 44 to 20. Immediately the Labour party distorted the balance on all committees. On most committees there are now no more than two opposition members. On the housing committee there are about four opposition members on a committee of over 30 councillors. That means that the Labour party is afraid not just of people but of argument. It is not even allowing the opposition to be there to put forward their arguments.

That is completely unacceptable and I hope that the message reaches Walworth road that unless the leader of Southwark council is told to do something about it, we shall go on hammering at this manipulation in order to embarrass the Labour party. Southwark is not the only authority where that has happened. Many other authorities have behaved in similar ways.

There are other examples. Legal advice is sought and then ignored by majority Labour groups. In my borough, legal advice was sought on whether a planning agreement should continue to be resisted for the rebuilding of Shakespeare's Globe theatre. The later legal settlement of the court case has cost Southwark £7 million in legal costs, costs which the ratepayers have to find. There is no way of retrieving that sum of money. The advice was that the battle should never have been fought.

The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton referred to another apposite example. Through a failure to advertise in *The Times Educational Supplement*, the number of applications for teaching posts in Hounslow has, I am told, gone down by about 75 per cent. We desperately need good teacher applicants for teaching posts in London. The Inner London education authority, like Hounslow, is desperately short of good applicants. However, they will not be found if all the advertisements are put into in-house party newspapers instead of into newspapers that are read more widely.

I hope that the district auditor in London, Mr. Skinner——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Oh!

Mr. Hughes: I am not referring to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Skinner: He is no relation of mine.

Mr. Hughes: No, I should not think he is.

I hope that we shall soon have a decision from the district auditor in London about the delayed rate setting last year by Labour authorities, which resulted in the wasting of hundreds of thousands of pounds. Nine meetings were necessary in Southwark before the authority did what it could have done after the first meeting. That is throwing money away and behaving improperly over money that is not theirs to waste.

In another respect and increasingly, Labour local government copies what central Government do. Before they appoint people to management committees, or appoint them to office on similar outside bodies, they ask whether they belong to their party, and unless they receive a positive answer they do not appoint them. It does not happen, as was the case in Greenwich — just when appointments are made to external bodies. When Labour discovered that my colleagues in Greenwich would have the right to make some appointments, Labour filled up those posts. It also happens on voluntary bodies. The health of the voluntary sector requires non-party and cross-party support.

Also, there are permanent campaigns of disinformation. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) and I served on the Standing Committee that examined the last Bill on local government. My hon. Friend then gave an example of a local authority newspaper in his constituency of Leeds, West. It chooses exactly those areas that are in the Leeds, West constituency and it is clearly aimed at propagating the views of the local council.

I had a major success the other day. I believe for the first time, my picture appeared in my local authority newspaper. It seems almost impossible for any Opposition point of view to appear in my local authority newspaper. My photograph appeared, together with a copy of a letter that I had written to the Prime Minister complaining about the Government's attitude to the National Health Service. It was a perfectly proper complaint. However, it is increasingly rare for pluralist argument to be accepted by many Labour local authority newspapers.

Furthermore, week after week advertisements appear in *Labour Weekly* for which local authorities must pay thousands of pounds. Presumably *Labour Weekly* would not stay afloat without them. They are not just advertisements about jobs. The advertisements also say how wonderful the local employment initiative is in Labour authority X or Y. That kind of abuse of ratepayers' money has gone too far.

There are many other examples. In Brent, the ward boundaries need to be reviewed, but the local

administration has resisted such a review. I hope that the Minister will be able to do something about it. I agree with Widdicombe that local authorities should be able to have a few political appointees. They should be appointed in direct proportion to the parties in the local administration. I gather that there are 13 political appointees in Brent but that the opposition have none. In Ealing there are about 20—18 for the Labour group, one for the Conservative group and one seventh of one for my three alliance colleagues.

We must return to a system under which there is fair treatment of the representatives of the different political groupings on local authority administrations. If we do not, the disenchantment—again I use the word of the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton—will continue. People will feel that, unless they are in the caucus or inner circle, their views will not be taken into account. I have made the point about committee places being distorted in Southwark.

The social services in Southwark have been in crisis for four years, largely because many key decisions have been taken by the council industrial relations emergency sub-committee, which consisted only of councillors from the majority group. At crucial times it sent out the officers and kept in union leaders. It made the decisions and then called in the senior officers and said, "This is what we have decided." Against this background, a major inquiry is still taking place—which is being conducted impartially, I am grateful to say—into the affairs of Nye Bevan lodge.

There is perversion of voluntary bodies. There was a welfare rights campaign, which I support, that organised a protest outside the DHSS office in Wedge house, Blackfriars road, in my constituency. I was not notified of that protest, but my two Labour parliamentary neighbours were notified about it. However, I heard about the protest and I turned up, much to the embarrassment of all the voluntary agencies, including the citizens advice bureau, which, to its shame, helped to organise this party political campaign. That is not the way for the voluntary sector to campaign or to win support.

On two occasions in Southwark, Militant has been supported out of ratepayers' funds. It was supported through the youth trade union rights campaign, which is disavowed by the national Labour leadership.

I hope that the Labour group will deal ferociously with the fact that senior members of the council—a chairman of a committee and a councillor in Browning ward in my constituency—managed to abuse council waiting lists in order to move from their home to somebody else's home, by means of mutual exchange, in the full knowledge that that other person was never going to move into the councillors' home, thereby overtaking thousands of people who are desperate for decent housing. That is unacceptable. It demeans local government. Those two councillors should be told that they have to wait in the queue, like anybody else.

My complaint is not only about London authorities, although London contains some of the most anti-democratic and non-democratic authorities. In Manchester, committee places were not allocated to opposition members. Eventually, having received protests, the Labour majority group insisted on deciding which of the opposition members they would nominate. That is a new development.

For months, until they were threatened with a court case, Labour councillors in Kirklees would not allow opposition representation on joint boards. The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton will remember that he was a party to piloting the legislation about joint board representation, which requires that joint boards reflect political proportions. It was only when court action was threatened that there was a change.

For years, there has been effective one-party control in Doncaster, where the Labour party has a substantial majority, and in six years the Liberal councillor has not been on one committee. That is unacceptable. In Wakefield, Labour apparently says to opposition councillors that they can be members of the committees only if they agree with Labour's aims and objectives. Local government cannot be run like a one-party state. What is sauce for the goose at the moment could be sauce for the gander if the political tables are reversed: that is the danger.

Mr. Skinner: Tell us about Eastbourne. The Liberals control it.

Mr. Hughes: I remember Eastbourne. That was a democratic debate, but perhaps the hon. Gentleman is talking about the local authority.

Mr. Skinner: There is a big fiddle going on. Tell us about it.

Mr. Hughes: I am happy to say that there have been very few criticisms in the local government press about administrations run by my colleagues. I would say equally strong things to them if there were such criticisms. Perversion of proper democratic procedures is unacceptable from wherever it comes.

Although the Government realise that there are valid reasons for complaint about such authorities, I hope that they appreciate that their view, like mine, is somewhat biased because we are in the middle of what is probably the worst region of local government manipulation. Many local authorities do not suffer from that recent, unfortunate and developing tradition. I hope that the Labour party will not only agree that this is unacceptable, but will do something about it. Its spokesmen on local government and the environment, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), and his deputy, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), are critical of the situation, but so far we have had a lot of words, a bit of action in Liverpool, and very little action anywhere else.

I hope that that warning is accepted by us all, because if we do not deal with problems of this sort, and especially if the Labour party does not put its house in order, then this place will see, I presume, the same sort of distortion of the government system as we see in many town halls. You will become increasingly powerless, Mr. Speaker. Committees will become increasingly biased in favour of the Labour party, there will be secret meetings, and when people who have not been invited turn up the meeting will be adjourned to a secret place.

If that sort of thing is not acceptable here, it should not be acceptable to the representatives of local government in town halls. The sooner the Labour party realises that and puts its house in order the better, because it is doing a gross disservice to local government.

11.32 am

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): I should like to join in the congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on bringing into the public arena for debate anxieties which many of us

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

have increasingly felt about the way in which local government has been drifting, especially in parts of Greater London. I also congratulate my hon. Friend on the way in which he carefully researched the material for his speech and brought to the public attention many disturbing features of what is happening in certain London boroughs.

I share with the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) the fact of many years' service in local government. During those years I acquired a great respect for my opponents. I disagreed with them on almost everything, but I realised that they were dedicated and had the interests of the community at heart. All those people whom I worked with and against, and respected, have, one by one, despite years of service to their local communities, been demoted. They have been removed from chairs of committees or de-selected as candidates, or even driven from the party to which they had dedicated lives of service.

They have been replaced by people whom it is fashionable to term the loony Left. I do not look upon those people as the loony Left. They are not loony. Most of them are highly intelligent and articulate. Nor do I believe that they belong to the Left, because they seem to derive more of their philosophy from anarchism than they do from socialism.

From my observation of what is happening in the London borough of Haringey, it seems that those people are determined to destabilise society. That has been replicated in the London boroughs in which they have gained control. They are seeking to do that in three ways. I shall enlarge on those. First, they seek to undermine family values. Secondly, they want to destroy respect for the forces of law and order. Thirdly, they wish to create financial instability in the areas in which they have gained control. Each of those methods, singularly and combined, is an attempt to destabilise society in those areas.

The House will recall that on the Report stage of the Education Bill I said that the parents' rights group had tried to present a petition to the council saying that they did not wish their children to be taught that homosexual activity was as normal as heterosexual activity. That proposal was made in the Haringey Labour group. I described how the parents' rights group was vilified, abused, intimidated and prevented from presenting its petition. Since that date, there has come into my hands a document headed, "London Borough of Haringey, Majority Group Leader: Bernie Grant, Secretary: Diana Minns, Majority Group Meeting—16 October 1986".

Appended to that document are the minutes of a meeting of the officers of Haringey Labour party that took place a few months earlier. Interestingly, this document, an agenda for the group meeting, is addressed to more people outside the group than are within the group. They are liaison delegates and group observers. When that meeting takes a vote, where do the councillors stand? They are clearly told what their policy will be by people who are not elected to the council.

The item that I wish to draw to the attention of the House is that it was reported that a letter was received requesting that the council meet the parents' rights group. Further down, without saying that the request had been received, it was agreed that a deputation from the Haringey Labour campaign for lesbian and gay rights should be accepted at the same meeting. Can one wonder that a riot ensued and that there were enough people there to bully the parents and stop them from presenting their petition to the council? It was clearly a plot to prevent these local residents from expressing their anxiety to their local representatives.

It does not stop there. As I said during the Report stage of the Education Bill, there is evidence that it is made clear to council employees that their jobs are on the line if they do not support every aspect of council policy. Headmasters were told that they could not consult and meet the parents' rights group, and when that group complained it was told, "We are employed by Haringey council and we have to look to our jobs." With that degree of political interference with the professional employees of the council, it is not surprising that the chief officers have resigned one by one. They obtained early retirement, some of them at reduced pay.

Mr. Corbyn: Name them.

Sir Hugh Rossi: They are well-known locally, and the hon. Gentleman, who used to be one of the motivators in the Haringey group, knows very well who they are.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hugh Rossi: No, I shall not give way.

Another minute entitled "Chief Officer appointments" states:

"The Deputy Leader reported on representations from NALGO about Hay-MSL."

That is a group of consultants who have been engaged to advise the council on the recruitment of staff. He reported "on the poor response rate to date; and that he had cancelled the proposed weekend."

Haringey has difficulty in recruiting new people who are high enough in their professions to take on the jobs of chief officers of the council because of its reputation throughout the local government world of interference in how professionals carry out their work and try to run the borough correctly.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman claimed that chief officers had resigned. Will he give the names of those chief officers, their positions and the circumstances in which they resigned?

Sir Hugh Rossi: I am reluctant to use the privilege of this House to refer to people personally who may be seeking employment elsewhere. It is well known locally that that is the position.

Mr. Hind: Perhaps my hon. Friend will confirm that four days after the Labour party took office in Ealing borough council the town clerk, Mr. Collins, was asked to stand down. At the time, the Labour leader said that he felt that Mr. Collins could better serve,

"a smaller, less politically radical and progressive authority."

That is a direct quotation from the *Daily Telegraph* of 5 July 1986.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I cannot speak of what is happening in Ealing. I have enough problems following what is happening in the London borough of Haringey.

During the opening speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West I intervened to mention the attitude of the Labour majority on Haringey council to the police. I do not wish to repeat what I said. I will simply draw attention to other matters in the minutes of the majority group which have come to my attention.

The House will recall that during the Broadwater Farm riots PC Blakelock was brutally murdered in the course of

his duty as he went to help firemen who were under assault from a mob. It was thought fitting to erect a memorial to that police officer, who had died in the course of his duty and who was a well-respected and well-known beat officer in Muswell Hill, which is part of my constituency. However, on the occasion of the riot he was ordered down to Broadwater Farm in Tottenham.

The Police Memorial Trust proposed erecting a memorial to PC Blakelock. The minutes of the Haringey Labour group read:

"Reported that, since discussion at Leader's conference on 18 July, it had become very clear that the Police Memorial Trust would proceed with a memorial to P.C. Blakelock whatever the council did."

It is clear that the council did not wish to see a fitting memorial erected to that gallant police officer who was murdered in the course of his duty. The minutes continue——

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Sir Hugh Rossi: When I have concluded, the hon. Gentleman may intervene. The minutes continue:

"Accordingly the Council had decided to proceed with a separate and very different memorial to Mrs. Jarrett on 17 October."

Mrs. Jarrett was the unfortunate lady whose death during a police search of her house triggered the riots on Broadwater Farm. The coroner found that she had died of a heart attack. She had a very grievous heart condition. So what happened? To detract from the occasion of the unveiling of the memorial to PC Blakelock, the council arranged another ceremony for Mrs. Jarrett to take place on the same day. Surely that could not have had any other objective than to increase and exacerbate the divisions that existed within the local community over those tragic events.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Sir Hugh Rossi: I have not yet finished on this matter. The Leader of the Opposition attended the unveiling of the Blakelock memorial. He made a fitting speech which negated all that the Haringey Labour party was trying to say to the local public, but on the same day he attended, with Bernie Grant, the Jarrett ceremony.

Mr. Corbyn: So what?

Sir Hugh Rossi: So what? I can tell the hon. Gentleman that nothing has caused greater offence among the people in my constituency than that hypocrisy of the leader of the Labour party. If he thought that that would do him any good, he was gravely mistaken.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We all heard the hon. Gentleman's comment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman was accusing the Leader of the Opposition of hypocrisy, that is an unparliamentary phrase and I must ask him to withdraw it.

Sir Hugh Rossi: If I inadvertently used an unparliamentary phrase, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of course I withdraw it. Nevertheless, I am trying to underline the fact that the actions of the Leader of the Opposition in my constituency have caused the deepest resentment. I know that he received letters from constituents, because they have copied them to me.

Mr. Straw: We would be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would answer two questions. First, what conceivable evidence did he have for suggesting that the council was opposed to the erection of the memorial to PC Blakelock? I understand that it supported the ceremony marking that memorial and that it was attended by the deputy mayor.

Secondly, I fail to understand the hon. Gentleman's point when he referred to the attendance of the Leader of the Opposition at the unveiling of the memorial to Cynthia Jarrett. The Leader of the Opposition attended the memorial service for an innocent policeman who was murdered, and attended the memorial service for the death of an innocent black woman. Why is the latter objectionable?

Sir Hugh Rossi: The mayor of Haringey did not attend. Only the deputy mayor attended the ceremony. No other Labour councillor went. The council had no choice but to send a token representative, because the leader of the Labour party was unveiling the memorial, but the councillors made it clear from their attitude—the minute also made it clear—that the ceremony would proceed, "whatever the council did."

The economic policies of Haringey council must end in the local authority going bankrupt. That has been made clear, as was said several times during the debate, by John Banham of the Audit Commission. He said that, by a system of "creative accountancy"—borrowing now on low interest terms money that will be repaid later on high interest terms—the local authority would force itself into bankruptcy. The council has become notorious for its overspending and for the fact that the Government were obliged to rate-cap it.

It is clear from the protests on the Opposition Benches that Labour Members do not like what I have said. However, the facts are well known to my constituents, who want me to bring those matters to the attention of the public at large. They are desperately worried about what is happening to their locality. Only a handful of Labour Members would be prepared to say that they support all the policies of the Haringey Labour party. Indeed, from time to time, hon. Members who represent constituencies in the north-east, the north-west and the midlands say that the Labour-controlled London boroughs are the biggest millstone round their necks. So they are. I do not always agree with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), but he was right to say that the Labour party must watch itself and must be careful about the people whom it has admitted into its midst, because sooner or later they will destroy the Labour party.

11.51 am

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): It is clear that the debate was inspired by Tory Members for reasons of electoral advantage. For some time now, Conservative Members have tried to smear some local authorities purely for political advantage. When the Government run out of other arguments, they look for new ways to attack the Labour party.

Underlying at least some of the speeches of Conservative Members was contempt for the electorate. The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), in his long catalogue of descriptions of local authorities, none of which was anywhere near his constituency, implied that the electors could not be trusted to make up their minds about the people who act for them in their town halls and that therefore he had to tell the electors what was good for them because they were too stupid to know otherwise. But

[Mr. Alfred Dubs]

the people are not fools. They have a pretty good sense of what happens in their town halls and they make up their minds accordingly. The elections last May were a sign in many areas that the electors completely understand their local authorities.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) talked at great length about Knowsley and Liverpool, which are alongside his constituency. I presume that when the hon. Gentleman talks about good sense he means the good sense of the electors in Wandsworth, who continue to return a Conservative administration.

Mr. Dubs: I shall deal with Wandsworth in a moment. It is one of the main reasons why I am speaking today.

Several hon. Members alleged that Labour-controlled local authorities are trying to achieve political control over the police. But Conservative Members are politicians and are in the business of trying to continue their political control of the country. In London, the Home Secretary is in charge of the police. He is the police authority, but I have not heard Conservative Members criticise him for exercising political control over the police in London. It ill behoves politicians to criticise somebody who wants to have political control.

In a democratic society, it is legitimate for local authorities to be critical of policing in their areas. Democracy is about people having their say and about institutions, whether local or national, being responsive to the wishes of the people. The difficulty is that, because there is no democratic system of accountability over the police, some local authorities have had to set up their own rather informal structures to allow for some democratic element in the criticism or praise of the way in which the police operate. I have both praised and criticised the police, depending on what they have done.

It is no bad thing to have such informal structures, because some of the criticisms of the police have led to changes in policing methods and approaches that have benefited local people. Nobody who believes in democracy should say that the police should be the one body above criticism. Nobody should be above criticism if people feel that there are honest and fair criticisms to be made.

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend mentioned the position of the Home Secretary, who is in charge of the Metropolitan police. We all know that the Home Secretary is totally non-political. What about the City of London, which, as a local authority, has its own police force?

Mr. Dubs: I take my hon. Friend's point. The City of London is a body in need of a bit of democracy, but that is a subject for debate on another occasion.

Mr. Hind: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that in some of the areas to which I referred, such as south Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, there are police authorities made up of local councillors and magistrates?

Mr. Dubs: Yes, I accept that, but the question is what sort of powers those police authorities have. Democracy is not about token structures of power but about giving elected people real power. Our criticism of the lack of accountability of the police applies particularly to London but also to some of the other police authorities, because they do not have power comparable to that which local authorities have over their services.

My local borough is the Conservative-controlled borough of Wandsworth. Its police consultative committee, on which I sit with Labour and Conservative councillors and other people, recently held a conference, inspired by Peter Hain, on the subject of violence against women. It was a useful conference, attended by the senior Scotland Yard woman police officer, other police officers and other people. It debated a matter of major concern to the community, but not one Conservative councillor bothered to attend. If the Conservative party is so concerned about law and order and such matters, why, on such an occasion, did none of its councillors bother to interest themselves in a major issue affecting local people?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Does the hon. Gentleman really expect anybody to imagine that a conference under the chairmanship of Mr. Hain could, in any way, be called independent? If it were an independent conference, somebody neutral, like the vicar, would have been found to chair it.

Mr. Dubs: The hon. Gentleman, as usual, has his facts wrong. Mr. Hain did not chair the conference, but inspired it.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Same thing.

Mr. Dubs: Not at all. Mr. Hain is a member of the Wandsworth police consultative committee and as such suggested that there should be such a conference. He produced one of the important documents before the conference, which was chaired by the person who is the chair of the Wandsworth police consultative committee. If it was the wicked event that the hon. Gentleman suggests, why did the police attend and send such a senior police officer? The hon. Gentleman has got it wrong, so perhaps he should not intervene in the debate.

There has been a great deal of talk about the 120 or so section 11 posts in Brent. Conservative Members have been a bit quiet about that recently, although not long ago they talked about it loudly. The truth is that, when Brent council was under Conservative control two or three years ago, it put forward a proposal to initiate a number of posts with section 11 funding. That proposal was taken up by the incoming Labour council. It is the same scheme. The Labour council had the support of the Department of Education and Science and the Home Office and that is how the scheme proceeded. But to listen to some Conservative Members and some Conservative newspapers one would think that this was a wicked Left-wing Labour plot, which is not so. Anybody who has looked at the facts must know that.

The Minister for Local Government (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): As the hon. Gentleman's point affects my area, may I deal with it now rather than later? That scheme was drawn up to provide 178 teachers inside schools to help the large ethnic minority in Brent. A question has now arisen over the change in the method of appointment and to whom the teachers are responsible. On what criteria are the new appointments being made and are they responsible to the head of the school or to somebody outside—so that every school has someone who is responsible not to the school but to a race relations officer in the borough?

Mr. Dubs: I am interested that the hon. Gentleman should make that point. I had a similar discussion with the chair and deputy chair of the Brent education committee. It is not a major point of substance, when initially there was a major attack on the principle of the scheme, now to say that there is discussion about the nature of the way in which those people are being appointed and the precise accountability as between the education authority and the heads of individual schools. That question may be reasonable, but it does not make the scheme such an outrageous attack on education in Brent as it has been portrayed by Conservatives in the House and outside over recent months. That is the real point at issue.

Let me deal now with Wandsworth council. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), the Under-Secretary of State, has left the Chamber, because he had a connection with Wandsworth council some years ago. Wandsworth council is Conservative by 31 councillors to 30, although at the elections in May there were more Labour than Conservative votes. It was a great disappointment to many of us and the majority of people in Wandsworth that there was no change in the control of Wandsworth council.

I happen to know Wandsworth council as my constituency is in that area, so I can at least speak with the familiarity with goes with having studied what Wandsworth council has been up to over recent years.

Wandsworth council has had a policy to sell off virtually every council property that it is able to sell. Some have been sold to sitting tenants, and I do not object to that. But many have been sold to people who are not sitting tenants, to people who may not be high on the waiting list or to people who may not be on the housing waiting list at all. That sales policy has represented a major attack on opportunities for decent housing for many people in my area.

I have a leaflet put out by Wandsworth council some time ago. On the back page there is a heading which says:

"Well, you wouldn't want to be the last tenant on the estate, would you?"

That phrase represents a cheap and unpleasant attack on council tenants because it implies that they are somehow not equivalent or equal in status to other people living in their area. It is an attempt to browbeat and coerce tenants into trying to buy their council properties if they can afford to do so—many of them cannot—and there is the implication that it is not desirable to be a council tenant.

Three years ago, Wandsworth council, as part of its sales policy, sent a letter to people living in the Broomwood area of my constituency. It referred to the council wishing to encourage tenants to buy their properties. The letter read:

"I sincerely hope that you will make the right choice and accept this offer."

That letter was sent in November 1983.

In February 1984, the council wrote to tenants in the same area. The letter referred to the estate needing some improvements, then stated:

"Before carrying out major improvement works it is necessary to arrange rehousing for all tenants in occupation."

That was an attempt to persuade tenants to buy. When they did not buy following the 1983 letter, they were pushed into moving out. Wandsworth council had to climb down because there was a great wave of protest throughout my constituency.

Shortly before the most recent local elections at the beginning of the year, the Putney Labour party, in the constituency which adjoins mine but within Wandsworth borough, issued a leaflet headed "Goodbye to Security: Wandsworth tenants beware". The leaflet was about the then Housing and Planning Bill, the right of tenants to stay in their homes, and whether they would be pressurised to move out.

On 26 March, Councillor Gaffney, the chairman of the housing policy committee, wrote a letter to all tenants in council-owned property in the borough. The letter, on Wandsworth council paper, refuted some of the arguments set out in the Putney Labour party leaflet. I am not concerned with the merits or demerits of the arguments that are advanced on these pieces of paper. I am concerned that a Conservative-controlled local authority, a few weeks before a critical local council election, sought to refute a Labour party publicity leaflet, which had been paid for by the Labour party and distributed by it, by a letter which was financed and distributed by the council at the ratepayers' expense.

Conservative Members who talk about politics on the rates, for example, should put their own house in order and address themselves to what one local authority has been doing. I regard the letter from Wandsworth council as an abuse. I think that it might have been more than an abuse. It may be that the letter should be the subject of further investigation. Perhaps it is being investigated, but I am not certain about that. I regard it as an abuse and an example of something which should not happen. If the Minister cares to comment on it, I shall be interested to hear what he has to say.

A number of the blocks of flats in Wandsworth contained asbestos and, quite rightly, the council removed it because it recognised that it was dangerous to the residents. At the same time, it has removed the residents. Instead of the blocks of flats being made available again to council tenants and those on the waiting list, they have been sold to private developers.

I have a sales leaflet about the development of what used to be called Jaycourt in Battersea Park road. It is now called Park South Development. The prices of two-bedroom flats go up to £120,000, which seems pretty expensive. The prices range from £88,000 to £120,000 for two-bedroom flats, which means that many of those who are badly housed in Wandsworth have no chance of moving into these properties. I am not saying that they are all that expensive and I accept that some of Wandsworth council's sales take place at low prices — of course, Wandsworth council's rents are now so high that there is not that much difference between rents and mortgage repayments. Nevertheless, there is an attempt to deride council tenants and to pressure them into buying, at the expense of other badly housed people who are on the waiting list.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): Will my hon. Friend say something about Wandsworth council's policy on the problem of homelessness and homeless families? As he said, it not only makes worse the position of people on the waiting list, but it makes it more difficult for Wandsworth council and other councils, if they have the same policy, to house families, except in inadequate and unhealthy bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Surely that is a point to be taken into account.

Mr. Dubs: Some of the problem hangs on whether Wandsworth council deems a family or a woman with a child to be intentionally or unintentionally homeless. The definition is used to try to make as many people intentionally homeless as possible, and an ever-increasing number of individuals in Wandsworth are becoming homeless. They are being put into bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

I have met a number of women with young children in such bed-and-breakfast accommodation. They are desperate. They may have to spend as long as a year there. There may be no cooking facilities in their accommodation, and, somehow or other, they must cope with young children in conditions such as that. It makes them desperate. They must serve that period in bed-and-breakfast accommodation before the council will move them into the next stage of homeless family accommodation.

One woman had poor cooking facilities. She used to cook for her baby in a friend's flat in Battersea. The hotel in which she was staying was some distance away. Therefore, because she did not spend much time in the hotel, the council was told that she was no longer there. When her chance came to move into the next stage of homeless family accommodation, she was told that she had to go back to the bottom of the list and start again; she had not served her time. I challenge that, and I hope I do so successfully. Some of the things that are going on under the heading "This is how we deal with homeless families" are appalling and disgraceful.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: The hon. Gentleman alluded to the high capital prices of properties for sale in Wandsworth. Has he compared similar accommodation in Lambeth and in Southwark? He will find that there is an appreciable difference. Prices in Wandsworth are higher. Estate agents will tell the hon. Gentleman that the reason is that people are prepared to pay higher capital values because the rates are lower.

Mr. Dubs: I addressed that point a few moments ago. I shall stop giving way if such interventions occur. Yes, the rates in Wandsworth are lower. Rate levels have been assisted by the Government, who were generous to Wandsworth council in last year's rate support grant settlement just before the local election. Nevertheless, prices are high. Estate agents call parts of my constituency "south Chelsea". It is not just a matter of rates, it is a matter of proximity to central London. Locations are good. It is a matter of Wandsworth council desperately trying to reduce the number of people in council properties.

Another issue involves service charges. A leaflet circulated by Wandsworth council states:

"Flat owners will also be asked to pay a small annual service charge."

That sounds fine on the strength of it. Some people have just about managed to afford to buy—sitting tenants—and now they have to pay this small service charge. The difficulty is that the small service charge escalates. On one estate in my area, there was a £900 addition to the service charge because of improvements to lifts. I get angry letters from some of my constituency on the East Hill estate, who bought when the service charges were a couple of hundred pounds or so. They are now in the region of £1,000. They consider that their money is stretched and that they cannot afford to pay extra service charges. They were not aware that that was another aspect of buying their council property.

I am happy about the idea that people should own their own properties. I am happy about the idea that there should be owner occupiers and that those who are not well-off need help. But I am not happy about a local authority that turns its back callously on people who are badly housed, who cannot afford to buy their own properties and who are treated as second-class citizens both in the way in which the council describes them and in terms of their basic rights. That is not the way local authorities should treat people. I argue that those attitudes of Wandsworth council to local people—those who are most vulnerable and the least well-off—is a thousand times worse than anything that Conservative Members have attributed to Labour local authorities.

12.15 pm

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): I should like to tell a straight story about Manchester. I do not need to embellish it. I shall simply tell it as it happened and the facts will speak for themselves.

I take the House back to May 1984, when the Liberal party joined the Conservative party and about 27 Labour councillors to save the subject then on the agenda—whether the city should retain its lord mayor. After that vote was over, the Liberal party proceeded to abstain. As a result, from that date, all the main council committees have been dominated by a new brand of Labour councillor.

We listened to a good speech by the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay). The hon. Gentleman represents a tradition in the Labour party and in local government which we all respect and with which we have all worked for many years, but which is now dying in some main cities.

The Sunday Times of about a year ago described that May 1984 event in the words of the then leader of the Labour group. The article stated:

"Eleven years ago, Labour's veteran northwest regional organiser, Paul Carmody, was so concerned about the young 'far left' in Manchester city Labour party that he called together a group of senior councillors to warn them: 'You are being infiltrated by Militants and other groups.'

The council leadership, dominated by Norman Morris . . . decided to do nothing.

Morris, leader of the council from 1974 to 1982, now admits his mistake . . . 'My mistake was in thinking these were the loony left, instead of realising that they were the conspiratorial left. I should have listened to Carmody.'"

It is interesting that when such statements are made the decent Members of the Labour party fall into two categories—the shufflers and the grimacers. There are the grimacers, who do not believe it, or do not wish to do so, and the shufflers, who know perfectly well that it is true and are very uncomfortable about the idea. We are talking about not simply a political philosophy but a mental attitude. These people bring into local government an attitude of mind that is dictatorial and exclusive of all other views. We contest that.

We argued earlier about the reasons why a particular chief officer in Haringey resigned. In Manchester there is no such problem. Shortly after the change of leadership on the Labour council, no fewer than five chief officers departed. Some were discreet, some went in the fullness of time; but from two of them we know precisely what they

felt. The director of recreation fell out with the new leaders. He admits that his retirement was made under duress, quoting sadly:

"What gave me most hurt was when these politicians were heard plotting my downfall in a city centre pub."

The head of the housing department, Mr. Goodhead, also reluctantly accepted retirement. It is doubtful whether we have had a better swap. Although I have had arguments with Mr. Goodhead, his successor, a 37-year-old American, is still to this day living in a council house, although I understand that he has now found a property in the face of public condemnation. Labour councillors who were not happy with the changes have gone the way of all flesh and many have left.

It is not simply in selecting people that we find this lack of independent view. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) referred to the fact that in many councils—and Manchester was mentioned in this respect—there is a tendencey and, indeed, a policy to withdraw decision taking to sub-committees on which other parties are not represented. In the curious case of Manchester, it was suggested that opposition members should be those who were nominated by the dominant party.

Some people may think that it is trivial, but there have been considerable changes in the kinds of materials allowed in libraries and schools. We know that Manchester Labour party, in conjunction with other Labour parties, is refusing to have any truck with News International, but this month has extended its ban to the Christian World Foundation, which has been placing its literature in libraries now for more than six years and 76 editions with only one complaint. It has now been forced out. There is a growing intolerance and withdrawal to smaller and smaller groups of people making decisions. Opposition Members are aware of what is happening.

The matters which attracted headlines after May 1984, taken one by one, were portrayed as being of relatively small significance. There have been changes in city insignia, changes in respect to the lord mayor, a refusal to hold a VE-day parade for old soldiers of the city, removal of the Queen's portrait, abolition of the police band and a decision this year to have Nelson Mandela on Christmas cards. Taken one by one these may be regarded as of no significance, but there is a cumulative effect in the city. The traditions of the place and the things with which people have become associated have been gradually undermined and changed. Collectively, these changes are not trivial. They are removing the signposts that people need in their daily and city lives.

Many of the charges since May 1984 have concentrated on waste. I only mention that in passing because it is not my main condemnation, but it is true to say that there have been massive expenditures on all kinds of propaganda. I do not want to go into the details, but I must emphasise that it is divisive in character. If the question was raised in the House whether to run a campaign about welfare or a magazine about the police to be delivered through every door, theoretically the decision could be correct. However, in practice there are strident discordant publications seeking to divide one group from another. In total, in Manchester I am concerned with about £3 million which, when compared with the total budget, is small. However, it is marginal money. Much of the budget is committed for very large expenditures about which nothing can be done. So, if we spend £118,000 on a new gay centre, that is money taken straight off the top which could have been spent elsewhere.

Waste is not the most terrible condemnation of the city. The most serious point is that the whole nature and tone of city life has been completely changed in a way that has produced discord and division.

For many years there was a belief that, although within the political battle there was an argument of one kind or another, nevertheless there was a united feeling about the city. It is a city with many different ethnic groups, but that has always produced a sort of mosaic from which one could see a glorious picture. We do not have that now. We have one group set against another. Even in the trade unions within the city council there is discord. The latest absurdity in which the council was requesting people to embrace AIDS victims has now produced discord within the unions and has had to be withdrawn. Wherever the city council treads it brings discord. Its whole purpose is to set one group against another.

I was deeply distressed, because I know him well, to hear the comments of the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs). He is an intelligent and sensitive man and, in many ways, he is also well versed in the techniques of advertising and communication. I wonder, when he talks about police monitoring and police propaganda, whether he has seen two magazines published quarterly by Manchester city council called "Police Watch".

Mr. Dubs *rose*——

Mr. Silvester: I shall give way in a moment, when the hon. Gentleman can answer the question that I am asking.

The producers of the publications are very skilful; they are not idiots. They will stay well within the law and know how far they can go. If one was a nit-picking lawyer, it would be difficult to make a case against them. One could say that the publications are expressing the argument put by the hon. Member for Battersea about making the police force more accountable. However, the hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do the cumulative effect of page after page devoted to alleged misdeeds by the police. Where are the stories that he tells me praise the police? He said that that was happening. That is not here. It is blatant and deliberate undermining of the police position, and every quarter it goes to every household in the city of Manchester.

Mr. Dubs: I have not seen the publications to which the hon. Gentleman is referring. My argument was simply that it is not right to say that the police should not be criticised at all. In a democracy we have that right. It may well be that sometimes the arguments are too strong and sometimes they are not strong enough. I was simply saying that it should not be said, as some Conservative Members are saying, that the police should never be criticised. There should be fair criticism and praise wherever it is appropriate.

Mr. Silvester: I do not think that my hon. Friends have suggested that the police should never be criticised. I think that most of us have done it at some time or another, and indeed we will have done it in the context of people we know quite well who we think may not have been treated well by the police. However, that is not what we are talking about. The council is an institution. We are talking about institutional criticism of the police, paid for out of the rates

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by a local authority which does not have police duties. Its sole purpose—the hon. Member for Battersea knows it if he looks at the publications—is to set the public on the track of believing that the police are behaving badly. That will pay a sad dividend, as will many of the other things.

There was a reference to voluntary groups in the minutes of the council. It was talking about using voluntary groups in aid of the political campaign run by the campaign unit of Manchester. It said:

"Officers are requested to look at the possibilities of using the range of non-statutory organisations which the Council sponsors as an outlet to advertise the campaign . . . Approval is given for grants to non-statutory and voluntary organisations to produce campaign material."

Many voluntary groups take that very badly. The misuse of what is a widespread and much approved of organisation of voluntary institutions of various kinds for political purposes is very bad and very damaging.

There are three reasons why the situation in Manchester is as it is. First, there is the widespread use of the argument that it is all someone else's fault. I shall not go into the subject of the rate support grant, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) said, there is no doubt that the present structure allows local authorities to cop out and blame other people for all the ills when that is not true. I will give three examples.

There are 5,000 empty council properties in Manchester. The council says that it does not have the money to look after them, but last year it was £1 million underspent on a budget of £11 million for doing up the houses. It is said that education has been disrupted as a result of arguments with the Government, but the Poundswick case is well known. The city council refused to support local teachers and governors in their activities against unruly children. It is perhaps less well known that the headmaster of one Manchester school resigned because of the council's lack of support in the pursuit of discipline in schools.

I am amused to hear that the council is now also trying to blame the Government for the buses. The Manchester buses are still owned collectively by the councils of Greater Manchester, with the city council as the lead authority. They allowed so many people to take redundancy that they were 20 per cent. short of drivers on the first day. It was also a local decision to change all the routes on one day and to put new drivers on every route. It is not surprising that chaos resulted. The ability to blame someone else is at the root of the problem.

Secondly, the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone talked about local support. I give him fair warning. People vote according to old loyalties. They remember times past, as I do, which in the case of Manchester means since May 1984. That is not a long time. My criticisms are not mine alone. They are to be heard in the street, in the pubs and on council estates. People are insulted by the councils' activities and support is slipping away. It takes time, but revenge will come and those currently in power will be swept out. That is our only hope. I do not wish to see local government destroyed, but little by little people from outside the cities are being forced to take a hand in the interests of the people living there.

Thirdly, there is the weakness of the Labour party at the centre. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has a reputation for doing battle on this, but it is wrong to suggest, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton seemed to suggest, that the conflict of interest between local government and central Government is the only problem. There is also the use of local government as a centre of power by people who wish to make radical changes in the way in which the Labour party behaves. The hon. Member for Blackburn knows as well as I do that that is so. Those in power in Manchester came to office after five references to the national executive committee of the Labour party. On each occasion the national executive backed off from supporting the local leadership, and I believe that on the last occasion no fewer than nine members of the national executive failed to turn up.

The hon. Member for Blackburn knows this, because it has landed on his desk before, but I return to it because it is so important. Manchester is one of the authorities which have done a deal with a Swiss bank. A loan of £100 million has been taken out through Phillips and Drew. The debt involves no payments for three years and then falls to be repaid, with interest, over a period of seven years beginning next summer. From then on the local authority will begin to pay back that loan and our children will also pay for that loan.

The hon. Member for Blackburn is in an impossible position, because he is not the only one involved. The shadow Home Secretary is a Member of Parliament for a constituency within the city of Manchester and he does not condemn them. The Council is behaving in such a way because it believes that, in the end, a Labour Government will bail it out even though the hon. Member for Blackburn says that it will not. Other Members of the Labour party Front Bench are still unable to condemn and throw out the people and the policies that have led to this impossible position. We simply must have a Labour party which will take a stronger view on these matters.

I have listened to this debate and there is some ambivalence. There is a willingness to wound but not to strike—or kill—or whatever the phrase may be.

Many people come as close as to say that they do not like this situation because it is damaging Labour interests, but it is doing more than that. It is ruining some great cities and some great local authorities. The Labour party simply must act because, at this stage, it is the most powerful engine for change to make sure that the people whom their friends elect in these local authorities are not those who will pursue policies of this kind. It is up to the Labour party.

12.36 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I hope that the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) will excuse me if I do not follow his speech, which concerns the problems of Manchester. I have no great knowledge of the local government affairs of Manchester and would prefer to leave it to the electorate of Manchester. If some of the things that the hon. Member has said are true, it will be up to the people of Manchester to decide at the ballot box. That is what local democracy is all about.

The motion moved by the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) will find accord on both sides of the House. We all agree that local government is

"a vital part of the British democratic system".

It is a feature of any current debate on local government, if one can grace them with that description, that they end

up in a general slanging match, with Members exchanging their prejudices from one side of the House to the other. That has become a feature of local government debates in this Chamber because of the gross interference by central Government in the affairs of local authorities.

In such debates on local government, the usual crowd of hon. Members take part. Many of the Members, perhaps most, who are present today have had local government experience. I have had 16 years experience as an elected local councillor on the borough council of Lambeth and as a member of the Greater London council. I wish to pay tribute to all those who serve in local government, from whichever party they happen to come. One knows the amount of dedication and self-sacrifice involved in being a local councillor.

What is extremely distressing to me—I must say this before I embark on perhaps the more tempestuous passages of my speech — is the way in which local government has become a butt in this House and in the press—an excuse for prejudice and bigotry to run amok. That is bad for local government and, in the sense that local government is so involved in democracy, bad for democracy as well.

We have had a series of speeches from Conservative Members which bordered on the disgraceful. I had to spend my time laughing, because that was all that I could do. Some of the contributions were awful. They consisted of a long string of innuendos, half-truths and downright newspaper lies. I am not accusing Conservative Members of lying. However, they have repeated what I consider, and what from personal experience in many cases I know, to be newspaper lies.

Since 1979, this Government have done their utmost to undermine local government. During the run-up to the general election in 1979, in a political broadcast the Conservative party said that it intended to take Whitehall off the backs of the town halls. However, since 1979 the Conservative Government have completely broken that promise. I shall give three specific cases.

There has been increasing intervention by Parliament in the day-to-day affairs of town halls and county halls. I do not know what the score is, but there have been 14 or 15 local government Bills. This place has become like a huge town hall. It has become bogged down more and more in what ought to be the day-to-day affairs of democratically elected local councils. If we do not agree with what they do—sometimes we do not agree even with our own side — let the people decide in local elections what to do about their local councils.

Mr. Corbyn: Does my hon. Friend recall that earlier this year, in less than an hour and a half, the House decided the budget for the Inner London education authority, thus negating a year of discussion within ILEA at departmental level, director level and authority level? In an ill-informed, bad-tempered and short debate, the House of Commons decided what the education budget should be for the largest education authority in Europe.

Mr. Banks: Yes, I remember it well. Also I remember the ridiculous debate that we had on London Regional Transport's level of fares and services when setting its subsidy for the year. These matters were far better debated when they were in the hands of democratically elected local councils. That is their job. Parliament is supposed to be looking after the nation's wealth, or lack of it, as a whole. It should not allow itself to become bogged down in the day-to-day affairs of a number of councils just because the Government do not like what they are doing.

I am amazed by the obsession of Conservative Members with the various anti-sexist, anti-racist and anti-discrimination policies that have been pursued by certain local councils. If a local council tries to do something about discrimination against gays and lesbians, why is there such an enormous reaction on the Conservative Benches? Do Conservative Members believe that we should do nothing to try to end discrimination against gays and lesbians?

It is the height of hypocrisy for the House as a whole to make a great fuss about this, as though every hon. Member was a macho heterosexual and as though some hon. Members had never experienced the prejudice and bigotry that exists against gays and lesbians. Only one hon. Member, whom I believe we all applaud, has felt strong enough to say that he is gay. I believe that he has gained the respect of us all. Until more hon. Members feel sufficiently confident to say that, the prejudice, bigotry and discrimination against gays and lesbians will continue.

It is no use Conservative Members thinking that this is an outrage against civilisation. It is a fact. Millions of our fellow citizens are gay or lesbians, and it is right that they should be able to play a full and an outgoing part in society. Some local authorities may have been a little hamfisted in the way that they have tried to end discrimination, but at least they have tried, and are trying, and, frankly, they deserve a damn sight more sympathy from hon. Members, whether they happen to be straight or gay, than they receive now. I ask hon. Members to bear that in mind the next time they join in all the muckraking rubbish that we read in such newspapers as *The Sun*, the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail*, when local councils are trying to end discrimination against significant numbers of our citizens.

I should like to return to my other point because it exemplifies the degree of interference by central Government in local government affairs. It is that, every year since 1979, there has been a cut in the rate support grant.

I am glad that the Minister is back in his place. I came with representatives of my council and my two Labour colleagues from Newham to talk about a partial re-determination for Newham. The Minister and his officials met us and he was cordial and gracious. I hope that he will be sympathetic to our case. We do not like going cap in hand to see any Minister, least of all a Tory Minister, to ask for things to be done for the borough, but we represent the interests of the people of Newham and if necessary I will sit down with the devil to try to get some money out of this Government. I have met other Ministers and I shall carry on doing that because that is what the people of Newham expect from their representatives.

The situation in Newham is serious. I should like to give the House a brief synopsis of our problems. We have the highest level of urban deprivation in Britain. We have the greatest need of all 96 education authorities in England and the second highest projected population increase in London. We have the second highest birth rate and extra service pressures arising from the London dockland development. Newham has the worst housing conditions in London. We have inadequate recognition in the

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provision of central Government resources through the GREA capital allocations and, unfortunately, we do not have partnership status.

The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) knows how often I have asked him as quietly, as gently and as persuasively as I could to give us partnership status, but, although he is always courteous, he has always refused.

Lastly, because of Government restrictions based on the erroneous view that Newham is outer London, we have inadequate local expenditure already. For expenditure comparisons in terms of the map of Greater London, Newham is in outer London but, of course, we have all the problems of an inner-city borough.

In the Ridley Mark 3 fiddling-with-the-books rate support grant proposal, I notice to my horror that Newham is about to lose a further £6 million in block grant entitlements. I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that Newham is the only borough in London in this latest Mark 3 proposal that will suffer a reduction in the block grant entitlement. It has gone down by £5·9 million. It is not surprising that there is so much cynicism in local government when there is so much cynicism by central Government in the manipulation of the block grant.

We all know what is going on. We know that the Secretary of State for the Environment is facing a lot of problems from the Tory shires. Many Government Members are jumping up and saying, "Hang on, we have followed Government policies to the letter and now we are to be penalised. You must not do that because we might lose our seats." That concentrates the mind of every Minister, every politician, because every hon. Member worries about losing his seat at the next election. Of course the Opposition think about seats too, but we are thinking only about winning more.

We have nothing to be ashamed of in Newham. We have 60 Labour councillors out of 60 in that borough, which shows how confident the people in Newham are about the quality of the representation that they receive in the town hall and in Parliament. We do not go around bragging that we have a one-party state, because there are responsibilities in having 60 seats out of 60 on the council, three Labour seats out of three in this Parliament and two European Parliament seats out of two. With representation like that there is only one way to go, but we do not want to move at all; we want to remain static like that for many years.

According to the Department of the Environment's own indices, Newham is the second most deprived local authority area in Britain. Why, under this mark 3 proposal, are we about to lose another £6 million, while Tory boroughs like Barnet, Bromley and Merton will get more? Barnet will get an extra £2·5 million, Bromley £2 million and Merton £1·5 million. Richmond on Thames is a Liberal borough, but no doubt the Tories have an eye on it. It will get an extra £1 million. Those are the affluent, prosperous boroughs of London. They will receive more money when Newham has money taken away from it.

The Minister knows that that is unfair and wrong. While the system allows manipulative Ministers to continue to move it around to their own advantage, what credibility has this system of local government finance? Members complain about cynicism and such things as forward funding, deferred payments and creative accountancy. They should look to their Government for having caused local authorities to take those actions to try to mute the worst excesses of expenditure cuts and continued attacks on local government services.

We have heard the new Secretary of State for the Environment — since 1983 there have been quite a few Secretaries of State for the Environment — say that he does not approve of or like the system of local government finance devised by his Government. At present, and perhaps for a few months more, it is in the hands of this Government to try to sort it out. I hope that when the Minister thinks about the Newham delegation, which he said was one of the most courteous that he had ever received, he will remember the problems in Newham, because he also said that he would come to our borough and examine the problems for himself.

The worst case of central Government interference in the affairs of local government during the past two Conservative Governments has been the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils. That is still the most undemocratic measure that has been passed by this, the most undemocratic and politically intolerant Government this century. The Conservative party spends much time talking about democracy, but I do not honestly believe that it believes in democracy. When it saw local authorities opposing the political line of central Government, it moved against them.

We all know why the Greater London council was abolished. It was nothing to do with local government efficiency. Anyone can see that from the mess that now exists in London. Eighty successor bodies have followed from the GLC. It was a piece of straightforward political malice, because that is the major motivating force in the mind of the Prime Minister. She did not like political opposition, so she did what all intolerant people do— she removed it by the abolition of the Greater London council.

This intolerance of democracy within the Conservative party worries me because of what may happen in the future when we have a Labour Government committed to Socialist policies. Conservative Members will accuse me of making alarmist or grotesque comments, but I am absolutely convinced that the Conservative party would not hesitate to inspire a military coup in Britain to thwart the Socialist policies of a Labour Government. If they saw the capitalist system under threat, they would stop at nothing to remove a Labour Government.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Is my hon. Friend aware that, having abolished Merseyside county council, the Government left no democratically elected body able to take over the Liverpool garden festival site? The Government insisted that a private company take it over. That company ran for a year and then went into liquidation, leaving £4 million worth of debts. Mr. Anton, who ran that company, still lives in a luxurious Georgian house fringing Regent's Park in London. Is it not interesting to contrast that with what is happening to the councillors in Liverpool and elsewhere who have been surcharged and disqualified?

Mr. Banks: It is indeed. I notice that the Prime Minister will soon be living in a neo-Georgian bunker in Dulwich. She obviously has a similar taste for such high living.

My hon. Friend is right. Whatever Conservative Members think about Liverpool, Manchester, Brent or

Haringey, those councillors are not corrupt. They do not have their hands in the till. Whether their policies are right or wrong, the Government penalise them. Just think of all the mistakes made by Ministers of both Governments. Budgets have gone out of control, but none of them is surcharged. When the former Secretary of State for Transport, the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), got it wrong, all that he did was to say to the House, "The courts have found me wrong, so let us have some retrospective legislation." Local authorities cannot do that. If they get it wrong, or the auditors and the courts think that they have got it wrong, councillors must pay with their political careers and, ultimately, with their personal effects. Anyone who thinks that it is easy to be a local councillor in an inner-city area does not know the half of it.

Mr. Greg Knight: Is that not a bogus point? Did not those councillors deliberately act against the legal advice given to them? That is why they were surcharged. They did not act innocently and mistakenly, as the hon. Gentleman is trying to imply. They went against legal advice.

Mr. Banks: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was in his place earlier when, on a point of order, I said that, since the Liverpool case was sub judice, it might be wrong for hon. Members to pursue it. I shall not fall into that trap, but shall talk about the matter obliquely.

If local councillors pursue a policy because they believe that it is in the interests of their ratepayers and their communities, whatever legal advice is given to them, the only sanction that should be imposed against them is the sanction of the ballot box. We should not resort to the sanction of the law courts. We cannot sort out local government problems by going to court. Courts are not there to consider the problems of an area; they are there only to rule on matters of law. I repeat that I would defend local councillors who defied the law if they considered that the law was passed by a Government whose aims were entirely malicious. That is true of much of the law on the statute book.

I also wish to mention the role of the media generally in joining the Conservative party and Ministers in attacking Labour councils, especially those in the London boroughs of Brent, Lambeth and Haringey. We are witnessing attempts to stir up bigotry, fear and prejudice based on ignorance of the truth. In that campaign, the Conservative party is ably supported by newspapers such as *The Times*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express* and *The Sun*. If Julius Streicher or Josef Goebbels were alive, they would undoubtedly be journalists on *The Sun*, although I doubt whether they could teach that Fascist comic anything.

I understand that *The Times* has employed a team of three full-time journalists to work up stories exclusively about the boroughs of Brent, Lambeth and Haringey. If they cannot find stories, they will make them up, and the stories will be reported with embellishment by Conservative Members. I suspect that there is much collusion between journalists on those newspapers and Tory central office. Between now and the election, and during the election campaign, a central plank of the Conservative platform will be an attack on the councillors of Brent, Lambeth and Haringey. Conservative Members will refer, insultingly, to those councils being in the control of the loony Left. I remind Conservative Members that the leaders of Lambeth and Brent councils are women and that the leaders of all three councils are black. I warn Conservative Members to be careful. They are stirring up a rich mixture of prejudice and bigotry by selecting those three councils. I ask them to think cautiously and judiciously before they launch further attacks on those councils. They should not be surprised to find that if they descend to the level of the sewer some of the muck will stick to them.

This debate had a great deal of potential, but while this Government are here there will be no meeting of the minds on what we should do about local government. There is no agreement and no consensus. It is no good Conservative Members saying that they remember when Labour councils were different from the ones that we now have. I remember when Conservative Governments were different. The one feeds off the other. The more central Government interfere in the affairs of local government, the more extremist the policies pursued by the Conservative Government, the more they attack local jobs and services, the more there will be a reaction from Labour councillors determined to defend local democracy, jobs and services in their area. We shall continue to support them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I can see at least six hon. Members still seeking to take part in the debate. With a little more economy in speech making, we might get them all in.

1.1 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I compliment the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who is a remarkably good constituency Member of Parliament, although not quite as good as his predecessor. However, how dare he make such statements! I shall go on attacking the foolish policies of councils irrespective of whether the leaders are black, white, Jewish, disabled, gay or lesbian. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that I should not do so, I suggest that he learns again what English democracy is about. I shall be talking about Camden, but I do not have any idea of the religious or sexual leanings of the leader of the council.

As the hon. Gentleman said, this is a different sort of debate on local government from the one that we would have had 20 or 25 years ago. In those days the Labour party was sensible when controlling authorities, and when Conservative-controlled local authorities had to deal with legislation passed by Labour Governments they did not refuse to operate the law.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Mr. Deputy Speaker has appealed for brevity, and anyway I am not prepared to give way to an hon. Gentleman who has been in the Chamber for only 45 minutes.

A major fault of local authorities, basically Labour-controlled ones, is that they are hoping to be the 155th or 156th member of the United Nations. There is no part in local government for debates on Cuba, Chile, South Africa or anywhere else. That is not the responsibility of local authorities. The public know this and are beginning to wake up and realise that they are being taken for a ride.

I shall make a few points about what is happening in a typical London Labour borough, that of Camden. It

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seems incapable of carrying out proper street cleansing, but is not prepared to put this service out to tender. Instead, the chairman of the appropriate committee gives excuses that there is sickness, or productivity problems. If the task was being carried out by a private firm, it would provide the extra manpower or it would lose the contract or have money deducted from the fee that it is being paid. However, there is no sanction against an in-house work force that is not doing its job properly.

I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) say that he approves of home ownership. It is notable that Camden is among the 11 worst authorities in Britain for the operation of the right-to-buy system. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is keeping that under review. When we passed the legislation, we thought that some Labour councils might try to defy or bend the law. One of them—Norwich—took us to court and it lost. I hope that if my right hon Friend decides to take over the administration of the right to buy in the London borough of Camden, it will not try to waste ratepayers' money on going to court.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) talked about the politicisation of chief officers. It is now a clear fact that if the curriculum vitae of a candidate for office says that he is a member of the local Labour party, he is the one whom the Labour caucus has decided in advance it will appoint. That is happening all over the country, and it is monstrous. When I was leader of a council, I would not have looked at a man who put down that he was a member of the local Conservative party. It is the job of a local authority officer, like a civil servant, to be non-political, as it used to be for chairmen and mayors of authorities. One should not be able to know the politics of a person in that sort of public office.

Ratepayers' money is being spent wildly on advertising, which in many cases is inaccurate. Only today I heard of a campaign being run by Camden on homelessness. It has managed to persuade an organisation called the Community Services Unit that the Government are responsible, and that unit has written to me saying that there should be an immediate supply of funds to start to create homes, instead of massive cuts in housing budgets. That would be all right if the London borough of Camden did not have hundreds of dwellings which have been empty for more than a year which it refuses to let to people on its waiting lists who are prepared to do them up, and when it has plenty of money to spend because it has underspent its housing allocations by over £15 million in the past two years. Yet it prefers to keep such properties empty and to start phoney campaigns. So let us have no more of that sort of thing.

Then there are the politicians who ponce on the ratepayer—those who act as political advisers to a local authority and do nothing except give advice to the local councillors at the ratepayers' expense. In many cases, they are councillors in other boroughs. That is an evil which I hope will not long be tolerated by the Government.

It is a farce to talk of rate consultation. The legislation that we passed saying that before the rate is fixed there must be consultation with business interests is meaningless in many parts of Britain. I shall be seeing my hon. Friend the Minister with a deputation from the commercial ratepayers of Camden so that they can try to explain to him why he or his predecessors have been bamboozled by officials into thinking that nothing can be done to strengthen the consultation process.

Local councils have deliberately flouted the advice of their legal advisers and have refused to stock Murdoch newspapers. I hope that they will now be dealt with by the district auditor, surcharged and made to pay. I do not see why the ratepayers should have to meet the legal costs of such an action. That is utterly wrong. If anyone should pay, it is the councillors, who clearly knew what they were doing and took that decision for political ends.

Creative accountancy is a system of local government finance which no self-respecting local authority officer would contemplate if it were not for the instructions given to him by his political masters. The Government were late in closing that loophole. The figures are astronomical and Governments will have an enormous headache in the next 10 years in trying to find ways of meeting them. In spite of all that is being done to close the loophole, other ways are being found to go on increasing that sort of expenditure in utterly wrong ways.

Then there is the problem of accountability. Of course, those who do not pay rates are not interested in value for money. In many Inner London boroughs, fewer than 40 per cent. of the voters pay rates. That means that there is no purpose in trying to say to them that there should be value for money. That is why I look forward to the swift introduction of a community charge so that everyone will have to pay something towards the rates. When that happens it will be realised that not everyone gets something for nothing, which at present is the principle upon which many operate.

The time may have come for legislation to be introduced to prevent local authorities from starting political legal cases. Perhaps there should be a reference to the Audit Commission judicial body to decide whether there is a legal case—not a political one—on which ratepayers' money may be spent. I would support that approach, although I would not have thought hitherto that such a form of legal action would be commenced. That was in the days when local government was run properly.

In contrast to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), I think that the time may have come to examine further the structure of local government in Greater London. I do not see why the people of Wembley, Hampstead or Streatham, or those in many other areas, should have their rights and interests grossly overridden by authorities which do not have the slightest interest in their particular needs. The interesting feature is that the demand for this change is coming from the citizens, the inhabitants of these areas, and not from the politicians. I hope that the Government will begin to consider what can be done.

Those who have contested parliamentary seats for many years have been talking about the danger of a Communist takeover. We have been talking of reds under the beds, but many people have taken no notice. We see, however, the advances that have been made by those who are Communists in all but name. The people can see what happens in Labour-controlled authorities such as Camden, Ealing, Islington, Haringey and Brent. When we paint the picture, I believe that people will realise what would happen if they were to vote Labour at the next general election. One of our great allies, besides the Leader of the Opposition and his defence policy, is the policy of

Left-wing Labour councils. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government replies he will find more examples that we can use to show the public the real mess in which Londoners are finding themselves.

1.13 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The motion states that we should continue

"to recognise the importance of local government as a vital part of the British democratic system."

In moving the motion, the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) attacked every form of democratic local government in the United Kingdom. This is part of a systematic attack on local government orchestrated by the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, in his capacity as chairman of the Tory party, in the run-up to the general election. His happily trained parrots sit around him and regurgitate the same sort of nonsense that is collected by the thought police at Tory central office.

We should be debating the record of the Tory Government since 1979 on local democracy. Since 1979, there has been a continuing process of curtailing the powers of local government, of centralising power around the Secretary of State for the Environment and of attacking local authorities that attempt to do anything to meet the needs of their communities or to redress the many imbalances inherent in our society.

Since 1979 we have seen cuts in the rate support grant. These were followed by the implied threat to individual borough councils that, if they tried to raise their rates to compensate for the loss of RSG, further controls would be introduced. Then the penalty clauses were introduced, which were followed by punitive penalty clauses. At that stage rate-capping legislation was introduced completely to control the funding of local authorities. At the same time, the Greater London council and the metropolitan councils were abolished as part of the process of destroying all opposition to the Government at local levels.

If Conservative Members were councillors in a rate-capped authority, what would they do? If they were faced with borrowing money to continue a capital building programme that keeps people employed and helps to meet some housing needs and maintain crucial social and recreational services, would they quite happily vote to cut, close and destroy local government community services that have been built up over generations? I imagine they probably would.

A comparison of the record of Conservative councils over the last few years with those of Labour councils that have attempted to maintain services will show exactly what the people have in store for them where they elect Tory councils. Since this debate is taking place on the eve of a general election campaign, what is in store for the rest of the country if the Conservative Government are re-elected?

I have had considerable experience of local government. I was a councillor in Haringey for the nine years from 1974 to 1983, and also an organiser and negotiator for the National Union of Public Employees. I dealt with a large number of local authorities and attempted to do something about the wages and conditions of manual workers in local government in particular.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) made an extraordinary speech about the position that the London borough of Haringey finds itself in — or, perhaps more important, the position that the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green finds himself in. He ought to be aware—I am sure he is—that, in the local elections in May of this year, for the first time on the new boundaries, there was a Labour majority within the Hornsey and Wood Green constituency. Presumably, he considers that, if he descends to the gutter and throws around enough muck, he might manage to hold on to his seat at the next general election. That is all that he tried to do.

The hon. Member has never attempted to understand what Haringey council is trying to do in respect of its policy of positive images of gay and lesbian people or its attempt to put itself within the law by the provision of sites for travellers under the Caravan Sites Act 1968. When I was the chairman of the planning committee in Haringey, we attempted to set up sites for travellers. We were attacked by the very same hon. Gentleman for attempting to put ourselves within the law. His remarks about the London borough of Haringey and its lack of respect for law and order come ill from someone who attacks the council for attempting to put itself within the law.

Over the past four years, there has been a systematic media attack on individual local authorities. It was the turn of Camden, the turn of Lambeth, particularly during the period when Councillor Knight was the leader of Lambeth borough council, and now it is the turn of Haringey council. Day after day, Haringey has been crawled over by journalists from the Murdoch empire, searching for dirt and salacious gossip. Journalists have been camping around the gardens of the houses in which Labour councillors live, following them home at night, endlessly phoning them, and going to the schools that their children attend to ask what they do, in exactly the same way that they attacked councillors in Islington after the 1982 elections.

The Minister knows Islington well. He was the head teacher of a school there for a number of years. Does he approve of the media attacks that are taking place on local government, on the principle of local government or on the lives of individual councillors? It is up to him to condemn what the media are doing to individual councillors throughout London.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green—I am sorry he is not here to listen to this, but no doubt he can read *Hansard*—went on to criticise the behaviour, as he put it, of the local council in Haringey and its so-called intolerance. I ask him to tell us which part of the Haringey Conservative group he supports. Does he support the Muswell Hill moderates, as they call themselves — the old wets of the Tory party, who have served him so faithfully for many years — or does he support the Tottenham skinhead clique that is led by Peter Murphy? That clique has disrupted council meetings, shouted down visiting speakers at council meetings and thrown things around the council chamber. *[Interruption.]* It is not funny. What I am saying about the behaviour of Councillor Peter Murphy in the council chamber in Tottenham is true. I shall give some examples of what he has done.

On 20 October, he attempted to disrupt the council meeting while Councillor Grant was speaking. Councillor Pat Salim who represents the West Green ward in the borough of Haringey, decided, presumably because of her racial prejudices, to throw sugar cubes continually at the

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

leader of the council, Bernie Grant, while he was speaking. She was eventually removed from that meeting. A number of Conservative councillors took their shoes off and banged them on the desks to prevent guest speakers being heard. Do Conservative Members condone that behaviour? Is that the behaviour that they support? Do they support the intimidatory Fascist tactics used by those people?

On 23 October, after the travellers' sites joint panel meeting, which Councillor Peter Murphy regularly attends, attempting to raise endless points or to disrupt or prevent the panel's work, the councillor decided to take matters further. This is where these actions go beyond the life of the political work in a borough and become personally obnoxious and dangerous. He decided to visit late at night—well past 11 o'clock—the home of the chair of the housing committee, Councillor Diana Minns, who lives alone with her five-year-old son. He demanded to be admitted to her house and, when she reasonably and respectfully refused, abused her through the letter box before driving off into the night. We need to know where the Conservative party stands on the issue of the behaviour of Councillor Peter Murphy and many others.

There has been a series of newspaper stories on the actions that Haringey council is supposed to have taken. I have a summary of some of them. *The Sun* on 5 November 1985 ran the headline,

"Barmey Bernie is going coffee potty".

The story said that the council had

"ordered its workers to show solidarity with Nicaragua by drinking the Marxist country's grotty coffee."

No such order had been given. All that happened is that some coffee had been bought and it was available in the council's canteens if people chose to drink it. *The Mail on Sunday* on 2 March 1986, under the headline

"The racist bin liner is blacked",

ran the story

"Black bin liners have been banned by Haringey Council because they are racially offensive."

There was absolutely no truth in that. Those bin liners have been used by Haringey council because they are the cheapest available. The summary goes on and on about the various actions that Haringey council is supposed to have taken. *The Daily Mail* on 9 October this year ran the headline, "Baa Baa Green Sheep." The story stated:

"The Council has banned the nursery rhyme Baa Baa Black Sheep and insisted it be replaced with Baa Baa Green Sheep."

That had never been discussed or proposed in the council. Despite *The Daily Mail* reporters crawling over every playgroup in the borough to find evidence of that, none could be found. That is what intimidation is.

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend is giving perfect examples of what I mentioned in my speech, which is that newspapers such as *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun* just tell dirty, downright lies, which are repeated—no doubt innocently—by Conservative Members. My hon. Friend would obviously be interested to know that *The Daily Mail* put someone into county hall who told us, before he was quickly removed, that his express instruction from his editor was to go in to county hall and do the dirt on the GLC.

Mr. Corbyn: I thank my hon. Friend. What he experienced during his time on the Greater London council is exactly what councillors are now experiencing in different parts of the country. The concept of democracy in this country is called into question when we have media which are controlled by so few people who make a great deal of money from lowering standards to the extent shown by the Murdoch empire.

We should not spend all our time discussing the Conservaive attacks on Haringey council. We should recall the fact that the Government have, through their agents at head office, started a smear campaign against a whole series of local authorities. They have chosen one authority after another. Haringey happens to be in the front line today. Islington may be in the front line tomorrow and Newham the day after that, as a marauding band of gutter journalists wander around the country looking for rubbish and lies to print about Labour councils.

It is important that we recognise what lies behind the smear campaign run by the Government and the newspapers against local government. They are trying to hide what the Tory and Liberal councils are up to. A number of Tory councils are not building houses and are selling off wholesale complete estates. They are causing the destruction of people's lives by privatisation, the sacking of school cleaners, school meals workers, home helps and others. That is the destruction of local government that is happening, presumably with the approval of Ministers and Conservative Members.

The question of political appointments has troubled Tory Members a great deal. I do not know if Conservative Members are aware that the leader of Harrow council, Councillor Don Abbott, has announced his intention to appoint a personal adviser at a salary of £15,000 a year. I trust that the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) is aware of what is happening and will write to Councillor Abbott and condemn him for his actions. Councillor Abbott is quoted as saying:

"I would not care to have someone from Militant Tendency working for me."

Presumably that will be a political appointment, to ensure that whoever is appointed as personal adviser is of the same political persuasion as the leader of the council.

Behind all these matters there is the very serious issue of privatisation in local government. I should like to quote from the Secretary of State for the Environment and refer to remarks that he made to the Selsdon group on 3 October 1986. He seems to be a very dissatisfied man, and he is not happy with the amount of privatisation that is going on:

"There are local authorities in America that contract every activity out, even police and fire services. Folk memory has it that there is even one authority which meets once a year to award the contracts, has lunch and goes away again for another year."

Is that what the Government want to achieve?

Mr. Skinner: On the subject of contracts, and as some of us will not be able to speak in the debate because of the lack of time and the long speeches that have been made, would my hon. Friend note the fact that it is not just Tory Councillors that are engaged in corruption in local authorities?

I have before me a statement regarding Eastbourne borough council, which is Liberal-controlled. A planning application has been put forward to resurrect what is known as the Eastbourne marina. Many millions of pounds will be made if that project goes forward. As a

result of the opposition, I have been provided with material that shows that the Liberal-controlled Eastbourne council earlier this year appointed a senior officer to work two days a week, a man called Mr. Maurice Howells. He is working on behalf of Tarmac and Enterprise Zones Ltd., in league with the Chatsworth Trustees, the developers for the Eastbourne marina. The Liberal council has appointed a senior officer to work two days a week who, on the other days of the week, is working for the company that has made the planning application to change the whole nature of Eastbourne. That is a scandal that should be investigated and I hope that the Minister will examine the matter very closely.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Interventions should be brief.

Mr. Corbyn: The House owes a debt of gratitude to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) for raising that important matter. No doubt in the 30 minutes before he speaks the Minister will have a chance to consult his officials and announce that there will be an inquiry into what is going on in Eastbourne.

I shall draw the attention of the House to some of the problems that have occurred because of the privatisation of services in a number of Conservative-controlled councils. I recently visited Buckinghamshire and took part in rallies and demonstrations opposing the privatisation of the school meals service. Sadly, that service has now been destroyed. Instead, the children who get free school meals —there are still some who are able to get them—are given a polythene bag once a day with a couple of sandwiches and an apple in it. That is their lunch. The other children who can afford to pay for their meals queue up and get them in the normal way. The children getting free school meals are singled out for particularly disgusting treatment. In the schools covered by Berkshire county council, where this year the Christmas lunch will be the normal Christmas lunch for those children who pay for their school meals, the children on free school meals will be given baked beans and mash at a separate table. That is the sort of policy being pursued by Tory councils.

In the case where services have been privatised, the record of contract failures is legion. The contract failures in the school cleaning service in Cambridgeshire have led to an enormous number of complaints. The contract failures in Wandsworth have been recorded previously in the House.

Wandsworth is continually being compared with Lambeth. We have all seen the boring picture of the street which allegedly—I am sure it does—divides Lambeth from Wandsworth. There are a few things we should know about the difference in the record of those two councils. Average rents have been raised by 30 per cent. in Lambeth and 87 per cent. in Wandsworth. From £12·50 in both boroughs, rents have gone up to £16·50 in Lambeth and £22·50 in Wandsworth at 1985 prices. That means that Wandsworth's rents now come close to the private sector average rent for London.

Since 1979, Lambeth has contructed 4,610 new homes. Wandsworth has built 60 sheltered homes for the elderly and sold one in five of the council dwellings. It is hardly surprising that the housing waiting list is so enormously long in Wandsworth. One could also compare the services to the elderly and all the other things that are important about local government and one would then see why the comparison ought to be made in the way of comparing the defence of services and so on. For all that, the Lambeth councillors were taken to court, thrown out of office and surcharged and they will be denied public office in the same way as the Poplar councillors were thrown out in 1921 and the Clay Cross councillors in 1973.

I hope that we will return again to debates on local government, because it is important. It is important that there should be democratic rights locally and local accountability and that the problems of areas are dealt with locally, not by the House because the House is not capable of dealing with those. While we have a financial straitjacket on local government and a legal straitjacket on the ability of local councillors to take decisions, those things will not be possible. This debate is important. It is a shame that it has been introduced by the clones of the chairman of the Tory party, who seem to have been repeating all his worst utterances throughout the day.

1.34 pm

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): I ask hon. Members and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to listen very carefully, because in the interests of brevity I shall say this only once. Bristol city council covers half my constituency. Before May, very few people would have believed that what is now happening in Bristol could have happened. The women's committee that we now have in Bristol is an active body. It consists of six Labour and three Conservative councillors. The three Conservative councillors are all female. There are no alliance councillors, in spite of the fact that the alliance has several female members on the city council. The six Labour councillors consist of five females and one male. The male has been put on the committee to maintain the majority, but has been sworn to silence. Is that really representing the interests of women in Bristol?

The first leaflet issued by the committee depicts a large number of women in different areas of society. Amazingly, more than two thirds of them are non-white. Bristol is a multiracial society in which 5 or 6 per cent. of the population are non-white, and I welcome those people to the city, to which they make a major contribution. Nevertheless, it is scarcely representative of the city to depict a proportion of more than two thirds.

The women's committee is costing the city a great deal of money. It is spending £25,000 on a women's resource and trade union centre, and £50,000 on a construction training scheme for women. I have not seen many women brickies or carpenters, so if the scheme is not providing additional female labour for the construction industry the money could perhaps be better spent. That is certainly the view of the vast majority of citizens of Bristol.

Mr. Allan Roberts: They vote Labour.

Mr. Hayward: In the St. George West ward by-election yesterday the Labour party obtained the lowest vote ever, lamentably failing to win the ward from the Liberals, so local citizens are taking note of what the city council is doing and are turning away from the Labour party.

The money being spent on ludicrous schemes such as the women's construction training scheme could be spent on other, better schemes. At a recent meeting in Fishponds, the women's committee was approached by local parents asking for a nursery, which would cost much less than the money being spent on the women's committee. So far, the parents have not received a reply.

[Mr. Hayward]

Only three weeks ago, the city council voted to remove the £10,000 grant for the children's festival. Several thousand children take part in that festival. That is surely preferable to expenditure on minority interests of very little benefit.

Finally, operation and delivery took place in St. Paul's on 11 October. The Labour councillor for Ashley ward, which covers St. Paul's, has announced that he intends to resign at the next election. The prime contender to replace him is a gentleman called Mr. Kuomba Balogan. When the assistant chief constable had a stroke, Mr. Balogan expressed the wish that he should die. Mr. Balogan has also recently been found guilty of assault on the police during the riots. He received a suspended sentence of three months. Appeals are being pursued with the direct intention that he should be the next Labour candidate in Ashley ward. Surely no self-respecting party could support a candidate convicted of assault on the police——

Mr. Jack Straw: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If an appeal against the conviction is pending, surely the matter is sub judice. How can it lie in the mouth of the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) to speculate on the reasons for the appeal, which may well have been entered on the ground that the defendant objected to the conviction?

Mr. Hayward *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If an appeal against conviction is pending, the matter is sub judice from the point of view of our proceedings. I hope that the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) will respect that.

Mr. Hayward: I will respect your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should tell the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), however, that I was referring to speculation that has appeared at great length in the Bristol *Evening Post*.

Mr. Corbyn: That is no defence.

Mr. Hayward: I understand that time is short, so I shall bring my comments to a close. I should have liked to refer to many other matters, such as the banning of the Gloucestershire Regiment and council policy in relation to the urban programme, but in the interests of brevity I shall not do so.

1.44 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): We are grateful to the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) at least for devoting today's debate to local government. The motion, if not his speech, deserves our support. The hon. Gentleman is not in his place for my reply to this debate, although all of us share his confidence in the imminence of a Labour Government, about which he spoke at great length. Indeed, the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) described the Labour party as a powerful engine for change.

Local government plays a central part in the lives of us all. It empties our bins, cleans our streets, cares for our elderly relatives and educates our children. Local government pioneered the services which have done so much to improve the quality of life in the past 100 years. Pure water, gas, electricity, public transport, hospitals, and public housing were all services begun by local councils. Council housing transformed the lives of millions of families and provided an escape from the terrors of private landlords. Today local authorities employ over 2·25 million people and spend over £26 billion each year, which accounts for about 7 per cent. of our total gross domestic product.

Local authorities also play a crucial role in our democracy. Some 24,000 people of all political persuasions, or none, make great personal sacrifices to work voluntarily for local communities. Within a plural democracy like ours, local councils provide people and their communities with the means of speaking against the Government. It is no accident that, under dictatorships, autonomous local councils are the first to be replaced by gauleiters and commissars under centralised control.

Because of the central importance of local government to the quality of life and the running of our democratic system, it needs to be treated with care by this House and by the Government. I regret to say that many of the speeches from Conservative Members today started in the gutter and finished in the sewer. Conservative Members seem to forget, all too readily, that democracy is not about according rights to those with whom one agrees, but it is about according rights to those with whom one disagrees.

All of us have a right, as citizens, to question the individual decisions of local councils, but if we care about justice and democracy we do not have the right to question the legitimacy of freely elected councils to make decisions and to be accountable for those decisions to their local electorates. It is not right wantonly to denigrate and abuse some individual councillor, usually on the basis of inadequate evidence, and often on the basis of no evidence.

I regret that the hon. Member for Lancashire, West, who initiated this debate, is not in his place for this reply.

Mr. Corbyn: Where is he?

Mr. Straw: I have no idea. Unlike the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who presented his apologies through the Minister for not being here, the hon. Member for Lancashire, West has done no such thing.

The opening speech of the hon. Member for Lancashire, West, which proved that he could read a Conservative central office brief, was a tissue of innuendoes and half truths. In the course of his speech he said that the Inner London education authority does not allow police into ILEA schools. It was a claim made in the tradition of Dr. Goebbels, who believed that if one repeated an untruth often enough some people would come to believe it. The hon. Gentleman's claim is not true.

It is true that the Inner London Teachers Association —which is a branch of the National Union of Teachers, but which does not enjoy the support of the NUT nationally — at one stage objected to the presence of police in some ILEA schools. To disprove the claim that somehow Labour authorities are always in the pockets of individual trade unions branches—I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Lancashire, West has now arrived —I wish to make it clear that ILEA has not had a policy of banning police from its schools. There is no school within the authority which does not allow police into the schools in any circumstances

I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that six months ago Commander Larry Roach of the Metropolitan police wrote on behalf of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis formally apologising to ILEA and admitting that the information that they thought they had about ILEA policy was entirely wrong.

One of the problems that Conservative Members face is that they know nothing about our public education system because they do not use it. I said earlier that my children are in ILEA schools. I have sat through school assemblies during which we have been entertained and informed by members of the local police. It is untrue—and the hon. Member for Lancashire, West needs to apologise to ILEA for repeating the untruth — that ILEA does not allow the police into schools.

Conservative Members have also expressed concern about the fact that some Labour councils want to ensure that those with gay or lesbian tendencies are treated fairly. However, they are treading a very dangerous road. It is notorious that a number of Conservative Members of Parliament, some of whom are in high places in the Conservative party hierarchy, have homosexual tendencies. They deserve the same tolerance as Labour councillors are trying to ensure for gay and lesbian people in their communities. Conservative Members ought to put up or shut up. If they say that it is wrong for homosexuals to teach in schools, are they also saying that it is wrong for homosexuals to seek the leadership of this country, or to seek prominent positions in the Conservative party and in this House?

The first cry of Conservatives in their pursuit of local government is about rates and votes. The outcome of free elections by means of a secret ballot is challenged on the basis that many voters do not pay full rates. We shall hear this argument again and again as justification for the poll tax. It is a most insiduous and sinister argument, and it needs to be nailed. Of course some families do not pay rates. Their incomes are so low that they cannot afford to do so, as Parliament itself has decided. Are we now to be told that an income qualification is to be reintroduced as a voting qualification? Is the whole of the struggle in the 19th century for universal suffrage to be cast aside, a struggle in which the "one nation" Disraeli Conservatives played an honourable role? Many of the same families, because they are poor, do not pay income tax, either. Are they to be denied a vote in national elections? If not, what is this argument about? The number of households that pay income tax is little different from the number of households that pay rates.

This argument is insiduous and sinister. It is also entirely bogus. Almost the same proportion of voters paid no rates in the late 1970s as in 1982. In those years, the Conservatives did well in local elections. I do not recall that on those occasions they sought to qualify their victory claims by referring to the inadequacy of the local franchise.

Mr. Skinner: Would my hon. Friend care to look at the facts relating to those who have managed to build a £500,000 house at Dulwich? If a poll tax were to be introduced at around £300 or £400, which is the kind of figure that is being mentioned for everyone, it would mean that the Prime Minister would be saving herself several thousand pounds a year in rates. However, some of those to whom my hon. Friend has referred—for example, the people of Derbyshire—have just been hammered by the Government, who have removed another £22 million, which will mean a 10 per cent. increase in the rates. Do not such comparisons show that this Government are about lining their own pockets, while attacking those who are below the poverty line?

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is right. The advantage to the Prime Minister, if her rates were cut in that way, would be reflected in a further increase in the capital value of her home, so she would benefit twice over—as would the rich across the whole of the land, if the poll tax were introduced.

The real reason for the claims that have been made is very simple. It is that across the country the Conservative party has lost the support of the electorate in council election after council election. The Conservative party has never been weaker in our town halls. Today it controls only one metropolitan district out of 36, 10 shire counties out of 39 and 10 London boroughs. The modern Conservative party is psychologically incapable of coping with defeat, so it searches for scapegoats, and now it seeks to vent its wrath upon the ratepayers.

One of the problems that local government generally has had to face over the last seven years has been the massive cuts in rate support grant. We see crocodile tears being shed over the level that rates have reached, especially in inner city areas. It is no wonder that they have reached those levels, because the rate support grant has been cut by almost £18 thousand million since 1979 and that has led to a trebling of the average domestic rate bill. That is well above the increase in general inflation, and well above the increase in the expenditure of those local authorities. That overall cut in the rate support grant obscures an even greater loss of resources to the areas which need them most, the inner city areas and the shire counties, such as Derbyshire and Lancashire, which are also trying to cope with major levels of unemployment and social deprivation.

The Government's refusal to acknowledge the problems of local authorities is made worse by the now blatant political manipulation, verging upon corruption, of the rate support grant system practised by the present Secretary of State. We had the occasional difference of emphasis with the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) and his successor the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), but at least by their own lights they cared about local government and local government democracy. The same cannot be said of the present Secretary of State, who has shown a contempt and hatred for local government never before experienced from a Secretary of State.

On Wednesday we saw the results of a crude political exercise in which the Secretary of State sought to bend the rules in favour of a number of shire counties in which there are hon. Members desperate to retain their seats. In a deceptive statement to the House, the right hon. Gentleman claimed that the rules had been changed because of new data. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) smiles in a knowing way when I suggest that there was some deception. If we look at the Secretary of State's own tables, we see that the effect of the new data, such as it is, is minimal compared to the effect of explicit political decisions on safety nets and capping arrangements. That is why Cleveland has lost £10 million, Derbyshire £22 million and Birmingham £30 million.

In this debate we have heard a lot about the police, and Government Members have said that they are worried about the police. Will those hon. Members join us in the Lobby? Will the hon. Member for Lancashire, West join us in the Lobby and vote against this rate support grant proposal, which would cut the Merseyside police budget and the grant from central Government by £6 million?

[Mr. Straw]

Will he vote for it? Will the hon. Member for Withington, who says that he is worried about the anti-police bias of Manchester city council, vote against the £2·5 million cut in the Greater Manchester police budget and the grant from central Government?

We will soon see on which side Government Members stand on the question of the police. We will see whether they back their prejudice with votes on behalf of the police, or votes in favour of cutting the police budget. By how much will the police force in Merseyside be cut when £6 million of grant is taken away? Will there also be force reductions in Manchester when £2·5 million is taken away? A great many policemen on the beat will go because of those cuts, and Conservative Members who are so prejudiced against local government will be to blame.

The manipulation is there to be seen. Hertfordshire will gain £6·3 million, and Surrey will gain £8 million. I know some poor people in Surrey, and I hope that they will get some of that £8 million, but the chances are that it will be used simply to cut the rates. Oxfordshire will gain £2·5 million, and Hampshire £4 million. In this debate there have been many attacks upon Labour-controlled councils. In a democratic party, a phrase which Government hon. Members do not entirely understand, it is not the job of the national leadership to endorse every action of local councils. That is a matter for those councils, for which they must be accountable to their electors.

If the stories that we have heard today were true, or even if a tenth of them were true, it is improbable, to say the least, that any of those councillors, who obviously have a direct line to the devil, could ever have been elected as the secretary of a tiddledywinks club, even when there were no other applicants, but they were elected last May, just six months ago, on a clear policy, because the Labour party cannot be accused of developing its policy in secret. We develop our policy in public, the manifestos were there, and people voted for us in larger numbers than for many years.

The hon. Member for Withington is not here to hear the reply to the debate. He told us a sad tale of the loss of support for the Labour party in Manchester. I am glad that he feels for us, but I must place on record the fact that, since 1983, in elections in Manchester support for the Labour party has increased. In the hon. Gentleman's constituency, Labour has councillors in every ward except Didsbury. Manchester used to be a Conservative stronghold. I say to Conservative Members, "Have confidence in the electors." Why are Conservative Members spending the entire day bad-mouthing Labour councillors when, if ordinary people considered that they were that bad, they would be swept out of office tomorrow?

We have not heard much about the true record of Labour councils. I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) and others for rebutting some of the claims that have been made about councils in London. Yes, on the whole, Labour councils spend more than Conservative councils. We make no pretence about that. That is one of the differences between the parties, but we are as concerned, if not more concerned, about true efficiency, because we have a commitment to public expenditure and public service, not a desire to undermine it.

We hear abuse and vilification of Southwark, but when, in all that abuse and vilification, will the Minister acknowledge some of the other things that it has done, and some of the major and minor things that it has introduced? The jobs and industry committee has a training scheme for repairing microcomputers. Associated Newspapers was attracted to Surrey docks. That can hardly be called a politically biased decision.

Mr. Simon Hughes: It was the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Mr. Straw: I understand that Southwark played a part in that. A Black enterprise scheme was set up, and a business advice service was established. A loan guarantee scheme was introduced to assist local firms. A council campaign for home workers was launched. Good recreational facilities, which my family and I sometimes have the privilege of using, were provided. Many good things occur in these boroughs, yet all the time they are the subject of vilification and abuse.

It is a mark of the extraordinary bias of the press that many of the excesses of Conservative authorities receive no attention whatsoever and those of Liberal authorities remarkably little. I ask Ministers whether they approve of the way in which the Conservative-alliance coalition cut school transport in Bedfordshire by £80,000 causing major disruption to the pattern of schoolchildren's journeys, and cut 100 secondary school teachers. Do Ministers approve of the fact that Conservative councillors in Blackpool spent £200,000 junketing on the rates? As we have been told about the need for recognition of and respect for minorities, which I entirely applaud, does the Minister approve of the fact that, in Enfield, guillotines are imposed on discussion? No deputations of any sort are allowed.

Mr. Corbyn: Is my hon. Friend also aware that in the neighbouring borough of Barnet the most extraordinary set of standing orders apply? They are designed to prevent Labour members of the council, because of the size of their group, from taking almost any part in full council meetings, and even to curtail their ability to raise matters in committee meetings. Does he think that the Secretary of State should launch an investigation into what is happening there?

Mr. Straw: We need national guidelines on the way in which minorities are treated. For example, the way in which Enfield behaves compares very unfavourably with the way in which Islington allows facilities for minorities. We have had complaints about the circumstances in which Haringey allowed a deputation. What about Enfield? I understand that it does not allow any deputations. Does the Minister approve of what has been happening in Merton, where the council is trying to close a school in such extreme circumstances that a Conservative councillor has been attacked by other Conservatives for having only dollar signs in his eyes?

Does the Minister approve of the record in Shropshire? Until two years ago, when the Conservatives lost office, roads were disintegrating and there were no local authority leisure services, such as indoor pools. We have heard much about Wandsworth council, for which the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment used to be responsible. Its private auditors, Deloitte Haskins and Sells, rapped the council's sales policy, yet the councillors dismissed the auditors' criticism. What does the Minister

say about the cavalier way in which Wandsworth council has treated an auditors' report? Or is it different when Conservative authorities are criticised? What about Buckinghamshire, where the school meals service for 90,000 children will be scrapped and 1,500 school dinner ladies will be fired?

When will we hear about what has been happening in Westminster? Will the Government take action in respect of the £10 million which has been lost because Westminster city council failed to charge business traders, or will Conservative Members remain silent about this clear abuse and loss of ratepayers' money? What about the £50,000 which Westminster city council proposes to spend on a glass screen to separate the unwashed public from the council? We do not even have a glass screen in this Chamber. Does the Minister approve of that proposal by a Conservative-controlled council, especially when there has been no record of violence at council meetings? The Minister remains silent. It is all right if it is done by a Conservative council, regardless of the abuse of ratepayers' money or the lack of respect shown for the wishes of voters.

In Berkshire, the nursery programme was torn up. What about the record of Kensington and Chelsea council? In an unprecedented ruling, it told a Bangladeshi family of six, who were legally resident in Britain, that their home was legally in Sylhet, Bangladesh, not in Britain, and that they could not be rehoused because they came to this country and made themselves intentionally homeless. The husband of that family has lived in England since 1964 and has every right to settle here. What is the Conservative party's view on that? What is the view of the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office — the hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott), who is the great Left-wing conscience of the Conservative party — especially since the legal requirement on councils to house the homeless is contained in the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, which he sponsored through the House? We want answers to those questions.

Finally, I draw to the attention of the House the remarks of Mrs. Una Goldie Gardner, who is a Conservative county councillor in East Sussex and the former chairman of the East Sussex further education sub-committee. We have heard today about Labour councillors who have said some silly things — indeed, worse things than that lady said — but does the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) think that it was reasonable for Mrs. Una Goldie Gardner to have said that the parents of the murdered Brighton schoolgirls should bear some blame for their children's fate? Is that the face of the modern Conservative party? Should she have said that those parents in anguish should bear some blame for their children's fate, knowing nothing whatever of the circumstances of the case? If those words had been used by a Labour councillor, we would not have heard the end of it.

Mr. Hayward: She resigned.

Mr. Straw: Yes, she resigned. So what? She resigned as chairman of the further education sub-committee, but she is still a Conservative. She is still a member of the Conservative party, and I know of no Conservative Member or Minister who has said a word against that woman. If the same words had been said by a Labour councillor in the same circumstances, we would never have heard the end of it in one newspaper after another, but at least the leadership of the Labour party would have had the guts to stand up and condemn it.

We have not had time to talk about the real corruption in local government, the corruption that will be institutionalised when the privatisation Bill goes through and we shall see in some detail the financial connection between Conservative Members——

Mr. Hind: No.

Mr. Straw: Oh, yes. We know the link between private cleaning contractors and the Conservative party receiving funds. Local government deserves much better than it is getting from the Government. Local government is central to the lives of our people and we want to hear from the Minister what good he will do for local government, not what bad.

2.5 pm

The Minister for Local Government (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): I agree with the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) that local government is vital to our society. It is always nice to find something in a speech with which one can agree. I also share his satisfaction that my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) has had the opportunity to introduce this debate, which has allowed hon. Members on both sides of the House to put forward their views. I shall pick up two or three points made in the debate, show where we are going and then finish with another point.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred to the Widdicombe committee's report. In essence it was set up because the conventions within which local government was working were breaking down, and it was time to see whether we could repair the structure so that, although there will continue to be differences between parties, they can still work together for the good of their areas. We are still consulting and receiving observations, and later we shall think about them and make our views public.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister use his influence on the Leader of the House to arrange for a debate early in the new year?

Dr. Boyson: I noted what the hon. Gentleman said, and I am sure that he can put his view on Thursday, and ask his party whether it wishes to use its time for a debate. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House must decide the priorities, but once we have finished the consultations I would welcome a debate on the Widdicombe report, as I am sure others will.

Reference has been made to the ombudsman. We have had a local government Bill every year and I am sure that we shall be meeting one another again not just on the Floor of the House but in Committee. Technical amendments can be discussed upstairs.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) referred to the delegation that he brought to see me. I agree that it was courteous and to the point, and firmly but fairly put its point of view. He referred to the reduction in grant for Newham after the second consultation. However, there is no point in having consultations if one does not do anything about them. If we had not done something, everyone would have said that the consultations were farcical. We consulted and did something. Some people are pleased and some are not.

[Dr. Boyson]

However, although Newham has lost money compared to the previous assessment, it will still have £26 million more this year than it had last year if it increases spending by 5·25 per cent. That seems fairly fair.

We are not just switching money from Labour-controlled authorities to Conservative-controlled authorities. Birmingham, Cleveland and Derbyshire are all Labour-controlled authorities but are still getting huge sums of money. I imagine that if it were totted up, it would be seen that more increased funding is going to Labour-controlled authorities than Conservative-controlled authorities. For example, the metropolitan districts have gained. As the hon. Member for Newham, North-West knows, all that we can do is change the formula, which works its way through. Limiting gains at one end and losses at the other was all that was done—the formula was not changed.

There is pressure to change the rating system. We have published a Green Paper on that and have promised to legislate. On Tuesday we shall be debating local government in Sotland. We have never said that the legislation for Scotland will be identical with that for England and Wales, but since it will have a bearing on it, no doubt those hon. Members who are here today will take an interest in that. It would be wise to do so, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West will take a similar view.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) talked about the way in which the present rating system is unfair to individuals. A person living in one house may have to pay the same rates as his neighbour, although there may be six people in that house with six times as many incomes and the consequent increase in the use of services.

I am told that, with the development of housing benefit, in Lambeth and Liverpool only one in five of those who vote pay rates. There have been revolutions and we have said that there should be no taxation without representation. But these days we have representation without taxation. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Blackburn must listen. I am not saying that such people should not be represented. I listened to the hon. Gentleman, although I cannot answer the 377 questions that he asked me—even more than the Arabian nights—but I shall think about them in great depth when I read them. In those boroughs four out of five people who vote are deciding how to spend other people's money.

Mr. Straw: That is not true.

Dr. Boyson: It is true. I shall not go through the primitive mathematics of that with the hon. Gentleman. I know how honourable the hon. Gentleman is, as are all hon. Members. The purists and the most self-sacrificing individuals in the country always gather inside the House of Commons. Four out of five people may be voting for a swimming pool at the bottom of their garden knowing that the fifth has to pay. I am not suggesting that that would happen, but if a person has to pay, it makes him think.

Mr. Straw *rose*—

Dr. Boyson: I shall not give way, because I have a lot to get through. We shall undoubtedly have other debates and I shall look forward to them. I knew the hon. Gentleman when he led the National Union of Students. I was involved in teaching at that time and we met regularly. I am delighted that we shall be meeting regularly again.

One accepts that if people have no income, they cannot pay but they must be topped up so that they have some responsibility for what they are voting for.

These days, businesses in Britain are sited not for geographical reasons but according to the rating system.

Mr. Dubs: No.

Dr. Boyson: The hon. Gentleman says, "Rubbish." *[Interruption.]* I am sorry—he did not. He is much nicer than that. He said, "No," in the most charming fashion. I withdraw any attack upon him. However, that is what businesses do and I must find some of them and introduce them to him. He is a seeker after truth and we must assist him to see clearly that the price of the end product of a business which employs a lot of labour and needs much space is affected by the rating system. We have said that there should be a universal business rate that should not be increased beyond the rate of inflation. Business men will then know what they can do in the future.

Creative accountancy has been talked about by many hon. Members. It was mentioned by my hon. Friends the Members for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), who has a long experience of local government, for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) and for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester), in whose constituency I shall be speaking shortly. I shall be taking enlightenment to Manchester. That could change the whole political scene. This weekend may be the end of a Labour-controlled Manchester. I should give warning to the Opposition that I shall be returning to the county of my birth this weekend.

Mr. Straw: Come to Blackburn.

Dr. Boyson: I was an early supporter of Blackburn Rovers. I failed the 11-plus because of Blackburn Rovers. I left the examination early so that I could see the beginning of the match. I do not hold that against the hon. Gentleman. I am not vindictive towards him or society.

Mr. Straw: I know that the Minister will share my concern about the current difficulties of Blackburn Rovers. Is he aware that the team's problems began in the year when the Prime Minister was made its honorary president?

Dr. Boyson: It is always dangerous to give way. I have to say, even with my ingenuity, that I shall have to return to that in act 1, scene II. I shall now hurry on with my speech.

I should explain that I read *The Guardian*. I find it useful to be aware of what Labour Members read. Only a fortnight ago it brought to public attention the fact that creative accountancy has led to the borrowing of about £2 billion. Creative accountancy is rather like using an Access card, because it means that a bill has to be met at a much later stage. With creative accountancy, the bill comes years later and not at the end of the month. I believe that Sheffield has borrowed £125 million. For the first three years it will not have to pay anything, and then it will have to pay £25 million over five years. This is mortgaging the future. If the borrowing is taken far enough, we shall be living on our children, and that does not strike me as an

honourable approach. I am sure that it worries the hon. Member for Blackburn as much as it does Conservative Members. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has said that there is no blank cheque, no easy money and no pork barrel. He has told the Labour party that it cannot expect a future Labour Government, should the British people be so ill-advised as to elect one, to pick up the bill for creative accountancy.

Many of my hon. Friends have referred to the hard Left. I do not call it the loony Left; it is not like the village idiot whom we tap on the back. Within the Labour party is a core which is acting in a way that is damaging the party, and ultimately the country. I have been provided with a copy of *London Labour Briefing*, which contains an article headed "Kick out Cunningham". I hate having to refer to it, because I am sure that it will hurt feelings throughout the Chamber. It has been written by the chair of the policy committee of the Greater London Labour party, Nadine Finch, and Steve Cowan, who is a parliamentary candidate for Orpington and the ILEA member for Westminster, North. The article says that it was written by those two people in a personal capacity. That is very nice! Presumably they could act likewise in a political capacity and then say "Bring Back Cunningham" the following day.

We are worried for the Labour party, which I am sure is as worried as we are. In some areas the hard Left has taken over, and it cannot be dismissed as being only 0·1 per cent. of 1 per cent. Its strength is much greater than that and it probably accounts for 13 per cent. of the electorate. I shall be prepared on another occasion to go through a list. Unfortunately, I do not have time to do so now. Whether it touches on the Honours List or on Labour Members is another matter, but the hard Left spends as if there were no tomorrow and all appointments are politicised. There are 13 political advisers at Brent, including one for the chief whip. I do not know what his adviser does for him. Perhaps he brings him a dictionary from time to time, or his adding machine. I do not know why he needs a political adviser. The director of education at Brent resigned and said that the politicians would not let him and his staff get on with the job.

There are advertisements offering jobs in *Labour Weekly*. That may be an honourable publication, but it is read normally only by those of a certain hue. If the same advertisements were to appear in Conservative central office's "Newsline" that would be fair enough, but that is not the position. Brent is employing a Council Communications officer—I believe that there is a similar organisation in Grays Inn road—and I understand that his response to a letter was as follows:

"We have shown Basildon council how to put 10 per cent. on the Labour vote."

That is the sort of thing that worries us. There is a process of politicisation that assumes that Labour control will remain for ever. This is accompanied by a wish to implement an irreversible shift in the areas which have been taken over. The hard Left runs its own foreign policy as a mini-soviet. Manchester has spent about £500,000 on nuclear-free Europe proposals. The armed forces were banned from the council-organised Manchester show while homosexual and lesbian stalls were allowed. We know about the Haringey coffee from Nicaragua.

Mr. Banks: That is not true.

Dr. Boyson: If it is untrue, I withdraw it. In that case we shall continue to drink the coffee. When I go to Haringey, I shall have another cup. This week, I read that Camden council is considering building its own non-nuclear electricity generating station. What will we get next?

In so far as many of these people may be Trotskyites, it is not unnatural that they want to destroy locality and family religion. In translation the word is "cement". One then destroys the cement of society and rebuilds. Lambeth council has banned the word "family" from council literature, while it runs 20 heterosexism awareness training courses. I do not know whether those courses are to recognise the other sex or not to recognise it by wearing dark glasses, but 20 courses are being run.

As has already been said, in Ealing one teacher in each school is taking out sexist or heterosexual materials. The sum of £139,000 has been put to one side to replace them. Brent council had a free gay and lesbian evening at Harlesden library this week. Nottingham council has introduced exclusive swimming sessions for homosexuals. I do not want anybody to be persecuted but there is a normality that most people recognise — that is, the family.

I cannot answer for everybody. My hon. Friends have been fair in everything that they said. The family is the normal unit. To have anything else is anti-life and the end of life. We have to accept that. I do not want anyone to be persecuted, but children are being brought up with the presumption that the family is not the normal way of life. That is what I am concerned about. Why some of these authorities have gone for the madness that they have, irritating ordinary Labour voters, just as much as they irritate everybody else, seems silly in the extreme. The last thing we need is extremism, or what the leader of the Labour party has called zealotry.

I shall briefly refer to the Maureen McGoldrick case, about which I have never before spoken in the House and on which the leader of the Labour party, the hon. Member for Copeland, the Opposition spokesman for education, the Brent North Labour party and the Sudbury ward, have tried to get Brent council to see sense. *New Society* has called it the Salem witch trial of Maureen McGoldrick. It has been brought against the wishes of the leader of the Labour party and other people. In the High Court, as we all know, the Master of the Rolls, said:

"I cannot believe the local authority would proceed with a disciplinary hearing."

The person concerned is a fine, fair teacher. I have never heard a word said against her in all the time that I have been there. She lives in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). The school is in my constituency. Sixty per cent. of the pupils of that school are coloured immigrants, the parents of whom practically unanimously support the strike. *The Guardian* leader states:

"It ought to be an outrageously implausible slur to claim that anti-racism in schools is nothing more than a cover for left wing witchhunting. Recent events in Brent (and elsewhere) though suggest it is no less outrageously true".

As I said, *New Society* called it the Salem witch trial of Maureen McGoldrick. It is like an Eastern European or Russian show trial. I shall say why I think it is being done. I do not think that Labour Members, if they are honest with themselves and with me, will have a different opinion. There is more. A council sub-committee recommended that the behaviour of some of the governors and parents

[Dr. Boyson]

at Miss McGoldrick's school should be investigated. Not only have they achieved the near-destruction of Maureen McGoldrick, but what that woman has gone through is something which I would not wish on my worst enemy — I trust that one will never have to hold oneself together and endure pressure that she has been under.

She was supported by the governors. As I know, the chairman is from an ethnic minority and is high up in the NUT in her area. The parents called a meeting in support. We have seen the figures on television. Now the governors are to be investigated. They obviously are a threat to the council because they supported Maureen McGoldrick. She has not been the sacrificial lamb that the council intended. The leader of the National Association of Schoolmasters/ Union of Women Teachers says — again I have the quotes and I shall give them to any hon. Member—that "a climate of fear" hangs over Brent teachers. That is what is intended so as to ensure that no one else speaks out. It is a repressive totalitarian approach, which allows no alternative view.

This week I read that Brent head teachers and teachers were not to be allowed to speak to the press. The Inner London education authority employed me for about 13 years. I battled with it many times but I was never stopped from speaking to the press about my views, which often did not agree with ILEA's. In fairness to ILEA, I must put that on the record. This is what freedom is about.

In January, Brent will be short of 150 teachers and 12 heads. The number of resignations this year has been twice the number two years ago. I do not want to exaggerate.

Mr. Straw: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Boyson: I shall give way, as long as the hon. Gentleman does not speak for more than 10 seconds. I hope that he does not speak again about Blackburn Rovers.

Mr. Straw: No, this is a serious point. The Minister has referred to my hon. Friends' remarks. May I make it clear that Labour Members regard what has happened in Brent as unequivocally indefensible? We have communicated that view to the councillors concerned in Brent. I hope that the Minister will respond to the points we are making which are also a serious criticism of some Conservative councils.

Dr. Boyson: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's comment, but, quite honestly, I do not think that they are parallel points. I should like to know if there is any maladministration in any way under a Conservative authority. I believe fundamentally in the rule of law. I believe that what has happened is serious. The electorate obviously agrees, because there was an 8·82 per cent. swing — a heck of a swing — in the by-election a week last Thursday in my constituency. I believe that that occurred because of what is happening in Brent. I do not believe that the hon. Member for Blackburn or any other Labour Member likes that. This is the tip of an iceberg of the certain takeover of the Labour party which will threaten practically every Labour Member, including the hon. Members for Blackburn and for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), for whom I have the highest regard.

There is one area in Brent that was settled largely by Jews who came in the 1930s as refugees from Germany. This week, one of them said to me — it was a terrible thing to have to say—"We came to this country because we feared the knock on the door in the night." I am worried about whether in Brent we are seeing the beginning of the knock on the door. It may spread.

Mr. Straw: No.

Dr. Boyson: The hon. Gentleman was not there. That is the fear, and people should heed the warnings. I know that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me on this point: It is important that it should never spread. If Labour Members dismiss all the comments of my hon. Friends as just political propaganda, they are being very short-sighted in thinking of the future of the Labour party and of this country.

I should like to leave time for my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West, so that, having given us the opportunity of debating this matter, he can, if not pronounce a long amen, bring the debate to a close.

2.28 pm

Mr. Hind: I am obliged to my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government. I thank all my hon. Friends who have taken part in the debate. It has emphasised the importance of local government, which is a central part of our organisation of government. Democracy is its most important part. I thank those hon. Members who have given up time in their constituencies to take part in the debate.

Conservative Members have raised matters of great concern to us. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) used the words, "If 10 per cent. of what hon. Members say was true". After the debate, I shall happily give him documents containing details of the cases that have been brought to my attention so that he can look into them. The details are true. I am sure that we shall be happy to put right and deal with any of the hon. Gentleman's complaints about Conservative councils.

I have been pleased to have the opportunity to raise this matter. I thank all those hon. Members who took part in the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House continues to recognise the importance of local government as a vital part of the British democratic system.

Division (3 December)

2.29 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This matter arises out of lies that have been printed in the Wapping newspapers and one lie in particular that relates to yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to myself. We need to put the record straight.

This morning in *The Sun* and *The Times*—significantly only those two Murdoch newspapers — there was reference to a delayed Division at 7.30 pm on Wednesday. *The Sun* stated that I had been in the Lobby when the Deputy Serjeant at Arms, Major Peter Jennings, hurried over and turfed me out. *The Sun* referred to the "'Beast of Bolsover' Dennis Skinner", and said that Major Jennings turfed some of us out with his sword. I never saw the Deputy Serjeant at Arms.

The Sun also referred to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It said:

"ignoring Deputy Speaker Harold Walker who was trying to start the Wednesday night discussion."

I have had a word with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you know, and you have confirmed that you were not in the Chair on Wednesday night when that alleged incident took place.

Furthermore, in *The Times* newspaper, the other half of the Wapping press, it said that they—the people in the Lobby—

"succeeded in lopping 10 minutes off the Alliance's defence debate."

That suggests that that Division must have taken about 22, 23, or 24 minutes. The usual time is 12, 13, 14, or 15 minutes. I can see that my hon. Friends are nodding in agreement with that, confirming that that is the usual time for a Division to last.

Bearing these points in mind, I met the Deputy Serjeant at Arms this morning and asked him the following questions, which I would like to put on the record in case any of us, including you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would like to take up the matter with the newspapers. It is important that this matter is put on the record.

I wrote:

"Dear Major Jennings,

I am enclosing cuttings from the "Sun" and the "Times" (5/12/86). I ask you to confirm in writing that you never saw me in the Voting Lobby.

I would like you to also confirm that you told me and Stan Orme in the Tea Room that you never saw me.

Will you also confirm that the Official Report shows that the Vote began at 7.32 p.m. and the next debate began at 7.47 p.m. despite a point of order having been raised in the Chamber before the debate took place which suggests that the total time of the division was 14 minutes only."

I have now received a reply from the Deputy Serjeant at Arms in which he says:

"Dear Mr. Skinner,

Many thanks for your letter of today's date.

I can confirm each of the points made in your letter. Since you did not see me either, you may care to know that I did not (of course) draw my sword!"

It is becoming a bit tiresome for newspapers like *The Sun* and *The Times* to be printing downright lies about what is happening in this place. The Deputy Serjeant at Arms has confirmed that he did not see me in the Lobby. *The Sun* newspaper suggested that you were in the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and you were not. *The Times* newspaper said that the Division lopped ten minutes off the subsequent Liberal debate and that was also untrue. The points have been confirmed by the Deputy Serjeant at Arms and it is high time that we made it clear to those newspapers that we expect them on occasions to make mistakes, but downright lies is another matter.

I can only conclude that perhaps the reason why these comments were printed in the first place is that they were tipped off by the dirty tricks department of the alliance parties.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Few of us in the Chamber would be surprised at hearing that *The Sun* and *The Times* print lies. They have been doing that for a number of years. However, I have just been telephoned on precisely the same matter by another newspaper which said that it understood that I was also in the Lobby when the Serjeant at Arms drew his sword. I was not even in the House of Commons at the time. I was away from the House with, of course, the permission of the Whips. I should like to know, along the lines mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), what action you propose to take.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Further to the point of order. I have no knowledge of where the information came from. I have asked my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). We were the two tellers for our party at that vote. So that there can be no confusion, my clear recollection is that there was a discussion between the Clerk at the Table and the then sitting Deputy Speaker, not yourself, about what should be done about the delay that was regarded as going on in the Lobby. There was an order—I have not checked in the *Official Report*—by the then Deputy Speaker, that the Serjeant at Arms should inquire as to what was causing the delay. The Serjeant at Arms on duty began that exercise. Subsequent to that, the hon. Members remaining in the Lobby who were, to my recollection, all Labour Members, including the hon. Member who was mentioned—[HON. MEMBERS: "He was not there."] A group of Members, all Labour Members, had stayed in the Lobby. They then came out quickly. I would guess that there was a delay of some minutes, but it was certainly not as long as 10 minutes. There was the unusual occurrence of the Deputy Speaker in the Chair requesting the Serjeant at Arms to inquire as to what was causing the delay. The story is probably partially accurate and partially inaccurate——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman is seeking to turn this into a matter of debate. We cannot have that. The matter has gone sufficiently far for me to express a view on it.

I should say to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that I cannot know, nor do I think that it would be sensible for me to seek to find out, how the story came to be in the newspapers to which reference has been made. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) for drawing it to my attention. I was unaware of the report in the newspapers until he mentioned it to me. Indeed, so far as there is a reference to myself, I shall have to reflect on that point to see whether there is any need for me to pursue it further. The hon. Gentleman has done the House a service by drawing it to our attention and I hope that the publishers will take full account of what he and others have said this afternoon.

Homelessness (Newham)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

2.37 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): This Christmas will be a nightmare for hundreds of Newham people. While others gather around the hearth in the warmth of their homes, surrounded by the good cheer of the festive season, the hundreds of homeless people in Newham will endure a nerve-wracking time in miserable, unhygienic and often dangerous bed and breakfast accommodation. Government policy has led to a frightening and rapidly deepening crisis in the borough. If the Minister visits Newham, the housing conditions he will see will turn his stomach. It must concern everyone, including the Government. That is why I want to bring Newham's position to the attention of Parliament today.

Our housing stock is in a worse condition than that of any other London borough. The number of unsatisfactory dwellings—unfit, lacking basic amenities and in need of substantial repairs—is 46,923. That is higher than in any other London borough. Most of Newham's housing, 58 per cent., is in the private sector and most was built before the first world war. While the proportion of private properties which are unfit in London as a whole fell from 10 per cent. to 6 per cent. between 1979 and 1985, in Newham during the same period the proportion actually increased from 21 per cent. to 36 per cent. The Minister should readily recognise from that that Newham is different and that it is a special case where it is the Government's urgent duty to take action before there is a disaster. The shortage of dwellings is severe. I have been shocked and appalled by the horrifying increase in homelessness which is now an acute cause of pain and suffering and hangs like a pall of misery over hundreds of my constituents this Christmas.

Because the Government have not allowed councils to build more homes but have forced them to sell homes instead, often to people for whom private builders would have found it profitable to build houses, the inevitable has happened — homelessness has risen dramatically. Homelessness is worse in London than in the rest of the country, but it has grown faster in Newham than in the rest of London. Between 1981-82 and 1984-85, the number of households accepted as priority need homeless in London rose by 42 per cent., but over the same period the figure for Newham rocketed 128 per cent. Again the Minister will see that Newham has special needs and requires special treatment.

In 1985-86, of the 1,400 dwellings let by Newham council, excluding transfers between tenants, 810 or 58 per cent. went to priority need homeless. In the current year, the increase in homelessness has been so dramatic that projections based on the first six months, from April to September, show that homeless cases will take 1,100 dwellings or 79 per cent. of the total. Housing the homeless is rapidly reaching the stage at which it is taking up all available council house lettings so that there is no room for rehousing from the waiting list of more than 11,000 people. Indeed, "waiting list" is now an inaccurate description as most of those people will never be housed by the council however long they wait. Does the Minister appreciate the heartache and misery that that causes and that is brought to me whenever I hold a surgery?

The Government must take the major share of the blame for the crisis. Housing has borne the biggest and deepest cuts in public expenditure and this has been the result. Newham's housing investment programme allocation has been more than halved in real terms since the Government took office—from nearly £45 million in 1979-80 to £21·7 million in the current year. This has resulted in severe reductions in the building of new homes and in repairs and renovation of existing homes. If new building had been allowed to continue at the average completion rate achieved under the Labour Government between 1974 and 1979, Newham would have completed more than 2,000 additional new homes between 1979 and the end of the current financial year.

Our housing is the worst in London and, as more and more of it falls below acceptable standards, the pressure for decent housing increases while the level of council stock falls. The Government repeatedly talk about the right to buy, but this adds not one house to the housing stock. By reducing the number of houses for rent, it exacerbates the problem. As of 31 October 1986, 3,365 council homes had been lost to the public sector in Newham through the right to buy. Council homes are being sold at a rate of 400 a year—far more than the borough's limited resources allow it to build to replace them. Inevitably, they have been the better quality houses, leaving only the older stock for people dependent on the council for rehousing, so the quality as well as the quantity of homes available for the homeless is being reduced.

Another specific problem of the public sector in Newham is the 108 tower blocks of more than eight storeys. Many of those blocks are reaching an age at which their services, particularly their heating and lifts, must be renewed. Service renewal and remedial works constitute a major capital expenditure which amounted to some 15 per cent. of Newham's HIP allocation last year and is predicted to rise to some 25 per cent. this year. Perhaps the most poignant of Newham's special problems is the tragic, ill-fated Ronan Point, of which the Minister will know, and eight similar blocks. All those blocks have had to be emptied because they are unsafe. Even if it were possible to bring them back into use, it would cost some £65 million—far in excess of Newham's resources. A further three tower blocks are now being emptied. The findings in the dismantling of Ronan Point fully justify that, but it has led to the loss of 1,338 dwellings. The rehousing of those tenants, plus the loss of relets and rents from those blocks, has resulted in a dramatic worsening of Newham's housing plight. The Government must recognise that special factor.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that the dismantling of Ronan Point will be completed by January and that, on present evidence, the final evaluation in the scientific report will probably be that it will not be possible to rehouse people in blocks of the Ronan Point design — approximately six of the blocks—so some 600 flats are likely to be lost for ever?

Mr. Leighton: My hon. Friend makes a valuable point and I pay tribute to the way in which he has followed up the Ronan Point story over the years. The Government must recognise that special factor.

One of the commonest causes of homelessness is overcrowding. A family splits or friends are no longer willing to accommodate two households under one roof. That is especially the case with young marrieds, crushed

in with relatives, who start to have children. In the whole of England and Wales only three local authorities have more overcrowding than Newham.

Unemployment is undoubtedly a major factor in causing family breakdowns. The additional stresses and strains caused by financial hardship, the loss of morale and other problems resulting from unemployment can undermine the endurance of people living in overcrowded and unfit accommodation. Since 1979 the jobless figures in Newham have risen by 300 per cent. In 1979 the figure was 6,000 but now it is nearly 20,000. The male unemployment rate is officially 21·3 per cent.

The cheapest house to buy locally costs £40,000 and the mortgage payments are well beyond the average wage. The supply of privately rented accommodation has virtually dried up and what little is left often consists of the poorest quality housing with the worst conditions and overcrowding. Indeed, poor conditions and lack of security of tenure will make over 200 households homeless from private rented accommodation in Newham in the current year.

The borough's age profile is changing and the numbers in the age group 16 to 29 are growing quickly, as are their housing needs. All these factors have led to an alarming rise in the number of households placed in bed and breakfast hotels—the council's last resort. That number is increasing at an accelerating rate. Between January and October of this year the number of Newham's hotel homeless rose by 180 per cent. Over Christmas 1984, Newham had one household in a hotel, but by January 1986 that number had risen to 107. Since then, the numbers have exploded, reaching 300 in early October this year. A total of 375 families in hotel accommodation is projected by next April.

Unless something is done now the crisis will quickly get worse. Already, bed and breakfast hotels across London are packed full and councils like Newham find it impossible to fulfil their statutory duty and are having to turn homeless families away.

The number of household nights in bed and breakfast accommodation has increased dramatically as each household has had to wait longer in such accommodation before being offered permanent housing. In 1981, the number of household nights was 588 and that increased to 25,863 in 1985. It is projected to be around an astonishing 100,000 in 1986. The cost of hotel charges to Newham council has risen from £26,500 in 1983-84 to an estimated £1·75 million this year. That is a burden the council can ill afford.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): No doubt my hon. Friend is aware that it is projected that, next year, the borough could be spending about £3 million on charges for bed and breakfast. That figure, attracting the normal grant from Government, could sustain a building programme of around 2,000 units. Surely this is the economics of the madhouse.

Mr. Leighton: That is absolutely right and I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for underlining that point.

My hon. Friend will be aware that there are very few hotels in the east end of London. Therefore, only about 50 of the 300 households needing such accommodation can be placed in Newham; the other 250 have to be placed further afield, as far away as Paddington, Bayswater, Hounslow and Southend.

These constituents are, by definition, in "priority need". They are people who already have more than their fair share of problems. To be physically removed from friends and their communities together with the long journeys that that involves exacerbates their problems. Many of Newham's homeless have children, and 22 per cent. of the women are pregnant. Others are vulnerable because of old age, mental or physical disability. The conditions in bed and breakfast accommodation can have serious detrimental effects on their health and well being.

The dislocation involved makes the maintenance of contact with social workers, health visitors and doctors difficult. It is estimated that Newham will be forced to put over 1,200 children into bed and breakfast accommodation this year. Inevitably, their education will be disrupted and many will be kept away from school.

Ethnic minority households have particular problems as cultural and religious dietary needs are not catered for by these hotels. The lack of cooking facilities also causes difficulty. Often these damp, overcrowded conditions, diets of cold food and take-away meals cause stress and illness. Because of the acute shortage of suitable hotels, Newham has been forced to use sub-standard accommodation. That is not only a disgrace but a danger to the health and safety of the occupants.

I am not being an alarmist, and I am choosing my words carefully, but unless extra resources are forthcoming and Government restrictions relaxed, it is only a matter of time before the next major fire, or other disaster, causes the death or injury of families.

This recourse to bed and breakfast accommodation is a monstrosity which must be ended. Before 1979, it was virtually unheard of. Now it has become the badge, and main result, of Conservative housing policy. It is not only inhuman but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has just pointed out, it is an insane waste of money. It is extremely expensive and costs more than building new homes, or housing the homeless in almost any other way.

When answering a parliamentary question on 20 December 1985 the Minister for Social Security said that the cost of accommodating a family with two children in board and lodging in London would be £13,150 per annum but that the cost of providing them with proper council housing would be just £5,060—just half the cost of keeping people in the misery and squalor of bed and breakfast accommodation. Where is the sense, where is the financial prudence in that? It is economic and social lunacy.

Bed and breakfast is the most expensive and least desirable of solutions. When I appeal to the Government for more resources for housing in Newham, I am advocating not the waste of money but its more sensible use. Money spent on board and lodging for the homeless is money down the drain. Money spent on new houses and repairing old houses is good housekeeping.

There are clear, long term financial benefits in providing more council homes. The growth of DHSS board and lodging expenditure is to a large extent the consequence of cuts in the Department of the Environment's capital investment in housing. It is absurd to pay huge sums to offer minimum relief to the victims of homelessness, instead of investing in the solution to their real problem.

The Government could make other very real savings from expenditure on new building, for unemployed

[Mr. Leighton]

construction workers would then be taken off the dole and additional tax income would be paid to the Exchequer. We need urgently additional capital allocations. The Government's restrictions need to be relaxed. The Treasury's arguments against this do not stand up against the size of the potential savings.

I hope that the Minister's reply will be constructive and that he will offer hope to the people of Newham. I hope that he will not seek to pass the buck to the council, or seek to blame it. He cannot accuse it of being profligate. For example, management costs per dwelling in Newham in 1985-86 were £183. In Wandsworth they were more—£189. Maintenance costs per dwelling in neighbouring Redbridge for 1985-86 were £767, whereas in Newham they were less than half that—£292.

Nor does Newham have a large number of empty council dwellings, or voids. If empty tower block flats are discounted, Newham's void rate is 4·5 per cent.—less, for example, than in Wandsworth where it is 4·6 per cent. Most of these voids are being repaired and improved and will be available for letting, but the scale of this programme is dependent on finance, particularly next year's capital allocations.

What will Newham's housing investment programme be next year? It will be announced very shortly. The new proposals of 3 December show that while Barnet, Bromley, Hillingdon, Merton and Richmond upon Thames—all Conservative councils in wealthier parts of London—have had their allocations increased under these proposals, that for Newham is to be cut by £6 million. That is absolutely monstrous. It is the opposite of what common sense and humanity require. The Department's proposals will be disastrous.

I hope that this afternoon the Minister will take that point on board. Regrettably, Newham, like other boroughs, has rent arrears, but it would be absurd to attempt to blame the housing crisis on that fact. These arrears have partly been caused by staff shortages, by the change to decentralisation and by staff concentrating on the turn round of voids and on getting the repairs service working efficiently. The annual cost to the borough of arrears is £681,000, and energetic attempts are being made to tackle it.

A major cause of rent arrears is financial hardship. Newham is an area of great poverty. While the number on the poverty line nationally has doubled since 1979, in Newham it has increased by 150 per cent. It is not only that some rents have not been paid; mortgages also have not been paid. No one would say that people do not want to pay their mortgages. However, growing poverty is stopping them.

Figures given by the Minister's Department last week show that the number of people whose homes have been repossessed or who are more than six months in mortgage arrears had reached an all-time high. Nationally, they show that in June 1986, 20,020 families, and single people had their homes repossessed compared to 2,530 in December, 1979. The number of people six months or more in arrears with their mortgage reached 66,930 in June compared to 8,420 in December, 1979. The Minister may mention the £15 million that the Government are giving to the Housing Corporation. This is an interesting idea, but even with the private money this would attract, the extra homes built would still be fewer than the increase in homelessness that is envisaged, so that will not provide a solution to this cruel problem.

What does Newham need? It needs immediate emergency aid this winter to defray the £1·75 million burden that the mushrooming of bed and breakfast is costing. We need a concerted attack on the main problem. This means, first, the restoration of the cuts and a substantial increase in housing capital allocation—at least to meet the council's bid for £67 million for 1987-8 to allow additional new building. Secondly, we need an increase in revenue support through reinstatement of rate support grant and an end to selective rate limitation. Thirdly, the Government should immediately lift the restrictions on councils buying empty property in good condition in the private sector. This would be the quickest acting emergency measure. Fourthly, we need the lifting of restrictions on the spending of capital receipts from, for example, the sale of council houses. The council has that money but is not allowed by the Treasury to spend more than about 20 per cent. of it per annum. That is manifest nonsense.

Fifthly, the Government should look at what other aid can be given under the urban programme and, of course, give partnership status to the borough. I have argued for that before.

Our problems have reached such outrageous proportions that only a partnership will solve them. If emergency action is not taken, the harrowing housing crisis in Newham will not go away, but will fester. Further constraint would result in diseconomies and more money wasted because forcibly ignored repair and maintenance problems will turn into major rehabilitation projects as houses are left to decay until demolition becomes the only option and the bed and breakfast bill mounts.

The Minister must appreciate that this would result in intolerable conditions for the borough's residents in both public and private housing sectors, and in turn lead to despair, vandalism, disincentive to private investment, and the downward spiral of inner-city decay from which Newham is desperately trying to escape.

I ask the Government to help, not hinder us. A programme like the one that I have outlined would, over a period of years, remedy our crisis. I ask the Government for a constructive, co-operative response and not for a dose of those Victorian values which condemn thousands of Newham people to Dickensian conditions this Christmas.

2.58 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) has once again given me an opportunity to spell out that the Government fully recognise the problem of homelessness and are taking action on a number of fronts to deal with it nationally, and of course that includes London and Newham.

On 7 November my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction announced that the total resources for local authority capital spending on housing are being increased next year by £390 million over the 1986-87 plans. That is an 11 per cent. increase in real terms. He also announced that allocations to local authorities through the Government's urban housing renewal unit, henceforth to be known as Estate Action, are to be increased from £50 million this year to £75 million

in 1987-88. In particular, he announced that the Housing Corporation is to receive an additional £20 million next year to generate £45 million to £50 million of additional private sector investment for priority work aimed at getting homeless families out of bed-and-breakfast hotels and at providing accommodation for young people moving to take up jobs in areas where there is a shortage of rented housing.

This year, in addition to a basic allocation of £430 million of housing investment resources, the London boroughs will benefit from an additional £14 million to £15 million of housing investment and urban programme money in support of projects developed in association with Estate Action to renovate estates and improve standards and effectiveness of management. In addition to the substantial borrowing power which the Government allocate to local authorities to enable them to maintain, improve and, where necessary, add to their housing stock, they are allowed to make use of capital receipts. In 1984-85 the London boroughs were able to supplement their HIP allocation to the tune of £280 million to produce an overall spending power of over £880 million.

In addition to local authority funding, the Housing Corporation also provides significant resources. In the current financial year national funding is £685 million, the same in cash terms as for last year. Funding is being focused on 80 housing stress areas, many of them in the inner cities, and including Newham and 20 other London boroughs. In 1985-86, Housing Corporation funding provided nearly 6,500 newly built and rehabilitated fair rent dwellings in London and the home counties. A significant proportion of those dwellings are reserved for those with special needs who might otherwise be homeless.

There is another side to the resource balance sheet—the efficiency and effectiveness with which existing resources are being used. Here I really must express concern about the still unacceptable level of voids in London and about the scale of rent arrears owing to the London boroughs. Although, thanks to the efforts of several inner London boroughs following the Department's circular of last year on empty dwellings, there has been a small net reduction in the number of local authority owned dwellings, there are still about 28,000 vacant local authority dwellings in London, more than 9,000 of which have been empty for more than a year. Nearly 6,000 empty local authority dwellings are available for letting. Efforts should be made to reduce that figure still further, through improved letting rates. At present 11,000 units are vacant, undergoing repair and improvement. Of the 9,000 long-term empties, 2,000 are awaiting demolition or sale to the private sector. Nearly 7,000 are awaiting repair or improvement.

As my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction said, the highest priority in the spending of housing resources should be on the maintenance and renovation of the existing stock. The task is not helped by the appalling rent arrears among the London boroughs. Arrears totalled £86 million at 1 April 1985 and provisional figures for 1986 suggest that they have risen still further. This effectively means that large amounts of much needed day-to-day maintenance and repairs funded from revenue have to be forgone, leading to a large backlog of major capital repairs, which, in turn, directs resources away from the critical task of bringing the empty units back into use.

Nor is the position helped by the fact, spelt out in the Audit Commission's report "Managing the Crisis in Council Housing", that many local authorities have fixed rent at levels that are simply insufficient to keep buildings in good repair. The commission's assessment of rents and housing costs for 1984-85 showed that, net of subsidies, interest on capital receipts and non-rent income, average gross rents charged by London boroughs were £7 per dwelling per week below the level required to cover interest charges and the costs of management, maintenance and repairs. These are fundamental criticisms of the way in which the local authority owned stock and housing resources are being managed, and I would urge London boroughs, including Newham, to get to work on bringing the empty units back into use as a first priority.

Hon. Members will understand that the Government are distinctly uneasy about the suggestions that we have received from representatives of the local authority associations that the way to deal with the problem of homelessness is through the acquisition of yet more property. In view of the evidence that the existing stock is still not being used effectively, and bearing in mind that municipalisation does not usually result in housing gain, we do not feel that it would be right at this juncture to permit another round of large-scale municipalisation. That said, we are in regular contact with the local authority representatives and we are keeping the position under review.

I remind hon. Members that, in addition to last year's 10 July circular setting out ways in which better management could reduce the number of empty dwellings and recommending a greater use of short-life schemes, we also relaxed the housing association grant regime to facilitate grant-aiding of short-life schemes. We grant-aid a London mobility scheme to enable people to be housed as and where accommodation is available, and in the current financial year we have increased to £500,000 the amount of grant which we make available to voluntary bodies concerned with homelessness.

We recognise, however, that there is a need to get homeless families out of bed-and-breakfast accommodation as quickly as possible, not only because we are concerned at the size of the bill to the public purse, with London authorities spending over £26 million on bed and breakfast, but because such accommodation is generally unsuitable for families with children. The Department's code of guidance to local authorities on this matter makes it clear that bed-and-breakfast accommodation is to be used only in the last resort. Now, the last resort is too often becoming commonplace. That should not be so.

In view of the immediacy of the problem, we have decided to make available, from this year's Estate Action resources, up to £4 million to help those local authorities with serious homelessness problems to bring back into use within the current financial year empty dwellings on their estates.

Newham was the first London borough to respond with a satisfactory bid to us for funds, and on 27 November my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction approved £250,000 of additional resources for a scheme on the Woodlands estate to bring back 23 empty flats into use to benefit homeless families. So, in total, this year Newham, on top of a basic HIP allocation of £21 million, has benefited from an additional £1·5 million of Estate Action resources. Newham was among the first of the London boroughs to be visited by the Estate

[Mr. Richard Tracey]

Action team with a view to identifying projects for support in 1987-88. Suitable schemes have been identified and the Department is expecting to receive formal bids shortly.

When we met representatives of the local authority associations in July this year, we pointed out that we are prepared to consider on their merits applications from local authorities to acquire properties suitable for use as hostels providing temporary accommodation for homeless families. To date, only a few authorities have come forward with proposals. Consent has nevertheless been given, within the last few months, to acquisitions which at any one time will afford temporary accommodation to at least 100 homeless people. I understand that Newham has run into some difficulty with its initial proposals, but I look forward to receiving an application soon.

Let no one say that the Government do not care about the plight of the homeless. Of course we do, and I have mentioned today some of the ways in which we are trying to help.

Ultimately, however, the responsibility for finding a solution lies with the local authorities. They have the powers and the resources to deal with the problem and they are free to determine their priorities according to their assessment of need. In fact, between 1980 and 1986, local authorities in London let homes to about 68,000 homeless families. The number of lettings to homeless families has increased under this Government from 12,700 in 1980 to nearly 18,500 in 1986.

I am pleased to say that many London authorities are taking their own initiatives to deal with the problem. Several have introduced incentive schemes to encourage those occupying council accommodation but who could afford, with a little assistance, to buy in the private sector to do so, thus releasing rented accommodation for those who have greater need of it. The Department is currently monitoring the effectiveness of——

The Question having been proposed after half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House, without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at seven minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 24 November 1986

PRIME MINISTER

Security (Publications)

Mr. Alan Williams asked the Prime Minister what access Rupert Allason alias Nigel West has been given since 1979 to classified information relating to the security services.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on Friday 21 November, at column *359*.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister when she first knew that the Westland board meeting and press conference were to be held at 4 pm on 6 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 17 November at columns *49-50*.

Sir Robert Armstrong

Mr. Kaufman asked the Prime Minister if she willl name the official or officials performing the duties of Sir Robert Armstrong during the latter's visit to Australia.

The Prime Minister: Responsibility for discharging the duties of Sir Robert Armstrong while he is in Australia rests where appropriate with the second permanent secretary at the Management and Personnel Office and the deputy secretaries within the Cabinet Office.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister if she will dismiss Sir Robert Armstrong on the grounds that he made statements to the Supreme court in New South Wales at variance with evidence previously submitted in affidavits sworn by him in the Australian courts.

The Prime Minister: No.

"Their Trade is Treachery"

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister why no interviews were conducted with members of the security services to confirm the sources of material in the book "Their Trade is Treachery" by Chapman Pincher during the two months beginning February to the end of March 1981 when the manuscript was in the possession of Her Majesty's Government.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on Friday 21 November at column *360*.

Mr. Mordechai Vanunu

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister whether information was passed from Her Majesty's Government sources to Israeli sources concerning the whereabouts of Mr. Mordechai Vanunu within the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: No.

Security Services

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Prime Minister if she will take steps to set up a team composed of an equal number of Privy Councillors and Back-Bench hon. Members from the House of Commons to whom the security services would be accountable.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the vetting procedures applied in the recruitment of members of the security services; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Mr. Peter Wright

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of the statements made by Mr. Justice Powell in the Australian Courts, she will request the Attorney-General and other suitably qualified persons to give evidence on behalf of Her Majesty's Government in the case concerning the alleged breach of confidentiality by Mr. Wright and his publishers.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister if there have been any discussions between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Administration about any matters arising from the case brought by Her Majesty's Government against Mr. Peter Wright in Australia; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Any such discussions, if they have occurred, would be confidential.

Post-Chernobyl Review

Mr. Strang asked the Prime Minister (1) whether the Government's post-Chernobyl review of emergency plans and procedures for implementation in the event of nuclear fallout has taken into account the increased danger of those Magnox reactors that have exceeded the initial term for which they were licensed;

(2) whether she will state the terms of reference for the Government's post-Chernobyl review of emergency plans and procedures for implementation in the event of nuclear fallout;

(3) whether the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority was consulted in relation to the Government's post-Chernobyl review of emergency plans and procedures for implementation in the event of nuclear fallout;

(4) if the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate was consulted or will be consulted in relation to the Government's post-Chernobyl review of emergency plans and procedures for implementation in the event of threat from nuclear fallout;

(5) if she will list the outside bodies and persons that were contacted or will be contacted in relation to the Government's post-Chernobyl review of emergency plans and procedures for implementation in the event of threat from nuclear fallout;

(6) if she will state the date on which the Government's review of emergency plans and procedures for implementation in the event of threat from nuclear fallout started; when she expects it to be completed; and whether it will be published.

The Prime Minister: I hope it will be possible to announce the interim outcome of the Government's post-Chernobyl review shortly. Appropriate consultations are being carried out.

"Protect and Survive"

Mr. Strang asked the Prime Minister when she expects the film and other material of the revised and updated version of "Protect and Survive" to be completed; and when she expects it to be published.

The Prime Minister: New public information material, which replaces "Protect and Survive", will be issued next month.

AIDS

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Prime Minister if she will publish the names of the members of the Committee appointed under the Chairmanship of Viscount Whitelaw to consider matters relating to acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to my reply of 14 November 1984 to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) at columns 243 and 244.

Coal Industry

Mr. Ashton asked the Prime Minister, whether the other measures of privatisation she referred to on 18 November, *Official Report*, column 432, include privatisation of the coal industry; and whether she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government have privatised one-fifth of the state sector of industries which they inherited in 1979, and will have transferred a further one-fifth to the private sector by the end of this parliamentary session. We have also announced our intention to return most of the remainder to the private sector in the next Parliament.

However, there are no current plans for the privatisation of British Coal. The priority for the industry's management is to build on the enormous productivity gains that are now being achieved and to restore the industry to financial viability.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

VDE Mark

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he received a response from the German Ministry of Economics concerning the VDE mark; if he will publish such response in the *Official Report*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My officials contacted the Federal Economic Ministry in Bonn in July this year, and received a response in October. The response was that no requirement existed in the area of electrical lighting at Government level, or, as far as they were aware, at local or professional level, for the exclusive use of equipment bearing a VDE mark. My officials are investigating this further.

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the Government propose to bring an enforcement action against the West German Government under Article 170 of the Treaty of Rome in relation to the requirement to obtain approval by VDE; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No, as no such German Government requirement exists.

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will assess the impact in pounds sterling of the damage suffered to the British electrical manufacturing industry as a result of the imposition in West Germany of the requirement that electrical equipment complies with the VDE standard; whether he will estimate the effect of such impact on the employment situation in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. There is no German Government imposition of such a requirement. It is therefore impossible to make any assessment of any effects on United Kingdom industry in the German market.

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the extent to which the use in West Germany of the VDE mark creates an obstacle to international trade and the free movement of goods within the meaning of *(a)* the agreement on technical barriers to trade and *(b)* EEC treaty provisions, regulations or directives concerning the free movement of goods and services; what steps he has taken concerning the removal of such obstacles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I have made no such assessment. The use of the VDE mark is not a governmental requirement in West Germany, so it cannot be interpreted as an obstacle to trade with the terms of the question. However, I am aware that West German buyers do look for the VDE mark. Work is going on in the European Community to establish a Community policy for mutual recognition of certification and testing. This will aid products certified in one country to be sold to another without restriction.

Electrical Goods (West Germany)

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has at to *(a)* the mark placed on West German electrical goods denoting compliance with EEC Directive 73/23 and *(b)* the electrical specifications of such mark; what are the parallel specifications of the United Kingdom mark; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In answer to the first part of the question, I have received notification in accordance with article 10 of EEC directive 73/23 (the low voltage directive) of the bodies recognised by the administrative authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany as being authorised to establish marks or certificates. The list of bodies is published in the administrative guidance to the United Kingdom Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations.

In answer to the second part, it is not an obligation for the administrative authorities of member states to supply this information in order to comply with the provisions of EEC directive 73/23. I am therefore not in a position to supply the parallel United Kingdom specifications.

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the degree of

West Germany's compliance with EEC council directive 73/23 of 19 February on harmonisation of electrical equipment.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As far as the Government are aware, the Federal Republic of Germany complies with the provisions of EEC directive 73/23.

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from manufacturers during each of the last three years concerning restrictions on the use of *(a)* luminaires, *(b)* other domestic electrical equipment and *(c)* all other electrical equipment in West Germany; whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the content of such representations, indicating his response or any action taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I am aware of no other representations except those by the hon. Member and the Lighting Industry Federation. These are being followed up.

Departmental Initiatives

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list initiatives by his Department which have been of benefit specifically to the north-east, north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside regions since 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In recognition of the continuing problems in these three regions, my Department has designated many parts of them as assisted areas for the purposes of regional industrial policy. Companies within, or moving to, these areas may benefit from our various schemes of financial assistance.

Greek Cement

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the result of his Department's consultations with the United Kingdom's European Economic Community partners concerning the attempt to dump cement from Greece into the United Kingdom market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Representations have been made to the European Commission about the impact of Greek export subsidies by a number of member states. I understand that Ireland and Italy have in particular raised the question of the impact of subsidised exports of cement. The Commission and the Council will be discussing next month the future of these subsidies and the other protective measures authorised to help the Greek economy.

PCRL Radio Station

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why PCRL radio station in Handsworth has been raided on 30 occasions; and how many other such stations have been raided as frequently.

Mr. Butcher: The Radio Investigation Service has seized equipment used by PCRL on 30 occasions. The RIS has seized equipment from two other unlicensed broadcast stations on more than 30 occasions. Two further unlicensed broadcast stations were raided 20 times or more before they ceased broadcasting. Raids will continue in all cases until illegal broadcasting activity stops.

Counterfeiting

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he intends to introduce legislation to make the forgery of commercial packaging or the possession of dies and similar equipment to manufacture counterfeit goods a criminal offence;

(2) if he will introduce legislation expressly to forbid counterfeiting and to make it a criminal offence;

(3) what progress he has made in his discussions with industry on reform of the law relating to counterfeiting;

(4) if he will make a statement on his proposals to deal with counterfeiting.

Mr. Geoffrey Pattie: The Government are taking action at several levels to combat the threat which counterfeit goods pose to legitimate manufacturers in their domestic and foreign markets. It is the intention of the United Kingdom Presidency to help secure the adoption of the Community regulation on counterfeit goods at the Internal Market Council on 1 December 1986. The regulation would establish improved rules on a Community-wide basis for inhibiting the introduction of a counterfeit goods from non-Community countries into the Community market. The Government will also press for the adoption of a code on counterfeiting in the current GATT negotiations.

The newly-published Criminal Justice Bill contains important provisions which should extend the powers of the courts to order forfeiture of counterfeit goods and equipment used to manufacture them. The Government are also considering whether further changes in domestic law are desirable. Counterfeiting, in the sense of applying a false trade description to goods, and trading in such goods are already criminal offences under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968. However, I have had representations from industry that certain related activities, such as forging commercial packaging, should also be made criminal offences. The representations also point to alleged shortcomings in the enforcement of existing legislation. These representations are being carefully considered.

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many cases have been brought under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 against counterfeiters; and what was the average penalty imposed in each of the last five years.

Mr. Geoffrey Pattie: The information requested is not readily available in the form requested and to produce it in that form would involved disproportionate cost.

Gas Consumers Council

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the names of those persons he has appointed to the Gas Consumers Council.

Mr. Howard: The following have been appointed: Miss Sheila Black, OBE (chairman); Mr. A. D. Arnold, MBE; Mr. R. M. Carver; Col. W. A. Dalziel, CBE; Mr. M. J. S. Gibbons; Prof. G. J. Goodhardt; Cllr. J. C. Hanscomb, CBE; Mr. R. D. Hoskin, MBE; Mrs. P. K. R. Mann; Mrs. S. Shaw; Mrs. J. H. Stephenson; Mrs. V. K. Studholme.

A number of further appointments will be made shortly.

Shipbuilding (Aid)

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the recent European Economic Community discussions on aid to shipbuilding.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) on 21 November 1986 at column *379*.

British Telecom

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, in the case of the flotation of British Telecom shares, how many applicants for shares returned shares which they had been allocated because the applications had been made in false names; how many shares were involved; who were the applicants; and what action was taken against them.

Mr. Geoffrey Pattie: None. However, a number of cases of multiple applications involving false names have been investigated and successful prosecutions mounted. In one of these cases the profit from the shares was voluntarily surrendered; in another the Government recovered the shares when the individual concerned failed to pay the second instalment. An institution also of its own volition returned shares in respect of a number of applications which it had made on behalf of individual overseas clients because the institution itself considered that errors had been made in submitting the applications.

Business Improvement Scheme (West Yorkshire)

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many applications for business improvement scheme moneys are awaiting approval for projects in west Yorkshire; and what is the total value of these outstanding applications;

(2) how many applications for business improvement scheme moneys have been approved for projects in west Yorkshire; and what is the total value of these approved applications;

(3) if EEC moneys unused in a scheme under one European regional development fund heading are redirected to a scheme under another European regional development fund heading where the budget has been exhausted;

(4) how long on average it takes between approval of an application for business improvement scheme moneys for projects in west Yorkshire and payment of the grant.

Mr. Channon: The business improvement services package of 11 schemes of aid for small businesses (BIS) is mainly operated under three separate United Kingdom programmes agreed with the EC Commission and jointly financed with them under specific European regional development fund regulations. BIS in west Yorkshire is operated under one of these programmes, which covers areas affected by the decline in the textile and clothing industry. This programme provides for a maximum overall amount of expenditure, and for the allocation of this between infrastructure and industrial measures, and between the geographical areas in the United Kingdom covered by the relevant regulation. It is open to the United Kingdom Government to seek Commission agreement to transfer funds within the programme.

In west Yorkshire 1,257 applications for BIS have been approved at a total value of £11·8 million, and 38 further applications are awaiting approval at a total value of £0·9 million. When these have been approved the money allocated to BIS in west yorkshire will have been fully committed. The average time taken between initial approval in principle of a grant and payment against a claim from the applicant varies between up to six months and up to two years, depending upon the scheme in question. Applicants cannot claim payment until the approved work has been carried out.

Bankruptcies

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many bankruptcies have occurred in Wales in each year from 1979 to 1986; if he will specify the size of the firms concerned, showing those employing *(a)* less than 20 workers, *(b)* between 20 and 50 workers, *(c)* between 50 and 100 workers and *(d)* over 100 workers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I will reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

BSC (Ravenscraig and Dalzell Works)

Dr. Bray asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy not to accept cuts in plate or strip capacity at British Steel Corporation Ravenscraig and Dalzell works as part of the 11·9 million tonnes voluntary cuts in capacity which are to be proposed by Eurofer by 1 March 1987.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Decisions on the future of any works of the British Steel Corporation are subject to the strategy agreed with the Government and announced in August 1985. It will be for the corporation to consider, in the light of that strategy, what part it might play in the development of Eurofer's proposals for Europe as a whole.

Information Technology Staff (Training)

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the average number of days training per year given to professional information technology staff within his Department who are no longer trainees, in the most recent years available.

Mr. Butcher: Over the past two years to 31 March 1986 the average number of days formal training per year, excluding on-the-job training, given to staff working in the ADP specialism was about 10 weeks.

Rolls-Royce plc.

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about arrangements for employees to acquire shares in the offer for sale of Rolls-Royce plc.

Mr. Geoffrey Pattie: Special arrangements will be made for employees to acquire shares in the offer for sale. All United Kingdom employees of Rolls-Royce with at least 12 months service will be entitled to approximately £70 of free shares, plus approximately £2 of free shares for each year of service. Secondly, eligible employees who invest up to £150 in the offer will be entitled on a 2:1 basis to further free shares up to £300. Thirdly, eligible employees will be

entitled to a discount of 10 per cent. on the offer price of any further shares purchased in the offer, subject to a maximum purchase value of £2,000.

In addition to these special arrangements, all eligible employees, irrespective of length of service, and pensioners of Rolls-Royce residing in the United Kingdom will be entitled to make priority applications at the offer price for up to 5 per cent. of the offered shares, subject to a maximum purchase per employee or pensioner of £10,000.

Insider Dealing

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has to how many cases of suspected insider dealing have been investigated by the Stock Exchange Council since 1980; how many of these cases were referred to his Department for further investigation; what was the total number of inspectors appointed by his Department to report on such cases; and what is the number of prosecutions brought arising from their report.

Mr. Howard: The Stock Exchange has referred about 100 cases of suspected insider dealing to my Department since the relevant legislation came into effect. The investigation of possible offences which my right hon. Friend is responsible for prosecuting is normally carried out by investigating officers who are members of the Department's staff. The power to appoint inspectors became available only on 15 November, since when there has been one appointment. To date, there have been nine prosecutions for insider dealing.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, as part of the Government's plans to deal with insider dealing, he will bring forward legislation to require those who purchase shares to register the beneficial owner of the shares.

Mr. Howard: The registration of shares is a matter for the issuing company rather than the purchaser. I do not consider it necessary, for the purposes of pursuing insider dealing, to add to the means which the law already provides for discovering the beneficial ownership of shares. Apart from section 177 of the Financial Services Act, these include sections 442 and 444 of the Companies Act 1985, which give the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry powers to investigate the ownership of companies and to obtain information as to those interested in shares.

AE plc (Share Dealings)

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to receive the report of the inspectors appointed by him to inquire into the share dealing in AE plc by Mr. Collier.

Mr. Howard: When the inspectors report is a matter for them. I am sure that they will complete their investigations as quickly as possible.

Mr. I. Boesky (Share Dealings)

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he intends to appoint inspectors to report on information received by his Department from the Securities and Exchange Commission arising from its investigation into the dealing of Mr. Boesky; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I am always ready to appoint inspectors where there is a good reason to do so.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Peter Wright (Court Case)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General if he has any plans to appear in person on behalf of Her Majesty's Government in the case currently being heard in Australia in relation to Mr. Peter Wright's book on the security services; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No.

Security (Publications)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General what discussions he has had with Mr. Chapman Pincher regarding the publication of matters relating to national security; on what dates; and at what locations.

The Attorney-General: It would be inappropriate for me to comment on matters which are or may be at issue in the proceedings concerning the Peter Wright case in Australia while those proceedings continue.

ENERGY

Coal Production

11. **Mr. McLoughlin** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the most recent figures for coal production in the coal industry; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Current output in the coal industry has been maintained at broadly the same level as in 1985, with output per man shift reaching 3·55 tons in the week ending 1 November 1986 compared with 2·87 tons in the same week last year.

13. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the latest productivity figures in the coal industry.

Mr. David Hunt: For the week ending 1 November average output per man shift was 3·55 tonnes. This is the sixth time the record has been broken in seven weeks and demonstrates the excellent team work by management and mineworkers throughout the coalfields. This is good news for British Coal and its customers.

24. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the latest productivity figures for each area of British Coal.

Mr. David Hunt: British Coal's average deep-mined revenue output per man shift for the week ending 1 November was as follows:

	Tonnes
Scotland	2·44
North East	3·01
North Yorkshire	4·66
South Yorkshire	2·68
North Derbyshire	4·38
Nottingham	3·51
South Midlands	3·18
Kent	2·97
Western	3·68
South Wales	2·68

The figures for north Yorkshire, north Derbyshire, Kent and western areas represent weekly productivity records.

Home Heating

14. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what advice his Department makes available to elderly people to try to ensure cost-effective heating of their homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department's Energy Efficiency Office is currently giving such advice through the biggest publicity campaign ever aimed at improving the energy efficiency of the domestic sector. The office publishes a full range of supporting literature, and elderly people are also helped through the 120 new Government-backed voluntary sector insulation projects which have started during Energy Efficiency Year.

Alternative Energy Sources

15. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to have discussions with the European Community Council of Ministers about alternative sources of energy.

Mr. David Hunt: Alternative sources of energy are on the agenda at the Council of Energy Ministers on Wednesday 26 November. I will represent the United Kingdom at this meeting. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is the current President of the Council.

Power Station Construction

16. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many new power stations have been ordered by the Central Electricity Generating Board since May 1979.

Mr. Goodlad: As far as major new stations are concerned, the board placed an order for Heysham II in 1981.

Northern Region

19. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will estimate the number of jobs directly and indirectly dependent in the northern region on the nuclear industry.

Mr. Goodlad: There are some 24,000 people directly employed by the nuclear industry in the north of England. A much larger number are employed in the construction, manufacturing and service industries which support them. Well over 100,000 jobs depend directly or indirectly on the industry over the country as a whole. United Kingdom also benefits from the important contribution which nuclear power makes to the cheapening of our electricity supplies.

Substitute Natural Gas

20. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what role his Department will have, following the privatisation of British Gas, in the development of substitute natural gas.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: This will continue to be a matter for the commercial judgment of British Gas.

Wind Energy

22. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about his Department's efforts to promote wind energy.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department is supporting a comprehensive research and development programme aimed at exploiting the United Kingdom wind resource for electricity generation. This programme which, since 1979, has cost some £17 million, has largely been directed to the development of large wind turbines for the UK grid operation and includes major projects on Orkney and at Carmarthen bay.

North Sea (Exploration and Development)

23. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement detailing any further initiatives he may be considering to stimulate North sea oil exploration and development work.

30. **Mr. Rowlands** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what estimate his Department has of job prospects of North sea oil developments, on and offshore.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The Government are concerned that worthwhile onshore and offshore oil and gas activity continues. Already this year I have approved 12 projects worth over £2 billion. In March I awarded 75 new onshore exploration licences. I am proceeding with the tenth round of offshore licensing, and I hope to announce awards by next summer. The projects I have approved and work flowing from new onshore and offshore licences will provide continuing job prospects in this vital sector of the economy.

Opencast Mining (Manchester)

25. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will list the opencast mining projects currently being considered by British Coal in Greater Manchester.

Mr. David Hunt: I understand that British Coal has applied for planning permission for Garnet and Lomax opencast sites in the Greater Manchester area. It has also applied for planning permission for a coal disposal point at Aldreds. Future applications are a matter, in the first instance, for British Coal.

British Coal Enterprise Ltd.

26. **Mr. Cash** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest number of jobs created by British Coal Enterprise Ltd.

Mr. David Hunt: By the end of October, British Coal Enterprise Ltd. had assisted in the creation of 11,776 new job opportunities.

Industrial Gas Prices

27. **Miss Boothroyd** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he proposes to take to reduce the price of industrial gas for United Kingdom manufacturers to the levels enjoyed by our European competitors.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Contract gas prices are a matter for commercial negotiation between British Gas and its customers taking account of market pressures from competing fuels.

Energy Efficiency Year

28. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on progress made so far during energy efficiency year.

Mr. David Hunt: Energy Efficiency Year continues to make a strong impact. Some 1,300 events have already taken place supporting and promoting our initiatives in every sector of the community.

In industry and commerce, the Energy Efficiency Office's schemes and programmes are now leading to savings worth over £500 million a year. Around 7,500 energy efficiency surveys under our survey scheme have identified savings worth £250 million. Two hundred and fifty projects under our energy efficiency demonstration scheme have stimulated savings worth more than £120 million a year. Monitoring and targeting systems have been completed in 15 sectors and are being implemented at some 200 major energy-using sites. Every £1 spent on M & T by Government is identifying savings of over £40 a year; 313 voluntary insulation projects have been established and over 200,000 homes insulated, creating some 5,000 job opportunities.

Energy Conservation and Efficiency

29. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the amount of money saved in 1985 by local authorities and industry adopting energy conservation policies; how this will compare with the projected figures for 1986; and if he will make a statement.

50. **Mr. William Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the aggregate annual savings generated by energy efficiency schemes undertaken by industry and commerce; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: It is estimated that energy efficiency measures undertaken by industry and commerce are currently leading to savings of over £500 million a year. A comparable figure is not available for local authorities. However, they have responded positively to the Audit Commission report of 1985, which identified savings of at least £135 million a year for local authorities in England and Wales.

Nuclear Energy

31. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received about the future of nuclear energy in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Goodlad: I have received many representations about various aspects of civil nuclear power, including its safety and its economic and strategic importance.

Combined Heat and Power, Leicester

32. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the latest situation regarding the proposals of the combined heat and power consortium in Leicester.

Mr. David Hunt: I understand the Leicester Combined Heat and Power Consortium expects to make available the results of its studies shortly.

Sizewell B (Report)

33. **Mr. Wrigglesworth** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has received the report of the public inquiry into the proposed Sizewell B pressurised water reactor.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) on 6 November at column *548*.

Electricity Demand

34. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the expected change in the demand for electricity between 1988 and 1990.

Mr. Goodlad: The sales forecast for England and Wales adopted by the Electricity Council in October 1986 includes unit requirements on the Central Electricity Generating Board of 240·5 terawatt hours in 1987-88 and 249·0 hours in 1989-90, an increase of 3·5 per cent.

Area Electricity Boards (External Audit)

35. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to seek to introduce competition for external audit work for area electricity boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend has decided to introduce competition into the appointment of auditors to the Electricity Supply Industry (England and Wales). The process will start with the appointment of auditors to the Electricity Council and the South Western Electricity Board for the financial year 1987-88.

Coal Industry (Capacity)

36. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the reduction in the capacity of the coal industry over the last two years.

Mr. David Hunt: Deep-mined output in 1985-86 was 88·4 mt, compared with 90·1 mt in 1983-84, and is continuing at broadly this level in 1986-87.

Tidal Energy

37. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to promote tidal energy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: As my right hon. Friend announced on 9 July, the Department of Energy has initiated a major extension of its programme of research and development on tidal energy. The chief features of the programme comprise: advanced investigation and site exploration of a Severn barrage near to Cardiff and Weston-super-Mare; support for the cost of studies into a barrage across the Mersey estuary conducted by the Mersey Barrage Company; a set of generic tidal energy studies complementary to these two major projects.

I regard tidal energy as one of the most promising of the renewable energy sources, and I therefore wish to discover as quickly as possible whether it can make a significant and economic contribution to electricity supply.

Nuclear Power (Co-operation and Exchange of Information)

38. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on progress on international co-operation and exchange of information relating to civil nuclear power issues, following the Tokyo summit communiqué.

Mr. Peter Walker: Since the Tokyo summit communiqué was issued in May, the IAEA has adopted and opened for signature two new conventions on early notification of a nuclear accident, and mutual assistance in the case of a nuclear accident or radiological emergency. Fifty-eight states have already signed these conventions, including the United Kingdom.

The IAEA is considering a number of further proposals.

Nuclear Generation

39. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the current effect upon electricity prices of nuclear generation.

51. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the current effect on electricity prices of nuclear generated electricity.

Mr. Goodlad: At present, nuclear generation accounts for around 17 per cent. of electricity output in England and Wales. The fuel cost advantage of the CEGB's existing nuclear power stations is such that they are significantly cheaper to run than even the most modern coal-fired plant. The industry estimates that, at the current level of nuclear output, running costs are lower that they would otherwise be by well over £500 million per annun, equivalent to about 5 per cent. on prices. This does not take into account the additional costs which would arise in any replacement of existing nuclear stations by other forms of generation.

British Gas

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the best available estimate of the take-up of British Gas shares by the general public.

Mr. Peter Walker: Over 7 million people registered their interest in buying shares with the British Gas share information office before the offer was made. The prospectus will be widely available from tomorrow in banks, post offices, British Gas showrooms and in the press.

Electricity Demand

41. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of electricity demand for the period 1990 to 2000; and to what extent domestically produced electricity will be able to meet this demand.

Mr. Goodlad: The sales forecast for England and Wales adopted by the Electricity Council in October 1986 includes a unit requirement on the Central Electricity Generating Board of 271·3 terawatt hours in 1995-96. The board expects, as in the past, to meet the overwhelming bulk of the requirment from its own power stations.

Energy Monitoring and Targeting

42. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what support his Department is giving to energy monitoring and targeting projects; and if he will make a statement

Mr. David Hunt: The Energy Efficiency Office is supporting a monitoring and targeting (M&T) programme aimed at developing and introducing M&T within 40 major energy consuming sectors: 25 sectoral projects are under way at present; 11 systems have already been fully developed for promotion within their sector. The programme is proving highly effective: savings averaging 10 per cent. are being realised from the adoption of M&T systems. The programme aims to achieve energy savings of some £300 million per year.

Energy Efficiency Office

43. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will report on the achievements of the Energy Efficiency Office to date.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer to the answer given earlier today to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn).

Fast Breeder Reactor Programme

44. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will report on the fast breeder reactor programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The research and development we are undertaking, in collaboration with our European partners, continues to provide encouraging evidence about the future potential of the fast reactor for electricity generation. The Government have always envisaged that the electricity supply industry would bear an increasing share of the cost of this programme as it progressed towards the commercial phase. I am pleased to announce that, from 1987-88, the CEGB will fund some 30 per cent. of the AEA programme.

Nuclear Generation (Manpower)

45. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the number of jobs currently provided by the generation of nuclear power; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB and SSEB currently employ over 11,000 people directly for nuclear power generation. Both the UKAEA and BNFL also generate electricity from some of their nuclear plant, but given the nature of their respective operations it is not possible to give a precise figure for the numbers employed in the generation of electricity. Overall, the nuclear industry directly employs about 44,000 people. Many thousands more are employed on the industry's major capital projects in maintaining and servicing the industry's existing sites and in providing local infrastructure. Well over 100,000 jobs depend directly or indirectly on the industry.

Land-fill Gas

46. **Mr. Stevens** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps is he taking to promote the use of energy from land-fill gas.

Mr. David Hunt: On 28 October I addressed a land-fill gas conference in Solihull at which over 200 delegates attended. The event was part of the United Kingdom-United States collaborative effort on energy r,d and Demonstration.

My Department has so far committed £1·85 million through its r,d and Demonstration Scheme programmes towards the use of land-fill gas as fuel. The promotion and take-up of this technology should eventually lead to the production of around 3 million tonnes of coal equivalent a year from land-fill sites.

Renewables Programme

47. **Mr. Norris** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what success his Department has had in attracting contributions from external sources for the renewables programme.

Mr. David Hunt: We have had considerable success in attracting external contributions to our renewables programme. Since 1979 over £14 million has been contributed. Estimate contributions for 1986-87 are £3 million compared to £2·1 million in 1985-86. (The figures include contractors' contribution to projects on waste as a fuel and passive solar design under the Departments energy efficiency demonstration scheme).

British Coal (Scotland)

48. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current numbers employed in the Scottish areas of British Coal.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of men on colliery books in British Coal's Scottish area at 8 November was 5,468.

Chernobyl

49. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about his forthcoming visit to Chernobyl.

Mr. Peter Walker: I shall be visiting Chernobyl in mid-December at the invitation of the USSR Government. I hope to be able to inspect the site of the accident and to have discussions with the Soviet authorities on nuclear safety matters.

Coal Mines (Vale of Belvoir)

52. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what plans the Government have to allow the opening of further coal mines in the Vale of Belvoir, and in particular at the Cadley Hill site.

Mr. David Hunt: Responsibility for proposed new mining developments lies in the first instance with British Coal.

South Wales Coalfield

53. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal to discuss the future of the south Wales coalfield.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry, including from time to time the South Wales coalfield.

Coking Coal

54. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the latest available figures for imports of coking coal.

Mr. David Hunt: During the period January to September 1986 imports of coking coal were 5 million tonnes. This compared with imports of 7·1 million tonnes in 1985.

Power Generating Plant

55. **Mr. Orme** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he will next meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and if he will discuss with him a programme for power generating plant orders.

Mr. Peter Walker: I meet the chairman regularly and we discuss a wide range of issues.

Drilling Rigs

56. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many drilling rigs are currently active within the United Kingdom continental shelf; and how this number compares with the position two years ago.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: In the week ending 27 October 1986, 27 mobile drilling rigs were active within the United Kingdom continental shelf. In the last week of October 1984, 49 rigs were active.

Plutonium Export Contracts

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will take steps to renegotiate the confidentiality clauses in plutonium export contracts to permit free circulation of information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: No.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. John McCarthy

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department has taken to identify the whereabouts of John McCarthy, the Worldwide Television News journalist, who was kidnapped in Beirut last April and to secure his safe release.

Mr. Renton: We continue to follow every possible lead but regrettably still do not have any hard information as to Mr. McCarthy's whereabouts.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. Stanbrook asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Anglo-Irish Agreement was registered at the United Nations.

Mr. Eggar: The Anglo-Irish agreement was registered at the United Nations on 20 December 1985.

Royal Mail Ship St. Helena

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to announce the placing of a contract for a replacement vessel for Royal Mail ship St. Helena.

Mr. Eggar: We are now working out the precise details of the most appropriate type of ship to build, and the timing of its construction. We hope to make decisions on these points shortly.

Visa Applications

Mr. Clelland asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what additional staff have been recruited to date to posts in Dhaka, Islamabad and Delhi to process visa applications.

Mr. Eggar: The answer is: in Dhaka, four entry clearance officers and 11 locally-engaged support staff; in Islamabad, one second second secretary, four entry clearance officers, and 12 locally-engaged support staff; in New Delhi, one second secretary, three entry clearance officers and nine locally-engaged support staff.

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current waiting period for visit visas from applicants in the Indian subcontinent.

Mr. Eggar: Over 95 per cent. of personal applicants are at present dealt with on the day of application. Those requiring more than a cursory interview may have to wait up to a maximum of 12 days (New Delhi). There is no backlog of postal applications at any post.

WALES

Private Patients

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for 1985 for each health authority and for Wales as a whole *(a)* the number of pay beds, *(b)* the number of discharges and deaths of private patients, *(c)* the average number of pay beds occupied by private patients, *(d)* the percentage occupancy and *(e)* the number of private out-patient attendances.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The required information is given in the following table:

	Number of pay beds authorised[1]	*Discharges and deaths of private patients*	*Average number of beds occupied daily*	*Percentage occupancy*	*Private out-patient attendances*
Clwyd	12	621	6·74	56·2	2,151
East Dyfed	7	273	2·89	41·3	1,249
Gwent	1	—	—	—	—
Gwynedd	8	270	3·50	43·7	129
Mid Glamorgan	3	40	0·27	9·0	269
Powys	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	11[2]	84	1·69	15·4	591
West Glamorgan	4	127	1·02	25·5	330
Pembrokeshire	3	104	0·94	31·3	815
WALES	49[2]	1,519	17·05	34·8	5,534

[1]At 31 December 1985.
[2]Excludes 2 beds at South Glamorgan DHA for emergency use only.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each year since 1979 in Wales *(a)* the number of National Health Service pay beds, *(b)* the average number occupied by private patients, *(c)* the occupancy rate as a percentage, *(d)* the number of private in-patients and *(e)* the number of private out-patients.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The required information for Wales is given in the following table:

	Number of pay beds authorised[1]	*Average number of beds occupied daily*	*Percentage occupancy*	*Number of private in-patients*[4]	*Number of private out-patients*[5]
1979	39	14·86	38·1	1,087	528
1980	36	17·13	47·6	1,234	850
1981	[2]46	16·42	35·7	1,349	1,008
1982	[2]47	13·31	28·3	945	1,192
1983	[2]47	14·60	31·1	1,271	1,980
1984	[3]49	15·12	30·9	1,315	4,092
1985	[2]49	17·05	34·8	1,519	5,534

[1] At 31 December for each year.
[2] Excludes 2 beds for emergency use only.
[3] Excludes 3 beds for emergency use only.
[4] Discharges and deaths of private patients.
[5] Total out-patient attendances by private patients.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the health authorities in Wales for which statutory auditors have issued reports of poor control over private in-patient care since his answer of 25 November 1985, *Official Report*, column 461.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The statutory auditor has recently re-reported on some of the control weaknesses identified in the 1984 audit review of the management of private practice in respect of the following authorities: Clwyd, East Dyfed, Gwent, Gwynedd, Mid Glamorgan and Pembrokeshire.

The Department is continuing its follow-up action on the original reports but clearance will not be considered until all outstanding points have been resolved. In re-reporting on these outstanding matters, the statutory auditor has acknowledged the progress made in remedying many of the points made in his original reports.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for 1985 for each health authority and for Wales as a whole the income from *(a)* private resident patients, *(b)* private non-resident patients and *(c)* services provided to private medical institutions; and if he will give the bad debts written off in each category.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is given in the following tables:

Income from private patients
1985-86

	Private resident patients (section 65 of the NHS Act 1977) £	*Private non-resident patients (section 66 of the NHS Act 1977)* £	*Accommodation and services provided under section 58 of the NHS Act 1977* £
Clwyd	284,301	79,143	—
East Dyfed	119,515	33,824	17
Gwent	—	—	16,063
Gwynedd	189,176	8,302	3,642
Mid Glamorgan	18,186	8,972	—
Pembrokeshire	49,752	12,498	—
Powys	—	—	342
South Glamorgan	66,618	24,557	—
West Glamorgan	43,087	43,252	—
Wales	770,635	210,548	20,064

Bad debts written off
1985-86

	Private resident patients £	*Private non-resident patients* £
Clwyd	2,379	557
East Dyfed	304	196
Gwent	—	—
Gwynedd	—	47
Mid Glamorgan	466	158
Pembrokeshire	478	1,715
Powys	—	—
South Glamorgan	—	8
West Glamorgan	—	—
Wales	3,627	2,681

Source: The Annual Accounts of Health Authorities.

Notes:

(1) Figures for 1985-86 are, at this stage, provisional.

(2) Income collected under section 58 of the NHS Act 1977 covers income for services provided to private medical institutions. No information is held centrally about bad debts written off in respect of section 58 income.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals for private hospital development have been notified to or authorised by him under the Health Services Act 1976 as amended by the Health Service Act 1980 giving the date in each case as well as the health district.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Date of notification	*Notified by*	*Number of beds*	*Health district*
16 September 1980	BUPA Hospitals Ltd.	60 (48 in first phase)	South Glamorgan
14 October 1980	HAI (UK) Ltd.	56/70	South Glamorgan
30 August 1984	Land Authority for Wales	30	Clwyd
October 1985	Clwyd County Council	30	Clwyd
23 December 1985	W. Griffiths, Son & Lewis	17	East Dyfed

There have been no requests for authorisation of controlled private hospital works.

Health Services (Privatisation)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each health district in 1985-86 the total expenditure on catering, the expenditure on services provided by private catering companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

Catering expenditure

	Total expenditure 1985-86 £000	*External contracts 1985-86 £000*	*External contracts as a per cent. of total expenditure*	*Difference between per cent. for 1985-86 and per cent. for 1984-85*
Clwyd	3,305	0	0·013	−0·004
East Dyfed	1,967	—	—	—
Gwent	4,167	—	—	—
Gwynedd	1,974	—	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	4,657	—	—	−0·001
Pembrokshire	484	—	—	—
Powys	1,125	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	4,620	3	0·056	−0·007
West Glamorgan	2,638	—	—	—
WHCSA	25	—	—	—
Wales	24,962	3	0·012	−0·002

Source: The Annual Accounts of Health Authorities.
Notes: Minimal expenditure (ie less than £500) is indicated by the use of 0. Figures for 1985-86 are, at this stage, provisional.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each health district in 1985-86 the total expenditure on laundry, the expenditure on services provided by private laundry companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is given in the following table:

Laundry expenditure

	Total expenditure 1985-86 £000	*External contracts 1985-86 £000*	*External contracts as a percentage of total expenditure*	*Difference between percentage for 1985-86 and percentage for 1984-85*
Clwyd	387	6	1·50	−1·61
East Dyfed	256	3	1·16	0·48
Gwent	515	11	2·15	−0·21
Gwynedd	256	2	0·91	−0·21
Mid Glamorgan	725	4	0·52	−1·29
Pembrokeshire	134	134	100·00	—
Powys	150	6	3·66	−0·34
South Glamorgan	651	3	0·51	−0·59
West Glamorgan	599	24	3·97	1·19
WHCSA	—	—	—	—
Wales	3,673	193	5·25	−0·44

Source: The Annual Accounts of Health Authorities.
Note: Figures for 1985-86 are, at this stage, provisional.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each health district in 1985-86 the total expenditure on cleaning, the expenditure on services provided by private cleaning contractors, the latter figure as a percentage of the former, and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is given in the following table:

Domestic and cleaning services expenditure

	Total Expenditure 1985-86 £000	*External Contracts 1985-86 £000*	*External Contracts as a percentage of total expenditure*	*Difference between percentage for 1985-86 and 1984-85*
Clwyd	3,107	11	0·36	−0·13
East Dyfed	2,000	49	2·45	1·77
Gwent	4,331	33	0·77	0·17
Gwynedd	2,122	9	0·43	0·01
Mid Glamorgan	5,013	24	0·48	0·02
Pembrokeshire	535	5	0·95	0·65
Powys	942	4	0·36	0·06
South Glamorgan	5,021	64	1·27	0·05
West Glamorgan	3,556	8	0·22	−0·11
WHCSA	24	22	91·90	40·58
Wales	26,651	229	0·86	0·18

Source: The Annual Accounts of Health Authorities.
Note: Figures for 1985-86 are, at this stage, provisional.

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Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each tendering exercise for hospital services of which his Department is aware *(a)* the health authority, *(b)* the hospital, *(c)* the service, *(d)* the successful tenderer, *(e)* the date of the tenders' approval and *(f)* the saving achieved.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I assume the hon. Gentleman is referring to hospital "hotel" services (domestic, catering and laundry). Such information as is held centrally is given in the following tables:

Health Authority	*Service*	*Hospital/Area*	*Successful tenderer*	*Estimated savings (p.a.) £*
Gwent	Domestic	DHA headquarters	Reliance Cleaning	5,080
Mid Glamorgan	Laundry	Whole district	In house	200,000
Pembrokeshire	Domestic	Withybush	In house	164,618
	Domestic	S. Pembs/Tenby Cottage	In house	25,223
	Domestic	Community Services	In house	6,782
	Catering	Withybush	In house	60,468
	Catering	S. Pembs/Tenby Cottage	In house	
	Laundry	Whole district	Initial PLC	82,950
Powys	Domestic	Machynlleth Hospitals and Health Centres	In house	15,000
	Domestic	Llandrindod Wells Builth Wells, and Knighton Hospitals, and associated Health Centres/Clinics	In house	19,855
	Domestic	Ystradgynlais Community Hospital	In house	New hospital
	Domestic	Llanidloes Llys Maldwyn, Newtown, Brynhyfryd, and Welshpool Hospitals, and associated Health Centres and Clinics	In house	18,000
	Catering	Ystradgynlais Community Hospital	In house	New hospital
	Catering	Llandrindod Wells Builth Wells, and Knighton Hospitals	In house	11,000
	Catering	Llanidloes Llys Maldwyn, Newtown, Welshpool and Brynhyfryd Hospitals	In house	16,000
West Glamorgan	Domestic	DHA Headquarters and Trinity Buildings	In house	19,868
	Domestic	Outpatient Department, Neath General Hospital	In house	3,393
	Domestic	Public Corridors and Residences	All in house	
		(i) Morriston		(i) 5,000
		(ii) Singleton		(ii) 6,000
		(iii) Neath		(iii) 28,749
		(iv) Cefn Coed		(iv) 23,000
	Domestic	Health Centres and Clinics	In house	32,000
	Catering	Neath General Hospital	In house	60,000
	Laundry	Whole district	In house	199,000
Welsh Health Common Services Authority	Domestic	All WHCSA premises	Central Cleaning Services	18,000

Source: DHA returns.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each year since 1979 the percentage of expenditure on *(a)* catering, *(b)* laundry and *(c)* cleaning which has been paid to private contractors for services provided to the National Health Service in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

Payment to private contractors as a percentage of relevant expenditure

	Catering	*Laundry*	*Domestic and Cleaning*
1979-80	0·013	3·79	0·64
1980-81	0·011	5·45	0·68
1981-82	0·047	2·64	0·72
1982-83	0·013	6·81	0·69
1983-84	0·013	[2]8·25	0·64
1984-85	0·014	5·69	0·68
[1]1985-86	0·012	5·25	0·86

Source: The annual accounts of health authorities
Notes:
(1) Figures for 1985-86 are, at this stage, provisional.
(2) A fire in the central laundry in E. Dyfed led to some additional external contracts in 1983-84. This central laundry has since been repaired and re-opened.
(3) The figures are not strictly comparable over the whole period as Value Added Tax on contracted out services became reclaimable by health authorities from 1 September 1983.

Deaths and Discharges

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for 1985 for each health authority and for Wales as a whole the number of deaths and discharges among, and the number of beds occupied on 31 December by, patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service breaking the figures down by category of patients treated.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The required information is given in the following table:

Patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements: 1985

	Discharges and deaths	*Average daily bed occupancy during year*[1]
Clwyd:		
Geriatrics	119	5·0
East Dyfed	—	—
Gwent:		
Rehabilitation	—	1·0
Gwynedd:		
Terminal Care	3	[2]—
Mid Glamorgan	—	—
Powys	—	—
South Glamorgan:		
Terminal Care	—	1·0
West Glamorgan	—	—
Pembrokeshire:		
Mental Handicap	—	0·5
Wales:		
Geriatrics	119	5·0
Mental Handicap	—	0·5
Rehabilitation	—	1·0
Terminal Care	3	[2]1·0
Total	122	[2]7·5

[1] Information on bed usage is now obtained in the form of average daily bed occupancy and not as occupancy at 31 December.
[2] Average daily bed occupancy for Gwynedd is not available; average occupancy figure for Wales excludes Gwynedd component.

Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the private hospitals and nursing homes which treated National Health Service patients under contractual arrangements with Welsh health authorities in 1985.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information is as follows:

Convent of Mercy, Colwyn Bay, Clwyd.
Maes Mynnan Nursing Home, Mold, Clwyd.
Poolmead Centre, Bath.
St. Andrews Hospital, Northampton.
The Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables, West Hill, Putney, London.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the private hospitals in Wales, giving in each case the health authority and the number of beds.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The latest available information, which relates to 31 December 1985, is given below:

Health authority	*Name of hospital*	*Number of beds*
Gwent	St. Joseph's Nursing Home, Malpas, Newport	56
Gwynedd	North Wales Medical Centre, Queens Road, Llandudno	52
South Glamorgan	B.U.P.A. Croescadarn Road, Pentwyn, Cardiff	48
West Glamorgan	Sancta Maria Hospital, Ffynone, Swansea	40

Patient Care

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each health authority and for Wales as a whole the expenditure on contractual arrangements for patient care in 1985-86.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

Expenditure on contractual arrangements for patient care, 1985-86

	£000
Clwyd	40
East Dyfed	41
Gwent	9
Gwynedd	23
Mid Glamorgan	34
Pembrokeshire	—
Powys	1
South Glamorgan	89
West Glamorgan	20
Wales	259

Source: The annual accounts of health authorities.
Note: Figures for 1985-86 are, at this stage, provisional.

Consultants

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each year since 1979 the total number of consultants holding *(a)* whole-time, *(b)* maximum part-time, *(c)* other part-time and *(d)* honorary contracts with the National Health Service in Wales; and if he will break down the figures by health district.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: For information relating to 1984 and previous years I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him on 25 November 1985, (*Official Report*, Col. 459). Information for September 1985, is as follows:—

Number of Consultants[1]

	Full-time	*Maximum Part-time*	*Other Part-time*	*Honorary*
Clwyd	82	26	8	1
East Dyfed	59	7	2	—
Gwent	69	35	2	1
Gwynedd	37	22	1	—
Mid Glamorgan	94	25	—	—
Powys	8	6	1	1
South Glamorgan	75	57	2	87
West Glamorgan	75	32	—	1
Pembrokeshire	23	2	—	—
WALES	522	212	16	91

[1] Including all medical and dental consultants in hospital and community services. Consultants who work for more than one authority are included only in the figures for the authority in which the majority of their sessions are worked.

Council House Sales

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many council homes have been sold in 1986 to sitting tenants in Dyfed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Between January and September 1986, 355 council homes in Dyfed have been sold to sitting tenants.

Assisted Places

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much is earmarked for the assisted places scheme in 1986-87, and 1987-88; and how much since the scheme's inception has been paid in each operative year for *(a)* school uniforms for the assisted places scheme and *(b)* travel grants.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The allocation for the financial year 1986-87 is £1,090,000 and subject to parliamentary approval, proposed expenditure for 1987-88 is £1,347,000. Payments in respect of costs incurred on school uniform and travel grants are shown in the following table. There are still some claims outstanding:

Payments

School year	*School uniform (£)*	*Travel grants (£)*
1981-82	2,547·78	3,288·87
1982-83	4,817·00	4,997·75
1983-84	6,045·45	6,387·45
1984-85	5,765·35	8,314·50
1985-86	1,018·60	3,069·86

Housing

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total allocation to Welsh housing authorities in each year from 1979 to 1986 inclusive.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Total housing capital allocations to Welsh local authorities in the period 1979-80 to 1986-87 are as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	121·2
1980-81	110·0
[1]1981-82	97·6
1982-83	145·8
1983-84	184·3
1984-85	125·6
1985-86	109·1
[2]1986-87	138·5

[1] From 1981-82, allocations for housing purposes are an identified element of the local authority block capital allocations.
[2] Provisional.

The allocations are not comparable from year to year because of changes in the basis of calculation.

School Meals

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in the past six months on the subject of the provision and nutritional quality of Welsh school means; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In the past six months I have received two letters concerning the provision of school meals. Both raised fears that children of parents in receipt of family income supplement might lose entitlement to free meals as a result of the new Social Security Act.

Although the entitlement to free school meals will be lost when the changes become operative in April 1988, it is intended that benefit will generally be provided in the form of a cash increase in family credits.

No representations have been received in the past six months in respect of the nutritional quality of Welsh school meals.

Primary Schools (Closures)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many rural primary schools in Wales were closed in each of the years from 1979-80 to 1985-86.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information, by calendar year, is as follows:

2, 8, 9, 9, 7, 4, 15 and 7 (to date).

Students (Financial Support)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met members of the National Union of Students on the subject of financial support for Welsh students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Secretary of State has not recently met representatives of the NUS to discuss financial support for Welsh students. Welsh Office

officials, however, have met student representatives on various occasions in the last two years to receive representations about the level of student awards.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in the last six months on the subject of student financial support in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have received 24 letters in the last six months about various aspects of student financial support. The majority of these cases concerned students who had been unsuccessful in seeking discretionary awards from their local education authority.

Drains and Sewerage

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many miles of drains and sewerage in the Welsh system *(a)* were built in the 19th century and *(b)* are in need of repair and replacement; what percentage of the total mileage this represents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Chapter 5 of the annual report of the Welsh Water Authority for 1985-86, a copy of which is available in the Library, discusses sewerage. More detailed information is not held centrally and I have asked the chairman of the authority to write direct to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made by the Welsh Office in trying to find a solution to the sewerage problems at Maes Gerddi, Porthmadog; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Department's letter to him of 30 October 1986. The Department has since received correspondence from the solicitors of the Maes Gerddi residents' association requesting that the Department take no further action in this matter while negotiations continue. The Department is not involved in these negotiations.

Jobs

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the number of new jobs created in each county of Wales in each of the years 1979 to 1986; what proportion of these are in the manufacturing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information in the form requested is not available. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman giving such data as can be provided.

Truancy

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the truancy rate for Welsh school secondary pupils in each year since 1980; and what are the latest available figures.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is not collected centrally.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his policy towards the provision of resources for children with special educational needs in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The provision of resources for the education of children with special educational needs is a matter for local education authorities. They receive help in meeting these needs through the rate support grant.

Help is also available through a specific direction of resources, via education Support Grants; these are for the provision of microelectronic equipment and computerised learning aids.

Resources are also provided centrally for a project which is establishing the requirements of children with special educational needs when they are integrated into ordinary schools.

School Buildings

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in the last six months from teachers' unions about the state of school buildings in Wales; and if he proposes to make funds available to tackle dilapidated buildings.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave him on 17 November 1986, *Official Report*, column 35.

School Books

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in the last six months from teachers' unions about the provision of books in Welsh schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In the last six months we have received representations from two teachers' unions. Both raised the matter of the provision of books in the context of a general discussion on the introduction of GCSE examinations.

Disabled Students

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the proportions of disabled students in higher education in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Department does not collect this information.

MSC Schemes

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the people employed on Manpower Services Commission schemes in Wales work on schemes for agencies based in England; and what proportion of the total employed on such schemes they represent.

Mr. Wyn Roberts [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 November 1986, c. 38]: The latest information available on scheme participants is as follows:

	Number on England-based agency schemes	*Percentage of total*
Community Programme	5,036	25
Youth Training Scheme	2,791	13
Voluntary Projects Programme	313	28

Source: Manpower Services Commission Wales.

Participants include those who are employed, receiving training or given the opportunity to do voluntary work on MSC schemes. The figures do not include supervisory staff.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Clinical Academic Staff

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure avoidance of delays in awarding pay parity for clinical academic staff with National Health Service colleagues.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend met representatives of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals on 13 October. He explained the nature of the Governments willingness to compensate universities for additional costs involved in applying to clinical academic staff pay awards recommended for NHS hospital doctors by the Doctors and Dentists Review Body (DDRB). The Clinical Academic Staff Salaries Committee subsequently determined that clinical academic staff should receive the award with effect from 1 July 1986. Now that the Government's position is understood delays in the application of DDRB awards to clinical academic staff should no longer occur.

Departmental Initiatives

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list initiatives by his Department which have been of benefit specifically to the north-east, north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside regions since 1979.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government are pursuing their principal aims for raising standards and securing better value for money in all sectors of education and for increasing participation of school leavers in higher and further education through legislative and other measures which have specific benefits for the regions concerned. For example, Cumbria, Humberside, Cheshire, North Yorkshire and Northumberland are amongst 14 local education authorities participating in a programme, funded by the Department through education support grant, to identify cost-effective means of enriching the curriculum in small rural primary schools. Authorities in these regions will also benefit from ESGs for a range of other activities and from the separate grant scheme for in-service teacher training.

Funding under special initiatives within the AFE pool — for biotechnology, research and engineering and technology — for selected polytechnics in the region amounted to £775,000 in 1985-86 and £895,000 in 1986-87.

The advice on target student numbers given by the NAB and accepted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has allowed for an increase of 13 ·7 per cent. in full time equivalent student numbers in local authority HE in the region, compared with 11 ·4 per cent. nationally, between 1982-83 and 1986-87.

In addition, my right hon. Friend's proposals for city technology colleges are designed to benefit a number of urban areas in these regions

Rural Schools

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision for rural schools is included in the public expenditure increase for education in the autumn statement.

Mr. Dunn: The increase of 18·8 per cent. in the Government's plans for local expenditure on education in 1987-88 does not distinguish between types of school. It allows scope for local education authorities generally to enhance provision in all schools, according to local needs and priorities. The distribution of rate support grant takes into account factors such as the increased cost of education in sparsely populated areas.

Student Grants

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received with regard to the decision to change the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations 1986, schedule 2, part 4, paragraph 21*(b)* on the earnings qualifications for older students.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has received about 80 letters since the change was announced.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in the past three months on the level of student financial support.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has received about 50 representations in the last three months. In addition, a few organisations have already submitted evidence to the review of student support.

Primary and Secondary Education

Mr. Rathbone asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he proposes to give any guidance to local education authorities on how best to encourage high quality teaching in their primary and secondary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government's policy was set out in the White Papers "Teaching Quality" in March 1983 and "Better Schools" in March 1985. Since then there has been progress in a number of areas including new arrangements for grants for in-service training of teachers and teacher appraisal.

Leicester (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the recent visit to Leicester by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold).

Mrs. Rumbold: I have not visited Leicester since my appointment as Minister of State, but did visit Beauchamp college in Oadby, Leicestershire on 12 November. During that visit I talked to the head teacher, members of staff and pupils about the initiatives the school is developing in the field of equal opportunities for girls and boys, and saw examples of pupils' work.

Further and Higher Education

Sir William van Straubenzee asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the work of the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education.

Mr. Walden: Following the abolition in 1982 of the Department's voluntary system of "recognition as efficient" of private sector further education colleges, discussions were held between parties interested in setting up an alternative system. These discussions resulted in the establishment of the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education as a company limited by guarantee, with charitable status. The BAC became operational in 1984. A number of bodies interested in maintaining academic standards in the United Kingdom have nominated members of the BAC's board. The BAC's role is to accredit institutions by inspection; it does not validate awards.

The Government welcome endeavours of this sort to establish standards within the independent sector.

Brixton, Plymouth (New School)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for South Hams of 25 September about a new school for Brixton, Plymouth, and his further letter of 30 October asking for an early reply to his letter of 25 September.

Mr. Dunn: I replied on 19 November.

Schools (Closure)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to confer powers on environmental health officers to close a school if they believe that any aspect of the school presents a serious health risk to pupils and staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: We have no plans at present to make changes in these arrangements. There are sufficient powers under existing legislation to prevent a school from being used if it is a danger to public health. My right hon. Friend is aware of problems in the Bradford area and will shortly be meeting a deputation.

Institute of Marine Biochemistry

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what basis his Department calculated its estimate of the costs of transferring the Institute of Marine Biochemistry from Aberdeen to Oban.

Mr. Walden: The transfer of the Institute of Marine Biochemistry from Aberdeen to Oban is a matter for the Natural Environment Research Council.

The work of IMB concerns mainly research on fish nutrition of relevance to fish farming. I understand that the council's decision to transfer this work to Oban was based on the potential for increased collaboration with scientists already there, considerations of the nature and long term prospects of the science and the cost of continuing to maintain a small laboratory at Aberdeen for this purpose.

The costs and savings related to the transfer are principally:

i. Building costs at SMBA, Oban, offset by the receipts expected from the sale of the IMB building;
ii. the costs of the transfer of mobile staff to Oban and severance payments for non-mobile staff;
iii. continuing savings from lower running costs at Oban as compared with Aberdeen.

The council has concluded that the transfer is beneficial on both scientific and financial grounds.

O-Level Examinations

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the percentage of children in each local education authority who achieve five or more O-levels within the grades A-C.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply as soon as possible.

A-Level Examinations

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the percentage of children in each local education authority who achieve five or more 'A' levels within grades A-C.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Leukaemia

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give, for each year since 1979, the total sum devoted by the Medical Research Council to projects involving leukaemia.

Mr. Walden: Since 1979 expenditure by the Medical Research Council on research into leukaemia has been as follows:

Financial year	*£ million*
1979-80	1·27
1980-81	1·73
1981-82	1·33
1982-83	1·40
1983-84	1·39
1984-85	1·38
1985-86	1·86

Personnel (Morale)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to improve the morale of those engaged in education.

Mrs. Rumbold: The main aim of the Department's policies is to improve standards in all sectors of education whilst at the same time making best use of the resources available. On 6 November, my right hon. Friend announced an additional £2·25 billion for education in 1987-88, including some £500 million for improving school teachers' pay and conditions of service. These policies should improve the morale of those engaged in the education service.

Redundant Maintained Schools

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to require local authorities to offer redundant maintained schools for sale to other institutions of learning before the land and buildings are put on the open market.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

ENVIRONMENT

Advertisements (Control)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he proposes to take to implement the recommendation of the working party on the control of advertisements' regulations that house colours and colour schemes on the exterior of premises should be covered by provisions in the regulations.

Mr. Tracey: The working party recommended that we should consider the merits of bringing house colours and colour schemes within the scope of advertisement control. We published the working party's report on 30 July 1986 with a consultation paper setting out proposals for the revision of the Control of Advertisements Regulations. We are considering the responses.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has as to the proportion of full planning appeals against decisions by each of the planning authorities in Staffordshire and by the Peak Park planning board which were decided in favour of the applicant in each of the past five years;

(2) what information he has at to the proportion of written planning appeals against decisions by each of the planning authorities in Staffordshire and by the Peak Park planning board which were decided in favour of the applicant in each of the past five years;

(3) what information he has as to the proportion of informal planning appeals against decisions by each of the planning authorities in Staffordshire and by the Peak Park planning board which were decided in favour of the applicant in each of the past five years.

Mr. Tracey: Tables 1 and 2 give details of the numbers of planning appeals under sections 36 and 37 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 against decisions of planning authorities in Staffordshire and of the Peak Park planning board which were decided and allowed in 1984 and 1985 respectively, the earliest years for which information about individual planning authorities is available. "Written planning appeals" and "Informal planning appeals" are assumed to refer to those appeals determined under the written representations and informal hearings procedures respectively.

Table 1

1984 planning appeals decided and allowed against decisions of planning authorities in Staffordshire and the Peak Park planning board

Planning authority	*Number of appeals determined following a local public inquiry*		*Number of appeals determined under the written representations procedure*		*Number of appeals determined under the informal hearing procedure*		*Total number of appeals*	
	Decided	*Allowed*	*Decided*	*Allowed*	*Decided*	*Allowed*	*Decided*	*Allowed*
Staffordshire County Council	—	—	3	0	—	—	3	0
Cannock Chase District Council	4	2	6	2	1	—	11	4
East Staffordshire District Council	3	2	11	3	1	—	15	5
Lichfield District Council	2	—	26	12	—	—	28	12
Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council	3	1	28	9	—	—	31	10
South Staffordshire District Council	10	4	24	5	2	—	36	9
Stafford Borough Council	13	5	27	7	3	1	43	13
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	3	1	23	9	1	—	27	10
Stoke on Trent City Council	—	—	27	5	—	—	27	5
Tamworth Borough Council	2	1	1	—	—	—	3	1
Peak Park Planning Board	4	1	16	5	—	—	20	6

Table 2

1985 planning appeals decided and allowed against decisions of planning authorities in Staffordshire and the Peak Park planning board

Planning authority	*Number of appeals determined following a local public inquiry*		*Number of appeals determined under the written representations procudure*		*Number of appeals determined under the informal hearing procedure*		*Total number of appeals*	
	Decided	*Allowed*	*Decided*	*Allowed*	*Decided*	*Allowed*	*Decided*	*Allowed*
Staffordshire County Council	1	1	1	1	—	—	2	2
Cannock Chase District Council	1	—	17	9	1	1	19	10
East Staffordshire District Council	2	1	20	6	1	1	23	8
Lichfield District Council	5	2	34	11	1	1	40	14
Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council	6	3	31	14	2	1	39	18
South Staffordshire District Council	8	6	21	9	2	1	31	16
Stafford Borough Council	10	5	42	17	—	—	52	22

Planning authority	Number of appeals determined following a local public inquiry		Number of appeals determined under the written representations procudure		Number of appeals determined under the informal hearing procedure		Total number of appeals	
	Decided	Allowed	Decided	Allowed	Decided	Allowed	Decided	Allowed
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	7	2	25	6	—	—	32	8
Stoke on Trent City Council	2	1	20	8	4	—	26	9
Tamworth Borough Council	4	2	3	—	—	—	7	2
Peak Park Planning Board	2	2	17	3	—	—	19	5

Departmental Initiatives

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list initiatives by his Department which have been of benefit specifically to the north-east, north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside regions since 1979.

Mr. Ridley: Each of these regions has benefited from the urban programme, urban development grant and derelict land grant. The aggregate allocations for 1986-87 are:

Region	Urban programme	Derelict land grant	Urban development grant	Total
North-east	40·7	15·5	2·3	58·5
North-west	90·8	29·3	6·8	126·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	21·7	7·5	5·0	34·2
TOTAL	153·2	52·3	14·1	219·6

Enterprise zones have been created in each region, as follows:

North-east
- Tyneside
- Hartlepool
- Middlesbrough

North-west
- North East Lancashire (Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Rossendale)
- Salford/Trafford
- Speke
- Workington

Yorkshire and Humberside
- Wakefield
- Rotherham
- Glanford
- Scunthorpe

In addition, my Department is responsible for, or participates in, a number of specific initiatives in the north-east and north-west, as follows:

North-east
- Newcastle/Gateshead City Action Team
- Cleveland Coordination Team
- North Middlesbrough Task Force
- Derwentside Industrial Strategy Committee
- Shildon ERDF Coordinating Committee
- South Tyneside Industrial Strategy Committee

North-west
- Merseyside Task Force
- Merseyside Development Corporation
- Mersey Basin Campaign
- Groundwork Trusts in Knowsley/St. Helens; Macclesfield; Oldham/Rochdale; Rossendale; Salford/Trafford; Wigan
- Manchester/Salford City Action Team
- Moss Side and Hulme Task Force

I have recently announced the intention to set up new urban development corporations—two in the north-east, Teesside and Tyne and Wear; and one in the north-west, at Trafford Park.

Housing Revenue Account

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the national notional housing revenue account for the current financial year and the estimates made in respect of the next financial year, and list the assumptions contained therein.

Mr. Tracey: The following tables are summaries of the housing revenue accounts of local authorities in England for 1985-86 and 1986-87. These summaries are based directly on provisional outturn figures for 1985-86 and estimates for 1986-87 submitted by local authorities to the Department, adjusted to allow for a small number of missing authorities. Similar information is not available at this stage for 1987-88.

1985-86 provisional outturn

Expenditure	£ million
Supervision and management	979
Repairs and maintenance	1,312
Interest payments	2,662
Debt repayments	356
Capital met from revenue	60
Other expenditure	197
Change in balances	37
Total expenditure	5,603
Income	
Gross rent	3,594
Interest on mortgages	289
Interest on capital receipts	367
Rate fund contribution: rate rebate administration	19
Other rents and income	468
Total income	4,737

Expenditure	*£ million*
Balancing and Funding items	
Deficit	866
financed by	
Exchequer subsidy	482
Voluntary rate fund contributions	443
Transfers to the general rate fund	−59

1986-87 estimates

Expenditure	*£ million*
Supervision and management	1,074
Repairs and maintenance	1,434
Interest payments	2,655
Debt repayments	376
Capital met from revenue	63
Other expenditure	83
Change in balances	−102
Total expenditure	5,583
Income	
Gross rent	3,706
Interest on mortgages	250
Interest on capital receipts	326
Rate fund contribution: rate rebate administration	22
Other rents and income	359
Total income	4,663
Balancing and Funding items	
Deficit	920
financed by	
Exchequer subsidy	501
Voluntary rate fund contributions	501
Transfers to the general rate fund	−60

Local Authorities (Capital Receipts)

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the assumptions underlying the estimate of capital receipts accruing to local authorities, including the sale of council houses, housing land and the repayments of loans and advances for housing purposes in the year 1987-88.

Mr. Tracey: The housing capital receipts of local authorities are forecast to be £1,581 million in 1987-88. The details are as follows:

	£ million cash
Receipts from sale of land	100
Initial receipts from council house sales	1,000
Discount repayments	21
Repayment of sums left outstanding on sales	330
Repayments of loans to private persons	105
Repayments of loans to housing associations	25
	1,581

The assumptions about council house sales on which these forecasts are based are:

Forecasts	
Number of completed sales	80,000
Average selling price net of discount	£15,600
Average level of discount	47 per cent.
Average level of private finance	80 per cent.

Council House Sales

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total value of discounts accruing to tenants exercising the right to buy or purchasing their homes from local authorities under voluntary sales agreements in each year since 1978-79, including the estimate for the current financial year.

Mr. Tracey: The information collected from local authorities is the aggregate amount of discounts on all their housing sales each quarter and the available estimates for England are as follows:

	£ billion
1978-79	0·1
1979-80	0·3
1980-81	0·4
1981-82	0·9
1982-83	1·3
1983-84	0·9
1984-85	0·9
1985-86 (provisional)	0·9
1st quarter 1986-87 (provisional)	0·2

Schools (Assistance)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will list the schools that have been assisted under the service provision initiatives in rural development areas.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are no specific service provision initiatives in rural development areas. The Development Commission considers applications for grant aid for selected projects forming part of annual rural development programmes for those areas.

Severn Barrage

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail the role that will be played by his Department in ensuring that the research into the Severn barrage is directed towards safeguarding all aspects of the environment of the Severn estuary.

Mr. Waldegrave: Officials of my Department are in consultation with officials from the Department of Energy with the aim of ensuring that the total package of research into the Severn barrage includes an adequate examination of the regional and environmental aspects before any decision to construct a barrage is taken.

Killer Whales

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take immediate steps to ban the importation of killer whales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have already acted. In my answer of 1 July 1986 at column 459 I said that my Department would not permit further imports of cetaceans until new standards for dolphinaria were met.

The departmental steering group set up to consider the detailed recommendations of the report commissioned from Dr. Margaret Klinowska is continuing its work and will take into account the recent death of the killer whale Nemo, at Windsor safari park.

West Yorkshire (Development Fund Assistance)

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how long on average it takes between approval of an application for European regional development fund non-quota textile areas assistance for projects in west Yorkshire and payment of grant moneys.

Mr. Waldegrave: Grant is claimed as authorities incure expenditure. The average time for grant payment from the closing date of each claims round is seven months.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications for European regional development fund non-quota textile areas assistance have been approved for projects in west Yorkshire; and what is the total value of these approved applications.

Mr. Waldegrave: There have been 49 approvals with a total grant value of £1·562 million in west Yorkshire on the infrastructure side.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications for European regional development fund non-quota textile areas assistance are awaiting approval for projects in west Yorkshire; and what is the total value of these outstanding applications.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are three applications under consideration from the 1986 round with a potential grant value of £743,856. Ten subsequent applications with a potential grant value of £879,000 have also been submitted to the Department and will be considered as part of the 1987 round. My regional office has also received seven further applications with grant potential of £193,000 for schemes not yet in local authority capital programmes.

Falkland Islands (Machinery Auction)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total sum received by Her Majesty's Government from the sale of machinery used in the Falkland Islands auctioned on 18 November; and what information he has on the original purchase price of the items auctioned.

Mr. Chope: A detailed account has not yet been completed but about £700,000 has been realised from the auction held on 17 and 18 November 1986.

These items are the residue from stocks issued by the Ministry of Defence for use by the Royal Engineers during and after the Falklands war and subsequently passed to the Property Services Agency for their use in the islands. The original purchase price of the various items cannot readily be identified, and the amount realised represents their secondhand value.

Privatisation

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which local Government services he proposes should be privatised; and if it is his intention, in the forthcoming legislation on this subject, to take enabling powers or to specify such services in the Bill itself.

Dr. Boyson: We have no plans for privatisation; only for the exposure of services to competition for the benefit of the ratepayer. We intend to include an initial list of services on the face of a Bill, with provision for adding others in secondary legislation. Final decisions on the initial list have not been taken, but it will include refuse collection, street cleansing, building cleaning, vehicle maintenance, ground maintenance and catering.

Birmingham (Parish Proposals)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report on the review of parish proposals for Birmingham from the local government boundary commission under section 48 of the Local Government Act.

Mr. Chope: The timetable for the submission of proposals by the local government boundary commission is a matter for them.

North Sea Conference

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is now able to announce the date on which the international North sea conference will be held in 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: The conference will be held in London on Tuesday 24 November and Wednesday 25 November 1987.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the value by historic cost and market price, of the local authority housing stock sold since 1979 *(a)* under right to buy legislation, *(b)* sales to sitting tenants and *(c)* sales of vacant dwellings, giving the cost of discounts off the sale price in each case;

(2) what is the total local authority housing stock sold since 1979, giving a breakdown of sales *(a)* under right to buy legislation *(b)* other sales to sitting tenants and *(c)* sales of vacant dwellings, listing how many in each category were (i) houses, (ii) flats, (iii) maisonettes, (iv) bungalows and (v) others.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his answer*, 17 November 1986, c. *44-45*]: Between April 1979 and June 1986 nearly 750,000 council houses were sold in England at a price after discount of £8 billion. These sales have given individual tenants greater control over their own homes and environment, are leading to more variety and social diversity on former council estates, and have given authorities very substantial additional resources for other capital work.

The detailed figures are as follows:

Sales of local authority dwellings, England April 1979 to June 1986

Thousands

(a)	*Right to Buy*	*Other sales to sitting tenants*	*Vacant dwellings*	*All*
Houses (including Bungalows)	528	n/a	n/a	713

(a)	Right to Buy	Other sales to sitting tenants	Vacant dwellings	All
Flats (including Maisonettes)	21	n/a	n/a	34
All	549	157	41	747

£ Billion

(b)	Right to buy and other sales to sitting tenants	Vacant dwellings	All
Selling price	7·4	0·6	8·0
Discount	n/a	n/a	5·8
Market Value	n/a	n/a	13·8

n/a = Not available.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Statistics

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many square feet of exercise space are available to prisoners in Liverpool prison.

Mr. Mellor: A total of 40,888 sq ft in exercise yards, 109,620 sq ft in the grassed area, and 8,964 sq ft in the gymnasia.

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners there are in Her Majesty's prisons; how many these prisons were designed to hold; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: On 14 November 1986 the total prison population in England and Wales was 47,664 as against a certified normal accommodation of 41,149.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the minimum recommended number of officers working in each of Her Majesty's prisons; what was the actual number on duty on the latest date for which figures are available; how these figures compare with the authorised establishment at each prison; what is the number of prisoners in each prison and how this figure compares with the recommended maximum; what is the recommended ratio of prison officers to prisoners at each prison and what is the actual figure; and if he will give these figures for each of the last three years, where appropriate.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not readily available and I shall reply as soon as possible.

Smoke Detectors

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy as to the installation of smoke detectors in business premises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Automatic fire detection systems incorporating smoke detectors can make a very effective contribution to good fire precautions within business premises, provided that the systems are properly installed and maintained.

Prisoners

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners were being held in police cells on 1 November;

(2) what was the present prison population at 1 November 1986; and what were the numbers at 1 November 1979.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 October 1986 the total prison population in England and Wales was 47,341 plus 106 prisoners in police cells. On 31 October 1979 the total population was 42,550. Population figures for 1 November are not available centrally.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the police stations in the Greater London area where prisoners were being held on 1 November.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that prisoners were held at the Metropolitan police support unit headquarters at Lambeth, at Highbury corner, Camberwell Green and South Western magistrates' courts and at seven police stations which, for operational reasons, the Commissioner does not wish to be identified.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many hours in the most recent convenient week the workshops in Wandsworth prison were open; what was the average number of prisoners employed; how many classes took place and for how many hours; what was the average number of prisoners in each class; and how much time on average each prisoner spent out of his cell during that week.

Mr. Mellor: In the week commencing 3 November 1986 the workshops were open for an average of 18 hours; an average of 648 prisoners were employed each working day in the workshops and on catering, maintenance, cleaning and other domestic tasks; 121 education classes (65 daytime and 56 evening) were held for a total of 234 hours; there were an average of seven prisoners in each class. It is not practical to calculate the average amount of time spent out of cells since this covers many things apart from work and education including, for example, exercise, association, visits, use of the prison library and canteen and other out of cell activities.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average population of Wandsworth prison in the most recent convenient week.

Mr. Mellor: Prison population figures are collected centrally once a week. On 14 November 1986 Her Majesty's prison Wandsworth held 1,548 prisoners.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many square feet of exercise space is available to prisoners in Wandsworth prison.

Mr. Mellor: A total of 66,300 sq ft in exercise yards and 1,820 sq ft in the gymnasium.

Stocken Prison

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost of construction of the

new prison officers' houses at Her Majesty's prison Stocken; when the work was completed; how many are currently unoccupied; how many are occupied by prison officers and how many by estate staff from Stocken hall farm; and what steps are being taken to rectify this situation.

Mr. Mellor: The 40 prison officers' houses at Stocken were built at a total cost of £2·37 million. Construction was undertaken in four phases of 10 houses each, the phases being handed over on 22 April, 6 June, 26 June, and 10 July 1986 respectively. Five of the houses are currently occupied by prison officers and two by horticultural craftsmen employed in the prison; the remaining 33 houses are unoccupied.

The present low rate of occupation can be attributed to the fact that the houses were not completed until some time after Stocken prison was opened. Staff originally posted to Stocken therefore opted to live in their own accommodation rather than wait for quarters to become available. As new staff who require quarters are posted to Stocken and to Ashwell prisons the occupancy rate of the Stocken quarters can be expected to increase.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest estimated cost to public funds of the necessary remedial work at Her Majesty's prison, Stocken regarding the gatehouse entrance; when this work will be undertaken; and what steps are being taken to establish responsibility, including financial responsibility, for the original unsatisfactory arrangements.

Mr. Mellor: Various items of remedial work associated with the gatehouse at Stocken prison were undertaken by the contractors during the 12 month defects liability period which followed the completion of the building work. These works were a contractual obligation and were carried out at no cost to public funds.

The latest estimate of the cost of the programme of improvements to the gatehouse drawn up by the Department is £230,000. The work is scheduled to commence in April 1987. The improvements are considered necessary to bring the equipment and operating systems up to the Department's current requirements, which are aimed at achieving efficiency of operation with maximum economy of staffing levels. These requirements have been developed since the time at which Stocken prison was designed; the original arrangements were not unsatisfactory in relation to the circumstances at the time.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of computers originally installed in the computer classroom at Her Majesty's prison, Stocken, and at what total cost; why they have been replaced by another model, and at what cost; and what use is to be made of the original computers.

Mr. Mellor: Six BBC microcomputers were supplied as part of the initial equipment for the education centre at Stocken prison to provide students with the opportunity to develop basic computer skills, for use in a business studies class and for use as a teaching aid in other classes. Because of the delay in completing the fitting out of a room designated for a separate full-time vocational training course in computer studies, these machines, together with two others which were purchased subsequently, were used for part of the time for an interim vocational training course which utilised an ordinary classroom.

The designated computer studies room is now ready and 12 Ferranti microcomputer systems costing £21,400 are currently being installed and commissioned. The BBC microcomputer will continue to be used in the general education programme as originally intended.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current budget and staffing of the prisons education service; and what are the comparable figures for Her Majesty's prison, Stocken.

Mr. Mellor: The planned expenditure on prison education services in England and Wales in the financial year 1986-87 is £14·54 million. Expenditure on such services at Her Majesty's prison Stocken in 1986-87 is expected to be about £246,000. The latter figure includes expenditure on equipment to commission new courses which will not be repeated in subsequent years. Both figures exclude some education-related expenditure, the main items of which are the costs of the prison officer manpower and prison buildings used in connection with the provision of education services and the pay of vocational training and construction industry training instructors.

In 1986-87 there is provision for local education authorities to supply to prison service establishments 527 salaried education staff and also 499,324 sessional teaching hours to be undertaken by part-time teachers. The corresponding figures for Her Majesty's prison Stocken are 4 and 8,560 respectively. In addition 323 full-time vocational and construction industry training instructors are currently employed directly by the prison department including five at Her Majesty's prison Stocken.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will give details of the tendering procedures which were followed by his Department before equipment and furnishings were ordered for a computer classroom at Her Majesty's prison, Stocken;

(2) whether he will make a statement on the results of his investigation into how equipment and furnishings costing approximately £7,000 was ordered for a computer classroom at Her Majesty's prison, Stocken; whether these items remain in storage and unused; and what steps will be taken to dispose of them.

Mr. Mellor: Four companies were invited to provide quotations for the supply of microcomputer equipment to Her Majesty's prison, Stocken and two other prisons. All four companies replied and the company offering the best value for money was selected to provide the equipment. In addition, specialist furnishing for the designated computer classroom at Stocken, mainly comprising work stations and chairs, were ordered from a supplier at a cost of nearly £8,000 without competitive quotations because of the high priority given at that time to early commissioning of the vocational training course in computer studies. This supplier had previously completed a similar order to a satisfactory standard in another prison service establishment following a competitive tender and the staff concerned concluded that its services would represent value for money. The computer equipment and

furnishings are currently being installed and commissioned in the computer room and the course will shortly become fully operational.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the equal opportunities policy of the Metropolitan police will be included in the Commissioner's force goal and in the divisional strategies.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner is still considering the form of his strategy statement for 1987 which will include the force goal. Divisional plans will reflect that statement.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether a working group has been established to determine the implementation of equal opportunities in the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Yes.

Leeds Prison

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Leeds on 7 November were held on remand.

Mr. Mellor: On 7 November 1986, Her Majesty's prison, Leeds held 548 unconvicted prisoners and 67 convicted unsentenced prisoners.

Prisoners (Cell Sharing)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many of the prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Leeds on 7 November were sharing a cell with *(a)* three other prisoners and *(b)* two other prisoners;

(2) how many prisoners on the latest available figures were sharing a cell with *(a)* three other prisoners and *(b)* two other prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: The number of prisoners sharing cells certified for one prisoner is recorded centrally only once a month. On 12 October there were 4,350 prisoners held three to a cell and 12,972 held two to a cell in England and Wales of whom 172 and 921 respectively were in Her Majesty's prison, Leeds. No prisoners were held four to a cell.

R. *v.* Ayres

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take on the advice of the Criminal Law Revision Committee with regard to the case of R. *v.* Ayres.

Mr. Mellor: The 18th report of the Criminal Law Revision Committee recommended that the ambit of the common law offence of conspiracy to defraud should be restored by statute to what it had been before 1977. We have accepted this recommendation and clause 12(1) of the Criminal Justice Bill adopts the terms of the draft clause suggested by the committee. Also in accordance with the committee's advice, prosecutors will be given guidance by the Director of Public Prosecutions on the proper use of the charge. We have, however, departed from the 18th report in one respect. The committee recommended that the penalty for the offence should remain unlimited, but we have thought it right to provide a maximum of 10 years' imprisonment—the same as for theft.

Traffic Offences

Mr. Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis *(a)* as to the number of prosecutions for unlawful use of bus lanes by unauthorised vehicles in London in each of the last three years and *(b)* as to the number of vehicles wheelclamped in each year since wheel clamps were introduced; and, of these, how many were vehicles in respect of which diplomatic immunity was claimed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has indicated that statistics in respect of bus lane offences are not recorded separately and cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost. Wheelclamping in central London commenced on 16 May 1983. Wheelclamps are not affixed to vehicles in relation to which a claim of diplomatic immunity is believed to arise. The table below shows the total number of vehicles clamped in each year, and the number of fees waived following a claim of diplomatic immunity.

Year	*Vehicles clamped*	*Fees waived*
1983 (from 16 May 1983)	26,808	156
1984	44,101	110
1985	34,801	48
1986 (up to 14 November 1986)	27,841	4

Peace Convoy

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make an emergency payment to Hampshire county council to help it cover the cost of policing the peace convoy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. I see no grounds for departing from the normal arrangements under which well over half of the expenditure of police authorities is met from central funds. Under these arrangements the Home Office meets 51 per cent. of the expenditure through police grant and the central Government make a further contribution through the block grant payable to local authorities.

Channel Tunnel (Immigration Control)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions his Department has held with French Railways, the European Commission and British Rail on the harmonisation of immigration controls on Channel tunnel trains; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: No discussions of the sort referred to by the hon. Member have taken place. However, British and French Government officials, including representatives of my Department, are negotiating arrangements for frontier controls in respect of the Channel tunnel. My officials are also in touch with British Rail about the arrangements for immigration control for trains travelling to and from London and beyond via the Channel tunnel.

Wheel Clamps

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Metropolitan police officers were engaged in wheel clamp duties in October 1985 and October 1986.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In both October 1985 and October 1986, four police constables were engaged in wheel clamp duties. In addition, one police sergeant and six police constables were engaged in duties at car pounds, and 60 per cent. of their time was occupied on wheel clamping matters. One inspector and two police sergeants were engaged on supervisory duties involving wheel clamping and vehicle removals. The physical work of clamping and unclamping is carried out by civilian employees.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of wheel clamps held by the Metropolitan police in October 1985 and October 1986.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of wheel clamps held by the Metropolitan police in both October 1985 and October 1986 was 300.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many wheel clamp prosecutions were made by the Metropolitan police in 1985 and in 1986 to date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The fixing of a wheel clamp to a vehicle does not itself give rise to a prosecution but the offence which led to the fixing of the clamp is the subject of a fixed penalty notice. During 1985 34,101 vehicles were wheel-clamped and up to 14 November 1986 27,841 vehicles had been wheel-clamped this year.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of operating the Metropolitan police wheel clamp unit in 1985-86.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The cost of operating the Metropolitan police wheel clamp unit from 1 April 1985 to 31 March 1986 was £966,685·00.

Polling Booths

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement detailing the cost per annum of the storage, handling and distribution of polling booths;

(2) what are the amounts spent per annum on repairing or replacing polling booths;

(3) what amounts were spent on the storage, handling, distribution, repair and replacement of polling booths at the last general election;

(4) what amounts were spent on the storage, handling, distribution, repair and replacement of polling booths at the last European Parliament election.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

The claims from acting returning officers for the 1979 and 1983 general elections and the 1979 and 1984 European Assembly elections have been examined. The costs for adapting and fitting up of any room for election purpose were £842,588, £1,244,189, £524,782 and £990,000 (estimate) respectively, or an average cost of just over £900,000. The further detail of costs for the handling, distribution, repair and replacement of polling booths could be obtained only with disproportionate expenditure of time and resources. Local authorities meet the costs of storage of polling booths for whatever form of election.

EMPLOYMENT

Restart Scheme

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General if there are any circumstances in which the form UB671, "Availability for Work Questionnaire", has been used or would be expected to be used by DE group staff working in restart teams.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The form UB671 is completed by claimants in the unemployment benefit office when they first make a claim for benefit. It is used by the unemployment benefit service in determining eligibility for benefit in accordance with long standing legal rules.

It is not used by staff in restart teams and I have no present plans for them to use it. Our restart teams are helping a completely different group of people — those who have been unemployed for over twelve months.

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General how many claimants called for restart interview have failed to attend their interview; how many of those failing to attend are believed to have found work; how many of those failing to attend have not found work; how many failing to attend have had their benefit stopped; how many of these have successfully appealed against the benefit decision; and how many failing to attend have subsequently re-registered as unemployed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: By 9 October 528,115 people had been contacted under the restart scheme, of whom 27,533 had failed to attend an interview, after two invitations. We have no means of knowing how many of them have, or have not, found work.

Of those who failed to attend, 8,405 had their benefit stopped, in accordance with long standing laws which require recipients to attend an interview. Of these 4,504 had their benefit reinstated because they subsequently attended an interview. Statistical records for the numbers of appeals are not available. A total of 377 people who failed to attend after two invitations to interview have subsequently made fresh claims and were awarded benefit again as unemployed people.

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General if he will list the circumstances or cases in which claimants referred to restart courses have had any benefit penalty exercised.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are not exercising any benefit penalty solely as a result of declining the offer of a restart course.

Departmental Initiatives

Mr. Silvester asked the Paymaster General if he will list initiatives by his Department which have been of benefit specifically to the north-east, north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside regions since 1979.

Mr. Lee: The main employment, training and enterprise measures offered by this Department and the Manpower Services Commission since 1979 have all been available to people in the north-east, north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside regions. The range of measures currently available is described in the "Action for Jobs" booklet. The measures which have operated in the period since 1979 are listed below.

Special Temporary Employment Programme*
Community Enterprise Programme*
Youth Opportunities Programme*
Training Opportunities Scheme*
Short-time Working Compensation Scheme*
Temporary Employment Subsidy*
Small Firms Employment Subsidy*
Adult Employment Subsidy*
Young Workers Scheme*
Temporary Short-time Working Compensation Scheme*
Part-time Job Release Scheme*
Community Programme
Enterprise Allowance Scheme
Voluntary Projects Programme
Community Industry
YTS
Job Release Scheme
Job Splitting Scheme
Restart Programme
Jobstart Allowance
New Workers Scheme
Training for Enterprise
Training Grants for Employers
Wider Opportunities Training Programme
Access to Information Technology
Job Training Scheme
Jobclubs
Travel to Interview Scheme
Open Tech Programme
Career Development Loans**
Loan Guarantee Scheme
Job Introduction Scheme
Adaptation to Premises and Equipment Scheme
Personal Reader service
Special aids to employment
Assistance to fares for work for the disabled
Skills-linked and Preparatory English as second language (ESL) Courses
Industrial language Training

* This scheme is now closed

** This is a pilot scheme which is running for a three-year period from April 1986 in Aberdeen, Bristol/Bath, Greater Manchester and Reading/Slough.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Paymaster General what is the latest information his Department has on the number of those unemployed by social class in Britain; and what percentage of each social class these figures represent.

Mr. Lee: The available information which comes from the labour force survey is shown in the table below:

Numbers of people without a job and actively looking for work and as a percentage of those economically active in each group.

Great Britain, Spring 1985

Previous Social Class	*Number*	*Percentage Rate*
Professional etc. occupations	17,000	1·5
Intermediate occupations	210,000	3·5
Skilled occupations	814,000	6·7
Partly skilled occupations	419,000	9·6
Unskilled occupations	199,000	12·7
Not classified	[1]1,155,000	[2]
All unemployed	2,814,000	10·6

[1] includes 554,000 people looking for work for over 3 years who were not asked about their previous occupation.

[2] No meaningful rate can be computed for this group.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General what is the number of claimants registered as unemployed at unemployment benefit offices in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Liverpool, *(c)* Norwich, *(d)* Cromer and *(e)* North Walsham; and what is the number of persons registered at jobcentres for each of the above.

Mr. Lee: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him on 17 November 1986, col. 67-68, which contains the unemployment figures which he has requested. The following table gives the numbers of people registering for employment at jobcentres on 3 October 1986 in the areas requested, except that Great Britain figures are given instead of United Kingdom. Northern Ireland figures are not comparable with the rest of the United Kingdom, since only disabled people and those in skill shortage occupations are encouraged to register there.

Registrants at Jobcentres—October 1986

	Number
Great Britain	361,183
Liverpool[1]	9,521
Norwich City Jobcentre	1,115
Cromer Jobcentre	241
North Walsham Jobcentre	248

[1] The Lord street, Williamson square and Toxteth jobcentres

Asbestos

Mr. Dobson asked the Paymaster General what criteria are used by the Health and Safety Commission to determine *(a)* the significance of exposure of workers to asbestos and *(b)* the appropriateness of their protection.

Mr. Trippier: The medical evidence on health effects of asbestos determines both the significance of exposure of workers and the precautions required. In particular, employers must ensure that the exposure of their employees is reduced to the lowest level reasonably practicable, and in any case never above stringent control limits.

Mr. Dobson asked the Paymaster General (1) how many deaths from the following asbestos-related diseases have been notified to the Health and Safety Executive for the years 1984 and 1985 (i) asbestosis together with lung cancer, (ii) asbestosis together with mesothelioma, (iii) asbestosis alone or with other diseases, (iv) mesothelioma of pleura, (v) mesothelioma of peritoneum, (vi) mesothelioma of pleura and peritoneum and (vii) mesothelioma, site not specified;

(2) how many additions to the mesothelioma register maintained by the Health and Safety Executive have been made for the years 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Trippier: The numbers of death certificates for 1984 added to the executive's register of specified asbestos-related diseases are as shown in the following table. Figures for 1985 are not yet available.

Deaths from specified asbestos-related diseases in Great Britain: 1984

	Number
Asbestosis with lung cancer	59
Asbestosis with mesothelioma	81
Asbestosis alone or with other diseases	67
TOTAL ASBESTOSIS[1]	207
Mesothelioma of pleura	462
Mesothelioma of peritoneum	43
Mesothelioma of pleura and peritoneum	11
Mesothelioma, site not specified	90
TOTAL MESOTHELIOMA[1]	606

[1] Both totals include the 81 certificates which mention asbestosis and mesothelioma.

Mr. Dobson asked the Paymaster General if he will give statistics on the prevalence of asbestosis, pneumoconiosis and mesothelioma in each year since 1975.

Mr. Trippier: The available information is as follows.

The figures for asbestosis and other pneumoconiosis are based on awards for benefit and those for mesothelioma on death certificates.

New awards of disablement benefit under the Industrial Injuries scheme

	Asbestosis	*Other pneumoconiosis*	*Death certificates mentioning mesothelioma*
1975	142	893	269
1976	169	831	315
1977	143	774	335
1978	123	654	390
1979	123	672	434
1980	144	584	458
1981	140	594	470
1982	172	561	497
1983	199	471	558
1984	186	391	606

Benefits

Mr. Fatchett asked the Paymaster General if he will publish information showing how many people in Leeds metropolitan district council area have had their benefits *(a)* reduced and *(b)* withdrawn in connection with the restart scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No one can lose their benefit entitlements solely as a result of the restart programme. Under long-standing legal rules people can lose their entitlement to benefit if they fail to attend an interview, are not available for work or refuse an offer of suitable employment. The information is not available in the precise form asked for. As at 9 October 1986 the number of people invited to a restart interview who had their

benefit withdrawn in Leeds Metropolitan District Council area is 105. A further 98 claimants had benefit suspended and then reinstated after going to a restart interview which they had previously failed to attend.

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Paymaster General how many suspended claims for unemployment benefit were held at the adjudication office in Birmingham at 31 October or the most recent date for which the statistics are available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Information is not available in the form requested. The number of cases under consideration at the adjudication office in Birmingham on 31 October 1986 was 6,678. It is not possible to say how many of these cases involved suspension of benefit. The adjudication office has always had and will continue to have a number of cases under consideration at any given time as part of our national insurance and supplementary benefit system.

Dr. David Clark asked the Paymaster General if, following the decision of the Social Security Commissioner, Mr. M. J. Goodman, in Southampton on 23 September to allow the payment of unemployment benefit to redundant employees of British Shipbuilders, he will now issue instructions to local offices instructing payments to be made to other persons in a similar position.

Mr. Lee: No. The Commissioner's decision allowed an individual claimant's appeal against disallowance of his claim for unemployment benefit. Whether this decision can be applied to claims from other redundant employees of British Shipbuilders is for consideration by the independent adjudicating authorities appointed under the Social Security Act 1975 to make decisions about benefit entitlement. Each case is considered on its merits.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General if he will list the size of his Department's advertising budget from each financial year since 1979; and if he will give the estimate for the next financial year.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General what has been the size of the budget for information and publicity staff of each financial year since 1979; and if he will detail the number of staff employed on this work over the same time span.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General if, in the light of the letter to him dated 7 November from the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR), he has anything to add to his reply of 17 November *Official Report*, column 66, regarding the effect on disabled people of the new guidelines on the availability for work test; why his earlier answer made no mention of the letter from RADAR; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Job Training Schemes

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Paymaster General (1) how much the agencies which have been selected as Dundee management agents for the new Manpower Services Commission's job training schemes for the long-term unemployed will be paid by the Manpower Services Commission once the trainee has been placed with a company;

(2) which agencies in Dundee have been selected to manage the new Manpower Services Commission's job training schemes for long-term unemployed; and on what criteria the selection was made;

(3) how much the agencies who have been selected as Dundee management agents for the new Manpower Services Commission job training scheme for the long-term unemployed will be paid per person each week for administrative costs, from the Manpower Services Commission;

(4) if the companies who accept trainees from the new Manpower Services Commission's job training scheme for the long-term unemployed are obliged to pay a fee for the trainee.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 November 1986, c. *276*]: Dundee training for employment and enterprise project is the managing agent for the pilot area's job training scheme. The criterion for selection is that potential managing agents should be able to organise schemes which can assess the needs of individuals for training, offer a sufficiently wide range of different types of training and linked practical experience to meet their needs (including training in new technology and self-employment), and provide training in job-interview and other related skills needed to help gain employment.

Managing agents will be paid an administration fee of £35 for each person joining the scheme and £58 for each month of training and linked practical experience delivered. Managing agents will expect providers of practical experience to pay a fee for trainees, but there is no set rate. The money will be used by managing agents to help meet the costs of the training that they provide.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Paymaster General (1) if those 20 long-term unemployed claimants who were invited to participate in the new Manpower Services Commission's funded job training programmes during interviews held in Dundee will be credited with national insurance contributions while on the scheme;

(2) if those 20 long-term unemployed claimants who were invited to participate in the new Manpower Services Commission's funded job training programme during interviews held in Dundee will be regarded as new claimants if they sign on when the scheme finishes;

(3) if those 20 long-term unemployed claimants who were invited to participate in the new Manpower Services Commission's funded job training programmes during interviews held in Dundee, will have their unemployment benefit withdrawn if they refuse to participate in the scheme;

(4) if those 20 long-term unemployed claimants who were invited to participate in the new Manpower Services Commission's funded job training programme during interviews held in Dundee will still be registered as unemployed if they accept this job training scheme.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986, c. *276*]: The aim of the job training scheme pilots is to assist the long term unemployed to acquire skills which will help them find employment. Trainees will be volunteers and benefit sanctions will not be applied to anyone who does not wish to take up an offer of training in a pilot scheme.

Participants are not unemployed whilst on the training scheme. If they subsequently become unemployed, they will need to renew their claim for benefit. National insurance contributions are credited for each week or part week of the course.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Paymaster General why his officers were unable to provide information to those twenty long-term unemployed claimants invited to participate in the new Manpower Services Commission's funded job training programme in Dundee as to the implications for their entitlement to benefits of accepting a place on the scheme.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 November 1986, c. *276*]: People on the job training scheme pilots will be paid a training allowance which will be no less than their previous rate of unemployment benefit or supplementary allowance. This is explained at the restart interview. In addition, people expressing an interest in joining the scheme receive individual counselling by the unemployment benefit service staff on transfer from one type of payment to another and are given a written statement about the amount of training allowance that they will receive and the availability of other benefits. I understood that these procedures were followed in Dundee.

Portsmouth

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General how many people in Portsmouth have left the employment register through the restart programme since it started.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1986, c. *367*.]: On the basis that the hon. Member is referring to the unemployment benefit count, it is impossible to estimate what proportion of those long-term unemployed people who have ceased to claim benefit in recent months have done so because of the restart programme. People are constantly ceasing to claim benefit because they have returned to work, started work, started training or for a variety of other reasons.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Manioc Imports

Mr. Latham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from pig producers regarding imports of manioc into the European Community; and any competitive advantage which this gives to Dutch pig producers; and what action he is taking in that regard.

Mr. Gummer: I have not received any recent representations from our pig producers about imports of manioc into the European Community. But I am aware that imports of cereal substitutes into the European Community are of concern to them.

It is difficult to make precise comparisons of feed costs for pig producers in the United Kingdom and other member states because of variations in such factors as the quality of feed produced and used. Compound feedstuffs in the Netherlands do contain a high proportion of cereal substitutes, imports of which enter the European Community mainly through Rotterdam.

I continue to work for further price restraints in the cereals sector. In this way, any advantage for users of cereals substitutes should be reduced.

Green Pound

Mr. Latham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received from the National Farmers' Union regarding the green pound; and what action he intends to take in that regard.

Mr. Gummer: Following the devaluation of the Irish green punt in September, I made a request to the Commission of the European Communities for devaluations of the green pound for beef and for other livestock products. On 18 November the Commission made a proposal for devaluations of the green pound and the French green franc for beef and sheepmeat. I am pressing for a positive decision at the earliest opportunity. The National Farmers Union wrote to me seeking a devaluation and has welcomed my request. It has, however, registered its concern at the size of the United Kingdom negative monetary compensatory amount. I keep this matter under constant review and shall continue to do so.

Pressure Stock Licences

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will investigate the extent to which pressure stock licences are being bought in the Plymouth area and transferred to Spanish fishing vessels; and if he will make a statement about the practice of transferring pressure stock licences from British boats to boats belonging to other countries but registered in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to restrict the issue of pressure stock licences to British nationals fishing from British boats.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Departmental Information Technology Staff

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average number of days training per year given to professional information technology staff within his Department who are no longer trainees, in the most recent years available.

Mr Jopling: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Milk

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish a table showing the figures for milk production within each country in the European Community over the last 10 years and another table giving details of the consumption of milk in each of those countries during the same period.

Mr. Gummer: Usable production of wholemilk for 1982-84 for each member of the European Community 10 is given on page 92 of the fourth quarter 1985 edition of "animal production" (Eurostat), a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Page 68 of the same publication also gives figures for cows milk collected for

1982-85. Data for earlier years are given in previous editions. Because milk is consumed as a range of products, in which the butterfat and solids-not-fat proportions are different from those in whole milk, it is not meaningful to produce a single figure for each country of milk consumption to compare with production. However, pages 95-103 of the Eurostat publication give usable production and human consumption of drinking milk and the major milk products for 1981-84.

Consultants (Fees)

Mr. Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the spending of his Department on fees to outside consultants in the current year; and what it was in 1979-80 and each intervening year.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 November 1986, c. *252*]: My Department has spent the following sums:

	£
1984-85	328,518
1985-86	428,719
[1]1986-87	956,207

[1]Estimate

Pesticides (Temik)

Sir John Farr asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy that the aldicarb pesticide Temik will not be made available for sale or cleared by the Pesticide Registration Department until an evaluation has been made in the United Kingdom of its effects on the immune system.

Mr. Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1986; c. *376*]: The insecticide Temik 10G, containing the active ingredient aldicarb, is approved under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. It has been evaluated by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides and its Scientific Sub-Committee and was first cleared for use in 1974.

The recently-introduced statutory arrangements for approving pesticides make provision for approvals to be reviewed at any time in the light of new evidence. We have made urgent arrangements to obtain details of the Wisconsin university studies referred to in recent press reports, and these will be evaluated carefully by the appropriate experts before any consideration is given to the status of the product under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in Northern Ireland have been diagnosed as suffering from acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Needham: Four.

Private Patients

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for 1985: *(a)* the number of authorised pay beds, *(b)* the average number occupied by private patients, *(c)* the average occupancy as a percentage, *(d)* the number of private in-patients and *(e)* the number of private out-patients for each health and social services board and for Northern Ireland as a whole.

Mr. Needham: Information is not available in the precise form requested. Details of the number of authorised pay beds, and of the average occupancy and percentage occupancy of these beds by private patients, in general hospitals, by Health and Social Services Board for 1985 are given below. Information on the number of private in-patients and private out-patients treated in hospital is not available and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Health and Social Services Board	*Number of authorised pay beds in general hospitals*	*Average number of pay beds occupied by private patients in general hospitals*	*Percentage occupancy*
Eastern	87	18·9	21·7
Northern	19	3·4	17·9
Southern	14	2·4	17·1
Western	21	2·8	13·3
Northern Ireland	141	27·5	19·5

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for each year since 1979 for National Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland *(a)* the number of paybeds, *(b)* the average number occupied by private patients, *(c)* the occupancy rate as a percentage, *(d)* the number of private in-patients and *(e)* the number of private out-patients.

Mr. Needham: Information is not available in the precise form requested. Details of the number of pay beds and of the average occupancy and percentage of these beds by private patients, in general hospitals administered by the health and social services boards, for Northern Ireland for each year since 1979 are given below. Information on the number of private in-patients and private out-patients treated in hospital is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Year	Number of Pay Beds in General Hospitals	Average Number of Pay Beds occupied by Private Patients in General Hospitals	Percentage occupancy
1979	141	29·8	21·1
1980	141	21·1	15·0
1981	141	20·4	14·5
1982	141	n/a	n/a
1983	141	26·1	18·5
1984	141	24·5	17·4
1985	141	27·5	19·5

n/a = Data not available due to industrial action.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list any health and social services boards for which statutory auditors have issued reports of poor control over private patient income since 1979.

Mr. Needham: In December 1985 the statutory auditor issued reports covering deficiencies in the system of control over private patient income in each of the four health and social services boards.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for 1985-86 and for each health and social services board and for Northern Ireland as a whole: *(a)* the income from private resident patients and the amount written off as bad debts, *(b)* the income from private non-resident patients and the amount written off as bad debts and *(c)* the income from services provided to private medical institutions and the amount written off as bad debts.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Health and social services board	Income £	Amount written off as bad debts £
Private resident patients		
Northern	143,282	nil
Southern	103,229	27
Eastern	890,641	624
Western	120,999	nil
Total all boards	1,258,151	651
Private non-resident patients		
Northern	9,488	nil
Southern	4,979	nil
Eastern	58,790	75
Western	7,158	nil
Total all boards	80,415	75
Services provided to Private medical institutions		
Northern	nil	nil
Southern	10,907	nil
Eastern	17,552	nil
Western	nil	nil
Total all boards	28,459	nil

Hospital Statistics

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for each health and social services board and for Northern Ireland as a whole in 1985-86 the total expenditure on hospital cleaning, the total expenditure on services provided to hospitals by private companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year.

Mr. Needham: The answer is as follows:

Health and Social Services Board	Total Expenditure in 1985/86 hospital cleaning £	Expenditure in 1985/86 on services provided by private cleaning companies £	Per cent. of Total	Difference between 1984/85 percentage and 1985/86 percentage
Northern	2,174,860	12,269	0·56	+ ·01
Southern	2,156,284	29,425	1·17	+ ·49
Eastern	7,863,971	101,475	1·29	− ·09
Western	2,591,060	33,451	1·29	+ ·19
All boards	15,146,175	176,620	1·17	+ ·07

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for 1985-86 for each health and social services board and for Northern Ireland as a whole the total expenditure on hospital laundry, the total expenditure on services provided to hospitals by private laundry companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Health and Social Services Board	Total Expenditure in 1985/86 hospital laundry £	Expenditure in 1985/86 on services provided by private laundry companies £	Per cent. of Total	Difference between 1984/85 percentage and 1985/86 percentage
Northern	981,722	242,474	24·70	+2·55
Southern	915,780	1,516	0·16	+0·16
Eastern	3,330,437	56,468	1·69	+0·05
Western	906,194	21,853	2·41	−0·50
All boards	6,134,133	322,311	5·25	+0·21

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for 1985-86 for each health and social services board and for Northern Ireland as a whole the total expenditure on hospital catering, the total expenditure on services provided to hospitals by private catering companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year.

Mr. Needham: No catering services are provided to hospitals by private catering companies. The total expenditure on hospital catering is as follows:

Health and Social Services Board	Total expenditure in 1985-86 on hospital catering £
Northern	2,600,259
Southern	3,064,442
Eastern	11,587,869
Western	3,547,059
All boards	20,799,629

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for each year since 1979 the percentage of expenditure on *(a)* hospital catering, *(b)* hospital laundry and *(c)* hospital cleaning which has been paid to private contractors for services provided to the National Health Service in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is shown in the table:

Percentage of Total Expenditure Paid to Private Contractors

Year	Hospital Catering	Hospital Laundry	Hospital Cleaning
1979-80	NIL	5·26	0·93
1980-81	NIL	5·25	0·86
1981-82	NIL	5·65	0·86
1982-83	NIL	5·21	0·92
1983-84	NIL	4·86	0·73
1984-85	NIL	5·04	1·10
1985-86	NIL	5·25	1·17

Patient Care

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for 1985-86 for each health and social services board and for Northern Ireland as a whole the expenditure on contractual arrangements for patient care.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is shown in the table:

Financial year 1985-86

	£
Northern board	3,986
Southern board	96,250
Eastern board	1,650,574
Western board	6,979
Northern Ireland	1,757,789

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the private hospitals and nursing homes in Northern Ireland which treat National Health Service patients under contractual arrangements.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows: St. John of God hospital; Ulster Volunteer Force hospital; Beaconfield Marie Curie home.

Private Hospitals

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the private hospitals in Northern Ireland giving in each case the number of beds and the health board.

Mr. Needham: The answer is as follows:

Private hospital	Beds	Health and social services board
St. John of God	50	Southern
Ulster Independent clinic	36	Eastern
Ulster Volunteer Force	70	Eastern

Consultants

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for 1986 for each health and social services board and for Northern Ireland as a whole the number of consultants holding *(a)* full-time contracts, *(b)* part-time contracts and *(c)* joint appointments with the University.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Health Service consultants at 30 September 1986

Board	Full-time	Part-time	Joint appointment	Total
Eastern	233	83	74	390
Northern	67	5	1	73
Southern	56	6	0	62
Western	59	8	0	67
Total	415	102	75	592

Notes:

(i) Consultants who serve different boards are shown under the board with which their major involvement lies.

(ii) Dental consultants and community physicians are included.

Maghberry Prison

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) for what offences the prisoner who miscarried in October at Her Majesty's prison, Maghberry was being held in custody;

(2) if he will outline the circumstances in which a prisoner in Her Majesty's prison, Maghberry had a miscarriage in October;

(3) if he will make a statement on the practice of strip searching pregnant women in Her Majesty's prison, Maghberry;

(4) what medical or psychiatric evidence he has received concerning the extent to which strip searching was a contributory factor in the miscarriage of a prisoner in Her Majesty's prison, Maghberry in October;

(5) on how many occasions a pregnant woman in Her Majesty's prison Maghberry was subject to strip searches in the week before she miscarried; and if he will indicate the number of times over the previous seven days she was strip searched each day before her miscarriage.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Housing (Newry and Armagh)

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications for housing transfer have been made in the area administered by the Newry (Urban) Housing Executive office during each of the past five years; how many of these were subsequently withdrawn; and how many were successful.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1986; c. *382-83*]: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I am informed by the chairman that the number of transfer applications made and those withdrawn during each year are not available. The available information for Newry (Urban) office is as follows:

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Number of applications for housing transfer held at September each year	702	637	664	684	589
Number of houses allocated to transfer applicants in year ended September	n/a	161	131	84	113

Labour Statistics

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people over the age of 40 years in Northern Ireland have not been engaged in full-time employment in the past five years.

Mr. Viggers [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1986; c. *385*]: At 9 October 1986, 8,086 unemployed people aged over 40 had been claiming benefit for five years or more.

Redundancy

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for each of the last six years the number of redundancies notified to the Department of Economic Development, the total number of jobs involved and the number of company closures by district council area in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1986; c. *386*]: The numbers of redundancies notified to the Department of Economic Development, and previously the Department of Manpower Services, in each of the last six years are as follows:

	Number of Notifications	*Number of Redundancies Notified*
1980	N/A	44,999
1981	430	23,614
1982	311	18,365
1983	185	9,254
1984	120	6,161
1985	100	5,568

Redundancies are notified to the Department in advance and may not all eventually occur.

Comprehensive information on company closures and associated employment loss is not available as there is no general requirement for businesses to notify the Department of closures.

The following table shows the closures of which the Department has details and relates mainly to closures of larger employers:

	Number of closures	*Jobs lost at closure*
1980	76	5,824
1981	74	5,234
1982	74	4,952
1983	27	1,785
1984	27	1,429
1985	13	548

A breakdown of these by district council area could be made available only at disproportionate cost.

TRANSPORT

Seat Belts

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to which European countries have laws requiring the compulsory wearing of rear seat belts.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Our understanding is that there are laws in the Federal Republic of Germany and in Austria and the USSR requiring rear seat belts to be worn in cars which have them fitted.

Roads

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the 100 major new local road schemes which he has indicated will be able to start following the provision of more resources as announced in his statement of 6 November.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It would not be appropriate to do this. My assessment is based on local highway authority plans and recent performance together with an estimate of what they could do with the available resources. It is for them to decide which schemes they start in accordance

with their priorities. Many will be covered by the 1987-88 transport supplementary grant settlement which has yet to be announced.

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the new trunk road schemes which he expects to start in the next three years as announced in his statement of 6 November.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Details of schemes in the trunk road programme are contained in the report "National Roads England 1985". It is not appropriate to specify expected starts in the next three years in more detail. The timing of starts of individual schemes depends upon progress through pre-construction procedures which can be significantly affected by factors outside the Department's control.

Passenger Ships

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any proposals to change the present arrangements for surveying passenger ships so as to avoid duplication of effort between his surveyors and those of the classification societies.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In discussions earlier this year measures were agreed with the industry to cut costs by rationalising survey procedures and this will avoid unnecessary duplication in the future. These measures will be reviewed again after a year's experience of their operation.

Bus Deregulation

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from Mr. Ian T. Brown of Manchester city council about the effects of bus deregulation in Manchester; what reply he will be sending; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend has received a letter asking for comments on a report about certain bus services in Manchester. I have replied today suggesting that the city council should consider drawing the report to the attention of Greater Manchester Buses Ltd.

M25

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the latest traffic flows in vehicles per day on each section of the M25 motorway;

(2) if he will state the percentage of original design capacity which is now represented by traffic flow in vehicles per day on each section on the M25 motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is as follows:

Motorway section	*Vehicles per 24 hour average day*	*Date of information*	*Per cent. of original recommended design flow standard*
J31—J1	75,000	October 1986	82
J1 —J2	73,000	June 1986	80
J2 —J3	64,000	June 1986	70
J3 —J4	53,000	October 1986	58
J4 —J5	60,000	October 1986	66
J5 —J6	76,000	October 1986	84
J6 —J7	84,000	October 1986	92
J7 —J8	87,000	June 1986	96
J8 —J9	84,000	October 1986	92
J9 —J10	86,000	October 1986	95
J10—J11	103,000	October 1986	113
J11—J12	116,000	October 1986	127
J12—J13	112,000	June 1986	123
J13—J14	125,000	October 1986	102
J14—J15	114,000	October 1986	93
J15—J16	118,000	October 1986	130
J16—J17	100,000	October 1986	110
J17—J18	82,000	June 1986	90
J18—J19	83,000	June 1986	91
J19—J20	88,000	November 1986	97
J20—J21	n/a	n/a	n/a
J21—J22	n/a	n/a	n/a
J22—J23	82,000	November 1986	90
J24—J23	60,000	June 1986	66
J24—J25	64,000	June 1986	70
J25—J26	68,000	October 1986	75
J26—J27	67,000	October 1986	74
J27—J28	73,000	June 1986	80
J28—J29	67,000	June 1986	74
J29—J30	61,000	June 1986	67
J30—J31	51,000	June 1986	56

n/a Not yet available.

The original design flow standard for dual three-lane motorways (24 hour average daily flow) was 91,000 vehicles per day, and for dual four-lane motorways 123,000. The M25 has dual four-lanes between jucntions 13 and 15. The design flow for any road is less than its maximum capacity.

Parking (Schools)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to tighten up parking regulations outside schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Local highway authorities already have powers to introduce mandatory parking restrictions outside particulars schools if they consider them appropriate.

Drink Driving

Mr. Stott asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much he intends to spend on the 1986 Christmas drink and drive campaign; and how this compares in real terms with the 1985 campaign.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This year, we estimate expenditure of about £1·5 million to include not only advertising but production and distribution of the free booklet "The Facts about Drinking and Driving" and the cost of offering a free telephone inquiry service to the public. A further improvement in the campaign, designed to secure better value for money, was its use for the first time during May and June when drink-related road accidents tend to peak. It will continue in the forthcoming Christmas and new year period.

Spending on the drink and drive phase of the Government's 1985 road safety publicity campaign was approximately £1·4 million wholly devoted to advertising in the Christmas and new year period.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake not to alter the Severn bridge tolls before the final outcome of the proposed appeal to the House of Lords by Gwent county council is known.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We shall not reintroduce the higher tolls until the current legal issue is completely resolved.

Settle-Carlisle Line

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce a decision about the future of the Settle to Carlisle railway line.

Mr. David Mitchell: I cannot say yet, as I have received neither the TUCCs' report, nor British Rail's financial case, but I hope to do so before the end of the year.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met members of the United Kingdom Search and Rescue Committee; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have not met the United Kingdom SAR committee as a body. It is chaired by a senior official who reports to me all matters of significance.

Roads (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been spent on the repair and maintenance of those London roads for which his Department is responsible in each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The approximate figures are:—

Year ended 31 March	*£m*
1982	9·3
1983	8·3
1984	8·3
1985	9·2
1986	12·1

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people are currently employed by the Greater London roads and traffic division of his Department; and what is the total staff complement of this division.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: 164 in each case.

One-Person Buses

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last discussed the issue of one-person operated buses with London Regional Transport board members.

Mr. David Mitchell: The use of one-person operated buses in London is an operational matter for London Regional Transport and its subsidiary London Buses Ltd.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations have been received by his Department in the last two months over the use of one-person operated buses in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department has received 10 letters which refer to the use of one person operated buses in London. I understand that London buses carry over 3 million passengers each weekday, and that 72 per cent. of their buses are currently one person operated.

Travel Concessions

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to arrangements for concessionary fares for the elderly in London for 1987-88.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand the London boroughs are close to reaching voluntary agreement to continue the existing scheme into 1987-88. The continued availability of free travel for London's elderly in 1987-88 is in any case guaranteed under the London Regional Transport Act 1984.

Bus Routes (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how many bus routes in London have been put out to competitive tender by London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: Sixty-six.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to financial savings made by London Regional Transport from bus routes tendering in 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. David Mitchell: The latest information that I have is for tendered routes operating up to 31 August 1986. For 41 tendered routes where a direct comparison can be made with former London Buses routes, the total contract prices including the administrative cost to LRT of tendering is some £4 million less than the fully allocated cost to London Buses Ltd before tendering.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement on his proposals for the levy on London ratepayers in support of his grant to London Regional Transport for 1987-88.

Mr. David Mitchell: Before Christmas.

British Airways

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what special arrangements are to be made for members of the British Airways Board as part of the process of privatising the company; if he will give the reasons for these arrangements; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy to ensure that the share issue in respect of British Airways contains provision for an allocation of shares to a British Airways employees trust; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's answer on 21 October which gave details of the share offers available to all employees at the time of flotation.

In addition, schemes will be put in place before privatisation to enable both employees in general and executives to exercise options after privatisation to buy further shares in the company. These save-as-you-earn and executive share option schemes will conform with the Inland Revenue and investment protection committee guidelines, but the final details have not yet been settled. I believe that it is important to give people at all levels working for British Airways the opportunity to take a continuing stake in the company's future, an objective which these schemes are intended to meet.

Shares acquired by employees on free and matching terms are required to be held in trust for specified periods. If employees decide to buy additional shares, they will be free to put them into a trust or deal with them in any other way that they think fit. However, the number of shares an employee acquires will be for that individual to decide, and the allocation arrangements will be framed accordingly.

Lorry Ban (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to make available transport supplementary grants to London boroughs requesting it for the purpose of altering London lorry ban road signs following his exempting of 65 miles of trunk roads from the ban; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is open to highway authorities to bid for support of the capital costs of such signing in their transport policies and programme submissions. They can then use the block of minor works expenditure that we accept each year for this purpose.

Ministerial Visits (Leicester)

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the recent visits to Leicester by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West, (Mr. Mitchell), and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley).

Mr. David Mitchell: I have made two recent visits to Leicester. On 16 October I was pleased to attend an informal ceremony at Billesden to mark the completion of the A47 bypass at the village which will take 1,470 vehicles —22·7 per cent. off the villages' roads. I called on the Midland Fox Bus Company on 29 October for a discussion with the management and also visited the company's mini-bus depot. The company is running over 100 mini-buses from its depot; these provide competitive new services which mean a big improvement for the travelling public.

My colleague the Minister for Roads and Traffic chaired the East Midlands regional annual consultative committee on 19 November at the county hall and later had an informal tour of the Woonerf scheme at Worthington street which forms part of the Melbourne housing action area.

DEFENCE

Wintex

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether Wintex '87 will involve the exercise of the national command authority in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the scenario for Wintex '87 will be made public; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether Wintex '87 will simulate the closure of essential service routes to the general public; and if he will make a statement;

(4) whether Wintex '87 will simulate the internment of subversives; and if he will make a statement;

(5) whether there will be any differences in the organisational involvement and scenarios as between Wintex '85 and Wintex '86;

(6) what will be the date and duration of the Wintex '87 exercise;

(7) what is the purpose of the Wintex '87 exercise;

(8) whether Wintex '87 is a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation exercise; and if he will make a statement;

(9) whether Wintex '87 will have a nuclear phase; and if he will make a statement;

(10) whether Wintex '87 will have a chemical phase; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stanley: Exercise Wintex-Cimex is the ninth in a series of NATO-wide command post exercises conducted by Alliance members. It will take place from 4-17 March 1987. Its objective will be to test military command and control procedures and to exercise Alliance authorities in procedures intended for use in times of international tension and war. To ensure that procedures across the whole spectrum of a crisis are practised a nuclear consultation phase is always included. In the United Kingdom, Government Departments will be participating. Details of the scenario for the exercise and the play itself are classified, but are based upon NATO's

deterrence strategy. As in previous exercises, the full spectrum of NATO's procedures and plans for crisis management will be tested.

Nuclear Weapons (Storage)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will summarise the state of discussions between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government about the possible use of RAF Bentwater for the storage of nuclear weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 4 November at column *430*.

Defence Arms Control Unit

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will explain the functions and duties of his Department's defence arms control unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 4 June 1985 at column 138.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the current number of staff and the annual expenditure of his Department's defence arms control unit in each year since 1979.

Mr. Stanley: The defence arms control unit was formed on 2 January 1985. Since that date, and currently, it has consisted of 13 posts. In 1985-86 it cost £466,000 at current prices. It is expected to cost about the same for the present financial year.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what differences of status are accorded by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to ground-launched cruise missile bases in different countries in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I assume the hon. Gentleman is asking about the opertional status of NATO ground launched cruise missiles. I refer him to paragraph 320 of volume I of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" (Cmnd. 9763-1).

NATO

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what Her Majesty's Government understand to be the current commitment by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to defend the United Kingdom in the event of a conventional attack; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has had any discussions with those North Atlantic Treaty Organisation states without an independent nuclear deterrent about the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's obligations to them in the event of aggression against them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The key principle of the North Atlantic Alliance remains that enshrined in article V of the North Atlantic Treaty which states that:

"The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish information on the production or storage of chemical gas by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The United Kingdom abandoned its chemical warfare capability in the late 1950s, and no change to that policy is now proposed. Details of national defence capabilities are a matter for national Governments. The United States has a limited and aging retaliatory stockpile of chemical weapons. Further details of this capability are provided in the report of the United States' chemical warfare review commission and the annual report by the United States' Secretary of Defence for the fiscal year 1987, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

US Submarine Nathanael Green

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United States authorities informed his Department of *(a)* the extent of damage suffered and *(b)* the nature of repair needed, by the United States submarine Nathanael Green; whether any evaluation was made of the likelihood of the submarine sinking in United Kingdom waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: United States authorities informed my Department that the USS Nathanael Green had suffered limited damage to her external hull plating and rudder. I understand that the nuclear propulsion system was not damaged. There was never any danger of the submarine sinking.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will identify the agreement or undertaking with the United States under which approval for use of the Holy Loch facilities by the United States submarine Nathanael Green was given following the recent incident in which it sustained damage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The USS Nathanael Green berthed at the Holy Loch under arrangements between the United Kingdom and United States Governments, details of which are confidential between them.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Sectretary of State for Defence whether the United States authorities informed his Department of *(a)* the approximate location and *(b)* the latitude and longitude of the incident in which the United States ship Nathanael Green was damaged; and if he will publish the information made available to his Department.

Mr. Stanley: My Department was provided with information as to the location of the USS Nathanael Green at the time when she was damaged. For reasons of operational security it would not be in the public interest to publish this information.

Holy Loch (Submarines)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether United States authorities *(a)* give advance notice

and *(b)* seek approval in respect of each berthing of a nuclear-powered United States submarine at the Holy Loch facilities; if he will describe the relevant arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Use of the base at the Holy Loch by nuclear-powered US submarines is covered by confidential agreements between the United States and United Kingdom Governments.

Royal Fleet Auxiliary Fleet List

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will detail the Royal Fleet Auxiliary fleet list; and if he will denote the dates on which vessels are marked down for refits; and in which year such refits are expected to take place.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The normal period between refits for the ships of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary is about 18 months, or a year for passenger-carrying ships (ie the landing ships logistic). The ships are listed below, together with the date for the next refit of each, on current plans.

Class and Name	*Planned refit date*
Fleet Tankers, Large	
Olmeda	12 January 1987
Tidespring	9 March 1987
Olna	15 June 1987
Olwen	2 November 1987
Fleet Tankers, Small	
Blue Rover	23 February 1987
Black Rover	1 June 1987
Gold Rover	28 September 1987
Green Rover	during 1988
Grey Rover	during 1988
Support Tankers	
Brambleleaf	22 December 1986
Bayleaf	10 August 1987
Orangeleaf	19 October 1987
Appleleaf	during 1988
Oakleaf	during 1988
Fleet Replenishment Ships	
Fort Austin	24 November 1986
Resource	25 May 1987
Fort Grange	21 September 1987
Regent	during 1988
Landing Ships Logistic	
Sir Bedivere	15 December 1986
Sir Geraint	23 February 1987
Sir Caradoc	9 April 1987
Sir Lancelot	8 June 1987
Sir Percivale	5 October 1987
Sir Tristram	during 1987
Helicopter Support Ship	
Engadine	No further refit planned
Forward Repair Ship	
Diligence	2 February 1987

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT (Auctions)

69. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what response he has made to proposals from the European Community to harmonise the levy of value added tax upon the sale at auction of works of art.

Mr. Brooke: Discussions on the draft seventh VAT directive, which was first proposed in 1978 to harmonise the VAT treatment of, inter alia, the sale of works of art, are continuing at official level. Regular representations have been received from a special working party set up by some leading auctioneers and importing dealers. Trade views will continue to inform the British position in the Brussels discussions.

Civil Service (Payroll Giving)

70. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to promote payroll giving for members of the Civil Service.

Mr. Brooke: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to a similar question on 20 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) at column *314*

Duty-Free Allowances

Mr. Hill asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress is currently taking place during the British presidency of the European Council of Ministers to achieve adoption of the proposed seventh directive which clarifies the legal status of duty-free allowances for intra-Community travellers.

Mr. Brooke: The seventh directive, concerning duty-free goods for travellers, has been made a priority for the United Kingdom Presidency. Discussions have taken place and some progress has been made towards reconciling conflicting national requirements, but I am optimistic that our essential interests will be provided for when discussions are resumed shortly.

Hospital Radios

Mr. Holt asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was raised by value added tax imposed on contributions to hospital radios run on a voluntary basis in each of the past five years.

Mr. Brooke: VAT is not charged on contributions and donations voluntarily given to charitable organisations. Charities do, however, bear VAT which they cannot recover on those non-business purchases which are not covered by a specific relief. I regret that there is no information on the amount of tax borne in this way by hospital radio organisations.

Direct Cosmetics Ltd

Mr. Latham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have been pressing Direct Cosmetics Ltd of Oakham to pay a sum in respect of value added tax while the sum in question is the subject of proceedings before a value added tax tribunal and the European Court; and whether he will give an assurance that no enforcement action will be taken in advance of a decision by the European Court.

Mr. Brooke: Parliament has empowered the Commissioners of Customs and Excise to collect value added tax due to the Crown. If tax is found to be due, but unpaid, the commissioners have a duty to secure it by means of an assessment. Time limits are laid down in law within which such assessments must be made. Direct

Cosmetics Ltd is receiving money in respect of tax from purchasers of its goods but is refusing to pay it to HM Customs and Excise. Should the company continue to refuse to pay the tax, the commissioners must consider what steps should be taken to secure it.

Mr. Latham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the letters sent to Mr. W. F. Doody of Direct Cosmetics Ltd. of Oakham dated 28 April and 20 May by Mr. G. R. Burgess of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise advising Mr. Doody to take Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to Court were sent with his authority; and on how many other occasions in 1986 officials of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have written to taxpayers advising them to undertake litigation against Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Counterfeit Goods

Mr. Oakes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the value of goods in each of the last five years seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise as being counterfeit.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Currency Depiction (Works of Art)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to permit the depiction by artists of currency in works of art; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No. In accordance with section 18 of the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981, reproductions of bank notes require the prior authorisation of the Bank of England. These sensible provisions are intended to prevent reproductions being passed off as genuine bank notes. Decisions on whether or not approval should be given in individual cases are entirely a matter for the Bank of England.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate has been made of the revenue consequences of applying value added tax to those areas which are currently zero-rated but which are required by the European Community Commission to be subjected to value added tax; and what account has been taken of these estimates in preparing the Government's spending and borrowing plans.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the Government's submissions to the European Court of Justice in respect of the application made by the European Community Commission to the Court for a declaration concerning United Kingdom value added tax zero-rating; and if he will also publish any correspondence with the Commission on the same subject.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Finance Act 1975

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the certification of policies known as senior plan and senior saver policies as qualifying policies for the purposes of schedule 2 Part 1 of the Finance Act 1975 has been withdrawn.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Channel Tunnel (Customs Control)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he proposes to take to ensure the harmonisation of United Kingdom and French customs' controls on Channel Tunnel trains.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Moynihan asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what response he intends to make to the report on the financial management initiative by the Comptroller and Auditor-General.

Mr. MacGregor: There will be a Treasury minute in response to any report from the Public Accounts Committee which follows from the Comptroller and Auditor General's report. It will be published.

Short Term Bills

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the value of short-term commercial bills which the Bank of England has purchased month by month so far in the current year; and what were the comparable figures for the years 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Net purchases of commercial bills by the Bank of England have been as follows:

£ million

	1986	*1985*	*1984*	*1983*	*1982*	*1981*	*1980*
January	+683	+1,135	+1,492	+613	+1,295	+568	−101
February	+201	+1,052	+1,461	−16	+1,108	+539	+244
March	−1,610	+242	+90	+499	+2,004	+1,335	+9
April	−3,146	−329	−776	−2,014	−418	−866	+305
May	+1,497	+822	−328	−55	−289	−864	−602
June	−1,967	−1,206	−1,354	−593	−53	−787	−19
July	+2,615	+755	+1,213	−140	+1,232	−154	+410
August	+430	−1,776	+742	−427	−804	+918	+216
September	−2,925	−734	+299	+1,406	+1,245	−169	+23

	1986	*1985*	*1984*	*1983*	*1982*	*1981*	*1980*
October	+1,754	+123	+1,056	+354	+213	−15	−121
November		+171	−548	+322	+21	+1,748	+251
December		+1,233	−715	−352	−865	+533	+47

Figures up to and including September 1986 are in banking months; the October 1986 figure is for the calendar month. In the period between the end of banking September 1986 and the beginning of calendar October, the bank purchased £23 million of commercial bills.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the total spending of his Department on press and public relations in the current year; and what it was in 1979-80 and each intervening year.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 November 1986; c. *230*]: The total budget for my Department in the current financial year is £617,000. Outturns for previous years are as follows:

	Cost £000
1982-83	404
1983-84	456
1984-85	508
1985-86	524

Comparable figures for the years 1979-80 to 1981-82 are not available because of machinery of Government changes.

Pensions

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* such information as he has on the numbers in receipt of part of their pension in tax-free lump sums in 1985-86 *(a)* up to £25,000, *(b)* up to £50,000 and *(c)* up to £75,000 and the cost to the Exchequer for each of those bands.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1986; c. *365*]: I regret that the information requested is not available. However, information from the Government Actuary Department's survey of occupational pension schemes suggests that, in 1983, about 400,000 lump sums were paid on retirement, averaging some £6,000.

THE ARTS

EC Library and Information Matters

61. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for the Arts what arrangements exist to ensure that initiatives taken in the European Economic Community on library and information matters are made known to professional organisations in the United Kingdom; and what arrangements exist for consultations with these organisations on those matters.

Mr. Luce: I am satisfied with the present arrangements for dealing with the European Commission's work on library and information matters. These involve two committees organised by my office, and both have representatives on them of all the major United Kingdom professional organisations concerned.

Arts Council (Funding)

62. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on funding for the Arts Council consequent upon the abolition of the Greater London Council and the metropolitan counties.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 17 November 1986 to my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson). I was very pleased to be able to tell the House that I could make £24 million available to the Arts Council for the post-abolition funding in 1987-88, an increase of £3 million on planned expenditure. The Arts Council, the regional arts associations concerned and the successor authorities were able to conclude arrangements for 1986-87 which effectively safeguarded the many excellent arts bodies in the metropolitan counties, and I am confident that they will be able to do so again.

63. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss funding of the arts.

Mr. Luce: I met the chairman on 3 November.

Newspapers

64. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Minister for the Arts what recent advice has been issued by the Office of Arts and Libraries on the stocking of newspapers.

Mr. Luce: The Office of Arts and Libraries has made it clear that it is for library authorities to decide what newspapers to make available by way of providing a comprehensive and efficient service as required by section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The office has pointed out, however, that in making their decisions authorities must take into account criteria relevant to their library functions. An authority contravenes section 7 of the Act if it withdraws newspapers to make a political or industrial point.

Public Library Service

65. **Mr Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Minister for the Arts what further action he proposes to take in discharge of his obligations to superintend and improve the public library service under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

Mr. Luce: I maintain contact with the public library service through my team of library advisers and the Library and Information Services Council.

VAT (Auctions)

67. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received about the possible levy of value added tax on the value of pieces of art at auction.

Mr. Luce: I believe my hon. Friend is referring to the European Community's draft seventh directive on VAT, and I refer him to the answer I have given to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

Arts Council and Scottish Arts Council

Mr. Craigen asked the Minister for the Arts what have been the operating costs of the Arts Council and the Scottish Arts Council over each of the past five years and as a percentage of their total expenditure.

Mr. Luce: The operating costs of the Arts Council and the Scottish Arts Council over the past five years and the percentage they represent of total expenditure were:

	Arts Council		*Scottish Arts Council*	
	Operating £	*Percentage of total expenditure*	*Operating* £	*Percentage of total expenditure*
1982-83	3,455,760	3·76	683,640	6·22
1983-84	3,852,193	3·97	697,017	5·76
1984-85	4,099,873	4·02	715,035	5·88
1985-86	4,241,015	3·97	735,679	5·59
[1]1986-87	4,467,000	4·20	847,800	6·20

[1] Estimate.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister for the Arts how many representations he has received about the consequences for the United Kingdom arts market of the European Economic Community Commission proposals on value added tax liability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I have received representations from the chairman of the Museums and Galleries Commission, the director of the National Art Collections Fund, and representatives of the arts trade on the draft seventh directive on harmonisation of VAT in the European Community, numbering seven in all. I can assure the hon. Member, as I did the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) on 6 November, that no decisions on new Community measures in respect of VAT and works of art are expected in the very near future.

I am very mindful of the unique position of the United Kingdom as a world centre of the trade in fine art and antiques. As Minister for the Arts I would of course be opposed to a harmonisation of VAT which damaged that position.

Regional Arts Associations

Mr. Dormand asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will discuss with the Arts Council the devolution of its powers to the regional arts associations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: It is the Arts Council's policy to devolve responsibility for clients and areas of work to regional arts associations where appropriate. Discussions about devolution continue between the Arts Council and the regional arts associations, but I do not propose to make any fundamental change in the powers of the council.

Leicester (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Spencer asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Leicester.

Mr. Luce: I had a most enjoyable visit to Leicester. I met local councillors at a lunch at the *Leicester Mercury* Offices, and visited Leicestershire's Libraries and Museums Services, during which I had great pleasure in opening an exhibition of pictures collected by the late Mrs. Anne Kessler. I am pleased that the loan of the paintings was made possible by the Government's indemnity scheme.

Marketing Initiative

Mr. Moynihan asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on his proposed marketing initiative for the Arts.

Mr. Luce: I announced to the House on 17 November that I would be launching a new arts marketing scheme shortly; it is intended to encourage publicly funded arts organisations to take new initiatives in the field of marketing for the purpose of increasing their audiences and improving their income.

SCOTLAND

Abortions

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, concerning each death notified in connection with legal abortion, performed in Scotland in each of the years 1968 to 1985, inclusive, what was the woman's age and parity, gestation period under nine, nine to 12, 13 to 16, 17 to 19, and over 19 weeks, abortion premises (National Health Service or non-National Health) and procedure; whether sterilisation was performed concurrently; and whether the Registrar General attributed the death to the operation.

Mr. John MacKay: The information contained in the reports of the inquiry into maternal deaths in Scotland and the annual reports of the Registrar General for Scotland is set out below. Information for 1981 to 1985 is not yet available. Figures for the number of deaths available from the Registrar General are based on the cause of death written by the certifying doctor on the death certificate; that information may not correspond to the more detailed information available to the inquiry, which looks at all deaths occurring up to 12 months after a delivery or abortion.

Period and number of deaths	*Age*	*Parity*	*Gestation group (weeks)*	*Method*	*Whether sterilised*	*Deaths*[1]
1968-1971						
3	33	4	17-19	Hysterotomy	Yes	0
	35	5	9-12	Hysterotomy	Yes	
	41	3	9-12	Hysterotomy	Yes	
1972-1975						
7	20	0	9-12	General anaesthetic only	No	5
	31	6	9-12	Vacuum aspiration	Yes	

Period and number of deaths	Age	Parity	Gestation group (weeks)	Method	Whether sterilised	Deaths[1]
	32	2	9-12	Vacuum aspiration	Yes	
	43	9	13-16	Hysterotomy	Yes	
	43	4	13-16	Curettage	Yes	
	Not known	Not known	10-13	Vacuum aspiration	No	
	Not known	Not known	10-13	Vacuum aspiration	No	
1976-1980						
5	20	0	9-12	Vacuum aspiration	No	2
	22	0	13-16	Prostaglandin	No	
	22	0	13-16	Vacuum aspiration	No	
	26	3	Less than 9	General anaesthetic only	No	
	34	3	13-16	Vacuum aspiration	Not known	

[1]Recorded by GRO(S) with underlying cause therapeutic abortion.

Expenditure (Roads)

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much additional expenditure in 1987-88 on roads is earmarked for Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend will announce in December his decision on the allocation to the transport programme. Fuller details will be published early next year in "Public Expenditure to 1989-90: A Commentary on the Scotland Programme".

Road to Mallaig

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he now expects to see the completion of the final section of the road to Mallaig.

Mr. Ancram: I expect the Kinsadel-Mallaig stage I scheme to start in February 1987 and to take two years to complete. Five further schemes will follow and the improvement of the whole route between Mallaig and Lochailort should be completed by 1995.

Expenditure (Schools)

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent per pupil (i) in primary schools and (ii) in state secondary schools in Scotland in the most recent year for which figures are available; and how this compares with the figure for 1978-79 at constant prices.

Mr. John Mackay: The information requested is given in the following table:

Net School Expenditure Per Full-Time Equivalent Pupil

Year	Primary		Secondary	
	At Out-Turn Prices	At November 1984 Prices	At Out-Turn Prices	At November 1984 Prices
1978-79	395	774	719	1,409
1984-85	918	918	1,468	1,468

Sewerage System

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many miles of the drains and sewerage system in Scotland *(a)* were built in the 19th century and *(b)* are regarded in need of repair or replacement; and what percentage of the total mileage each of these represents.

Mr. Ancram: Precise figures are not available, but it is estimated that there are some 15,000 miles of sewers in Scotland of which about 30 per cent. were built in the 19th century. Regional and islands councils have been encouraged to survey the condition of the sewers, particularly those in critical parts of systems. This work is proceeding. Preliminary findings indicate that the structural condition of sewers may in general be better than has been suggested. Sewer repair, renovation and replacement are undertaken routinely by local authorities within their capital expenditure programmes.

Housing (Scotland) Act 1986

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1986 will come into force.

Mr. Ancram: A commencement order will shortly be made bringing the Act into operation on 7 January 1987. From that date, the right to buy will extend to tenants of regional authorities and housing associations. The discount scale for flats bought under the right to buy will run from 44 per cent. by 2 per cent. steps to 70 per cent. For both houses and flats, the period during which there is a liability to repay discount on resale will be reduced from five to three years; this will apply to former tenants who have already bought their homes at discount provided that they do not sell before 7 January.

A7 Road

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the general condition of the A7 road in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I am satisfied that the general condition of the A7 in Scotland is adequate for the volume of traffic using it. However, improvements are planned to rectify certain substandard features. With the completion of the Edinburgh city bypass due about the end of the decade, the Scottish Development Department is putting in hand a

study of the various trunk routes south of Edinburgh, including an assessment of the need for any further improvements to these roads.

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on plans for realignment of the A7 at Dryden-Headshaw.

Mr. Rifkind: A draft trunk road order to establish the new line of the A7 at Dryden-Headshaw was published in September 1986. Timing of a construction start will depend on the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and on the availability of funds.

Private Patients

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give for each health board and for Scotland as a whole *(a)* the number of pay beds, *(b)* the average number occupied by private patients, *(c)* the average occupancy percentage, *(d)* the number of private in-patients and *(e)* the number of private out-patients in the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) if he will give for each year since 1979 for National Health Service hospitals in Scotland *(a)* the number of pay beds, *(b)* the average number occupied by private patients, *(c)* the occupancy rate as a percentage, *(d)* the number of private in-patients and *(e)* the number of private out-patients.

Mr. John MacKay: The information available centrally is given in the following table. Information on the number of private in-patients and out-patients is not available centrally.

Health Board	*1979-80*			*1980-81*			*1981-82*			*1982-83*			*1983-84*			*1984-85*			*1985-86*[1]		
	(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(1)*	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(1)*	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(1)*	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(1)*	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(1)*	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(1)*	*(2)*	*(3)*
Argyll and Clyde	13	1·3	9·9	13	2·2	16·6	13	7·4	57·2	13	0·6	4·6	13	2·6	19·7	13	0·8	5·9	13	0·4	3·0
Ayrshire and Arran	12	5·3	43·9	9	3·8	42·5	9	4·0	44·4	11	3·2	29·2	11	4·5	41·0	11	3·3	29·9	11	3·2	29·3
Borders	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0·1	10·7
Fife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—
Forth Valley	5	1·5	29·2	5	2·3	46·1	5	1·7	33·5	5	1·1	21·5	5	1·2	24·9	5	1·1	22·4	5	1·2	23·7
Grampian	14	5·9	42·2	13	5·4	41·4	13	5·2	40·0	15	4·1	27·1	17	3·0	17·6	17	3·7	21·8	17	3·4	20·1
Greater Glasgow	41	6·9	16·9	30	3·8	12·5	30	5·6	18·6	30	3·7	12·2	30	3·8	12·8	30	1·6	5·3	30	1·5	4·9
Highland	3	0·7	22·0	3	0·4	12·1	3	0·5	16·4	4	0·4	9·9	4	0·7	16·5	4	0·5	11·6	4	0·1	3·7
Lothian	21	6·9	32·7	16	6·3	39·5	16	7·6	47·7	19	8·2	43·1	19	6·7	35·4	19	5·0	26·4	19	3·7	19·4
Tayside	5	0·4	8·5	5	0·4	8·6	5	0·6	12·0	11	0·6	5·2	9	1·2	13·8	9	1·7	19·0	9	2·0	22 3
Total	114	28·0	24·6	94	24·6	26·2	94	32·6	34·7	108	23·4	21·7	108	23·7	21·8	109	17·7	15·8	110	15·6	13·7

[1] Provisional.
(1) Number of authorised pay beds at the end of the financial year in question.
(2) Average daily occupancy number.
(3) Average daily occupancy percentage.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will list any health boards whose accounts have been qualified by the statutory auditor in respect of control over private patient income since 1979.

Mr. John MacKay: No accounts of health boards have been qualified by the statutory auditor in respect of control over private patient income in the period in question.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for 1985-86 and for each health board and Scotland as a whole the income from *(a)* private resident patients, *(b)* private non-resident patients and *(c)* services provided to private medical institutions; and what is the amount written off as bad debts in these areas.

Mr. John MacKay: The information available on income from private patients is set out in the table below. Central information on amounts written off as bad debts does not distinguish between resident and non-resident patients.

The only source of income to the NHS from the supply of services to private medical institutions in Scotland for which central information is available relates to the charges made by the Common Services Agency for the expenses incurred in the handling and processing of blood and blood products. Income from provision of these services amounted to £34,032 in 1985-86.

Income from Private Patients in NHS Hospitals in Scotland 1985-86

Board	*Resident*	*Non-resident*	*Amount written off as bad debts*
	£	£	£
Argyll & Clyde	140,871	41	2,788
Ayrshire and Arran	108,833	11,082	467
Borders	3,192	546	11
Dumfries & Galloway	—	1,161	—
Fife	118	307	—
Forth Valley	65,177	10,405	—
Grampian	168,888	32,492	1,096
Greater Glasgow	66,002	295	4,764
Highland	9,719	460	—
Lanarkshire	453	268	1,873
Lothian	129,081	29,749	674

Board	Resident	Non-resident	Amount written off as bad debts
	£	£	£
Orkney	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—
Tayside	72,308	10,850	595
Western Isles	—	—	—
Scotland	764,642	97,656	12,268

Hospital Patients

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board and for Scotland as a whole the cost of maintaining patients in hospitals not vested in the Secretary of State in 1985-86.

Mr. John MacKay: Contributions by health boards in 1985-86 towards the cost of maintaining patients in hospitals not vested in the Secretary of State were as follows:

Health boards	£'000
Argyll & Clyde	951
Ayrshire & Arran	18
Borders	377
Dumfries & Galloway	—
Fife	21
Forth Valley	112
Grampian	—
Greater Glasgow	1,449
Highland	217
Lanarkshire	657
Lothian	3,977
Orkney	—
Shetland	—
Tayside	38
Western Isles	—
Total	7,817

Patient Care

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for 1985 for each health board and for Scotland as a whole the number of deaths and discharges among, and the number of beds occupied by, patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service, breaking the figures down by category of patient treated.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested, which relates to 30 September 1985, is as follows:

Health board/speciality	Average occupied beds	Discharges and deaths
Argyll & Clyde		
Geriatric long stay	40	12
Mental handicap	65	8
Total	105	20
Borders		
Mental handicap	65	5
Total	65	5
Greater Glasgow		
Geriatric long stay	24	16
Others	49	138
Total	73	154
Highland		
Geriatric long stay	19	1
Total	19	1
Lanarkshire		
Convalescent	35	541
Geriatric long stay	53	16
Total	88	557
Lothian		
Geriatric long stay	158	94
Mental handicap	174	7
Others	55	671
Total	387	772
Scotland		
Convalescent	35	541
Geriatric long stay	294	139
Mental handicap	304	20
Others	104	809
Total	737	1,509

Private Hospitals

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the private hospitals and nursing homes in Scotland which treat National Health Service patients under contractual arrangements with health boards.

Mr. John MacKay: The latest available information, which relates to 30 September 1985, is as follows:

Argyll & Clyde
Princess Louise Hospital, Bishopton
St. Mary's Private Hospital, Barrhead
Borders
St. Aidan's Private Hospital
St. Mary's Hospital, Galashiels
Greater Glasgow
Jewish Old Age Home, Newark Drive
St. Margaret's Hospital, Clydebank
Highland
St. Vincent's Home, Kingussie
Lanarkshire
Assumption House, Airdrie
St. Mary's Convalescent Home, Lanark
Lothian
St. Columba's Hospice
St. Joseph's Hospital, Rosewell
Fairmile Nursing Home
Queensberry House

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the private hospitals in Scotland, giving in each case the health board and the number of beds.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is as follows:

Private nursing homes and hospitals in Scotland (December 1985—latest available figures)

Health board area / *Private nursing home/hospital*	*Bed complement*
Argyll and Clyde	
Argyle Lodge	12
Cairndhu House	33
Downie Campbell	10
Drumadoon	32
Moredun	26
Princess Louise Hospital[4]	298
St. Gabriel Woods Mariners Home[1]	45
St. Josephs[2]	84
St. Mary's Home[3]	90
Ayrshire and Arran	
Abbotsford	27
Arisaig	18
Auchenbeg	33
Belhaven	17
Blair Lodge	30
Craigdhu	25
Craigie	8
Dunvagan	18
Glenfairn	40
Grange	18
Hollybush[2]	25
Malin Court	7
Silverdale	32
The Queens	50
Torrance Lodge	47
West Bank	22
Whitecross[2]	28
Windyhall	30
Borders	
Knowe South	25
St. Aidan's Hospital[3]	74
St. Andrews Hospital[3]	56
St. Mary's Hospital[3]	75
Dumfries and Galloway	
Dalawoodie	21
Goldielea	28
Moat Brae[4]	14
Fife	
Craigmount	18
Duncraggan	20
Forth Valley	
Ashlea House	25
Dalnair	60
Dunblane	18
Gateside House	24
Stirling District[4]	16
Strathcarron Hospice	13
Viewforth	22
Grampian	
Devanha Gardens	46
Hillside House	25
House of Corse	20
Pitmurchie House	16
St. Andrews	40
St. John's Hospital[4]	36
Greater Glasgow	
Bon Secours Hospital[4]	50
Bon Secours Nursing Home	10
Cleveden Lodge	38
Cottage Homes	15
Elmtree	37
Eastpark Children's Nursing Home	33
Glenafton	30
Hillside	17
Hogganfield House	24
Huntershill	54
Jewish Old Age Home	86
Kensington	12
Langside	24
Lyndale	22
Nuffield McAlpine Hospital[4]	50
Rodel	29
Ross Hall Hospital[4]	76
St. Andrew's	24
St. Francis Geriatric (Unit)	38
St. Francis Maternity Hospital	38
St. Margaret's Hospice	60
Wilmar	12
Highland	
Bellevue	27
Carnoch	9
Duncraig	30
Elmgrove	19
Fairburn	22
Fairfield	29
Hebron House	26
Lentran	40
The Croft	14
Lanarkshire	
Assumption House	21
Avonbridge	24
Blyth Holme	20
Collisdene	29
Ellenvale	27
Kirkdene	12
St. Mary's Hospital	80
Woodhurst	18
Lothian	
Abercorn	16
Ashfield	14
Auchlea	17
Belleville Lodge	22
Cluny Lodge	50
Croston Lodge	18
Dean Carlton	36
Dunvegan	17
Fairmile[1]	42
Findhorn	22
Glencairn Towers	36
Guthrie Court	38
Hilton Lodge	15
Huntly[4]	20
Levenhall	22
Lynedoch	54
McNeil House[2]	10
Merchiston	24
Milford	16
Murrayfield Hospital[4]	60
Portree	23
Queenspark	19
Queensberry Lodge	57
Regis	24
Reston House	12
Rutherford Morrison	40
St. Anne's	20
St. Columbas's Hospice	30
St. Joseph's Hospital, Rosewell[3]	235
St. Raphael's	49
St. Rule's	23
Servite Convent	24
Skye	23
Trinity Lodge	21
Tayside	
Fernbrae[4]	31
Moncrieff	10
Roundel Wood	50
St. Johnston	25
Westbay	16

[1] Exempt from registration under section 6 of the Nursing Homes Registration (Scotland) Act 1938.
[2] Exempt from registration under section 7 of the Nursing Homes Registration (Scotland) Act 1938.
[3] Private nursing homes/hospitals admitting patients under the Mental Health Act 1960.
[4] Private hospitals offering acute surgical care.

Consultants

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the 1985 figures broken down by health board showing the number of National Health Service consultants holding *(a)* full-time, *(b)* maximum part-time, *(c)* other part-time and *(d)* honorary contracts in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The number of medical and dental consultants by nature of contract at 30 September 1985 is shown in the table below:

Health Board	*Full-time*	*Maximum Part-time*	*Other Part-time*	*Honorary*
Argyll and Clyde	94	13	5	—
Ayrshire and Arran	76	9	2	—
Borders	21	—	1	—
Dumfries and Galloway	44	2	7	—
Fife	78	2	1	—
Forth Valley	70	10	1	—
Grampian	97	28	5	43
Greater Glasgow	416	93	11	128
Highland	68	—	1	—
Lanarkshire	138	7	2	—
Lothian	223	53	14	113
Orkney	1	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—
Tayside	137	11	2	40
Western Isles	5	—	1	—
Common Services Agency	15	—	—	—
Scotland	1,483	228	53	324

Chiswick Report

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all recommendations of the Chiswick report on Glenochil young offenders' institution and detention centre, indicating what action has been taken to meet them.

Mr. Lang: In his statement to the House on 24 July 1985 my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) indicated the Government's response to the recommendations of the Chiswick report and to the findings of fatal accident inquiries into two deaths which occurred in 1985. Of the report's 63 recommendations 13 were rejected, while the remaining 50 were accepted or remitted for further study.

Considerable progress has been made in implementing those recommendations which the Government accepted. I am now reviewing all aspects of follow-up to the Chiswick report and to the fatal accident inquiries and I shall write to the hon. Gentleman before long.

Education Authority Bursaries

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland for what reason he has not provided additional resources to enable education authorities in practice to waive, in whole or in part, the parental contribution element of a bursary calculation, as provided for under the Education Authority Bursaries (Scotland) Regulations 1986.

Mr. John MacKay: In response to representations from the education authorities, the regulations were amended to give the authorities discretion to waive in part the parental contribution element of a bursary calculation. The allowance of £23·8 million in the 1986-87 rate support grant settlement for expenditure on further education bursaries is sufficient to enable the authorities to exercise discretion in their determination of parental contributions.

Glasgow College of Arts

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the funding for the Glasgow School of Art in each of the past three years; and what changes he plans for the college.

Mr. John MacKay: The Glasgow School of Art receives funds from various sources. The Scottish Education Department has provided the following grants towards current and capital expenditure in each of the past 3 years:

£ million

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Current	2·812	2·985	3·120
Capital	0·095	0·302	0·203

No decisions have been taken about the level of such grants in future years.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why he plans a 20 per cent. increase in funding for forestry in 1988-89.

Mr. MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans for a 20 per cent. increase in funding for forestry in 1988-89. The Public Expenditure White Paper 1986-87 to 1988-89 (Cmnd. 9702-II) records an increase from £50 million to £60 million between 1987-88 and 1988-89, but these figures have been rounded to the nearest £10 million in accordance with convention. The planned expenditure, at outturn prices, is £54·4 million for 1987-88 and £55·8 million for 1988-89.

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of total receipts to March 1989 for the Forestry Commission's disposal of plantations and planting land; and whether he intends to revise the guidelines on the selection of areas for disposal.

Mr. John Mackay [*pursuant to his reply*, Friday 21 November 1986; c. 389]: The latest estimate of total receipts from that part of the Forestry Commission's disposals programme relating to plantations and planting land, covering the period from the passage of the Forestry Act 1981 to 31 March 1989, is around £70 million. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to revise the guidelines on the selection of areas for disposal.

Sheep Premium

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent progress has been made with the European Commission in the extension of sheep annual premium to untupped gimmers.

Mr. John Mackay: The European Commission has still not made a proposal to extend sheep annual premium to untupped gimmers in Scotland despite our continuing to press strongly for them to do so.

Laminate Manufacturers

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what consideration he gave to the effects on other laminate manufacturers in the United Kingdom when grants were awarded to Isola Werke A. G. of Duren, West Germany to establish a manufacturing facility at Cumbernauld; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consideration he gave to the effects on other laminate manufacturers in the United Kingdom when grants were awarded to Les Techniques Industrial les Du Stratifie at Livingstone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The normal evaluation procedures relating to offers of regional selective assistance were carried out before grant was offered to the companies. These procedures include an evaluation of the likely effects of the proposed project on existing United Kingdom manufacturers of similar products. As well as consideration by my own officials, consultations were held with the relevant divisions of the Department of Trade and Industry. In both cases the conclusions reached were that the projects would strengthen manufacturing capability in the United Kingdom at the expense of imports.

Industrial Grants

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now answer questions about grants to individual companies in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Questions about grants, to individual companies in Scotland are answered subject to the normal rules of commercial confidentiality.

Green Belt

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce legislation to remove all planning controls in the green belt in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has no such plans. The Government's policies on green belts in Scotland remain as set out in Scottish Development Department Circular No. 24/1985.

Hazardous Cargoes

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which a gas-carrying vessel went aground near Leith; what information he has as to the consideration given by the Forth Ports Authority to the hazardous nature of the cargo while the vessel remained in the estuary; and if he has received a report on the effectiveness of the emergency procedures.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.

An inspector has been appointed to carry out an inquiry into the casualty under the Merchant Shipping Act and is presently pursuing his enquiries.

The Forth Ports Authority has a rigorous system for the control of all shipping movements and vessels with hazardous cargoes are additionally required to confirm each time before entering the ports authority area, that they comply with internationally agreed safety standards and that their systems are in good working order.

Immediately after the grounding of the Inga Tholstrup the authority designated a three-mile exclusion zone around the vessel and this was maintained until her cargo had safely been transferred to other vessels.

Throughout the incident the authority acted in the interests of the safety of all concerned and kept my Department's marine pollution control unit fully informed of the action being taken.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are awaiting admission for each speciality at each hospital in Wandsworth; and what were the comparable figures for 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) on 25 July at columns *722-724*.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year since 1970 and for each region the in-patient waiting list at 31 December.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is given in the table. However, the waiting list figures are generally at a seasonal peak at 31 December. The March and September figures give a better indication of trends in the demand for hospital in-patient treatment.

Numbers of patients on in-patient waiting lists at 31 December

	1970	*1971*	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Northern RHA	27,209	26,021	25,856	26,501	29,178	35,903	34,514	34,058	39,983	39,566	36,118	34,804	51,608	42,833	39,386	37,042
Yorks RHA	23,148	22,586	23,132	26,464	31,468	36,736	38,392	36,102	44,181	43,371	40,876	38,598	55,347	48,682	48,909	46,640
Trent RHA	52,493	48,725	49,652	50,181	44,717	49,049	51,213	52,486	63,041	65,427	58,468	56,786	75,104	68,492	66,330	62,701
East Anglia RHA	15,670	15,058	16,393	19,330	19,390	22,947	23,460	22,720	27,486	28,850	26,854	23,215	34,583	31,965	30,212	27,702
North West Thames RHA	55,312	52,194	49,234	48,184	37,939	44,939	45,196	43,005	47,608	44,606	43,768	42,453	42,513	41,354	41,307	42,726
North East Thames RHA	30,006	30,911	29,692	31,907	37,622	43,746	42,788	44,434	51,668	53,396	49,945	51,529	60,079	58,560	63,818	69,401
South East Thames RHA	39,744	35,170	34,095	37,649	39,286	45,548	47,104	47,332	51,746	50,186	46,762	45,922	52,501	52,596	50,856	52,476
South West Thames RHA	32,281	28,668	26,540	29,750	25,767	30,002	32,215	31,174	37,747	39,508	35,326	34,270	36,172	38,095	36,495	36,851
Wessex RHA	21,531	18,193	20,826	25,054	29,148	31,938	33,557	33,173	37,665	39,140	39,582	41,147	46,546	46,183	45,627	42,397
Oxford RHA	24,988	23,602	22,247	22,421	28,913	29,693	33,099	32,043	37,409	34,331	33,626	32,224	36,387	36,793	35,492	33,731
South Western RHA	51,107	45,334	41,453	45,161	40,842	43,340	46,508	46,562	48,637	47,131	42,954	44,733	49,297	50,587	49,096	46,609
West Midlands RHA	61,145	60,744	56,660	58,813	60,766	68,417	73,890	75,826	83,435	86,490	80,637	78,944	88,241	83,393	83,675	83,311
Mersey RHA	22,489	21,424	20,157	21,457	24,813	30,271	29,656	29,526	38,110	38,013	33,801	32,939	38,957	34,014	32,303	32,239

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
North Western RHA	68,803	65,101	63,262	65,745	60,236	68,503	67,930	65,639	66,069	70,192	62,997	59,752	68,767	60,745	59,031	56,927
SHA's	—	—	—	—	7,339	7,451	7,619	8,011	7,659	7,479	8,396	7,831	7,984	8,682	9,277	9,491
England	525,926	493,731	479,199	508,617	510,085	581,032	599,522	594,080	674,785	680,207	631,714	617,316	738,102	694,292	682,538	670,753

[1] Figures prior to 1974 relate to Regional Health Boards and Boards of Governors. Because of NHS restructuring in 1974 and 1982 the regional figures are not strictly comparable over the whole period.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the number of people on in-patient waiting lists every six months since 30 September 1982 for *(a)* each district health authority and special health authority in Greater London, *(b)* the health authorities in Greater London added together and *(c)* the health authorities in inner London added together;

(2) if he will give the number of people on the waiting lists for acute surgery every six months since 30 September 1982 for *(a)* each district health authority and special health authority in Greater London, *(b)* the health authorities in Greater London added together and *(c)* the health authorities in inner London added together.

Mr. Newton: For information from 30 September 1982 to 30 September 1985, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) on 25 July at columns *723-28*. The position at 31 March 1986 for Greater London, Inner London and individual health authorities is given in national, regional and district waiting list figures for 31 March 1986, copies of which I have placed in the Library. Greater and Inner London are identified in the booklet. The summaries for Greater London and inner London are on pages 17 and 18 respectively.

Cancer (Treatment)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time delay between a general practitioner recommending a patient to a consultant on the National Health Service for cancer diagnosis and the date the patient is seen by the consultant in *(a)* London and *(b)* nationally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I regret I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. Information on waiting time for out-patient appointments is not collected centrally.

NHS (Drugs)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions in the current financial year his staff responsible for scrutinising the accounts of companies which supply drugs to the National Health Service have discovered (i) breaches of profit targets allowed by the Department of Health and Social Security under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme, (ii) that the companies' costs cannot be properly validated, (iii) that their capital employed is excessively inflated, and (iv) that the cost of the raw materials from a foreign subsidiary drug company has been artificially inflated and (v) that costs for drug trials, or for researching copied drugs, are bogus or unacceptable and really for promotional purposes; how much money he estimates is involved under each category; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Information is not available in the form requested. Companies supplying drugs to the National Health Service in significant quantities submit audited financial returns which are examined by the Department, following which detailed adjustments may be made for a variety of reasons in assessing a company's level of profit on National Health Service sales.

NHS (Beds)

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the average value per bed of hospitals included in the National Health Service estate;

(2) what is the current average cost of providing a new bed in a district general hospital broken down into, land, buildings, equipment, fees and other overheads, together with figures for different sizes of hospital, including ones of 300 beds and 450 beds.

Mrs. Currie: A meaningful answer cannot readily be given.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year since 1979 and for each district health authority the total number of beds in National Health Service hospitals.

Mrs Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Average daily number of available beds in National Health Service hospitals in England

Regional, District and Special Health Authority	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Northern Regional Health Authority							
Hartlepool	592	614	600	627	636	705	607
North Tees	956	971	954	952	973	970	941
South Tees	2,282	2,232	2,122	2,066	2,069	1,973	1,902
East Cumbria	*	*	*	1,552	1,532	1,524	1,491
South Cumbria	*	*	*	872	862	847	874
West Cumbria	1,113	1,094	1,045	1,052	1,078	1,087	1,047
Darlington	1,310	1,336	1,326	1,307	1,319	1,264	1,225
Durham	1,192	1,188	1,181	1,156	1,165	1,107	1,103
North West Durham	717	697	685	681	664	642	611
South West Durham	1,921	1,890	1,847	1,828	1,800	1,719	1,690
Northumberland	3,996	3,988	3,870	3,827	3,766	3,727	3,664
Gateshead	1,368	1,378	1,357	1,362	1,383	1,368	1,365
Newcastle upon Tyne	3,479	3,570	3,567	3,517	3,566	3,488	3,401

Regional, District and Special Health Authority	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
North Tyneside	719	724	723	739	733	740	725
South Tyneside	771	762	828	825	829	821	813
Sunderland	2,426	2,379	2,356	2,338	2,351	2,349	2,312
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority							
Hull	2,145	2,128	2,024	1,955	1,948	1,935	1,934
East Yorkshire	2,184	2,113	2,004	1,934	1,951	1,904	1,871
Grimsby	797	800	806	800	807	800	957
Scunthorpe	993	983	962	936	931	913	933
Northallerton	437	448	448	444	413	406	404
York	2,985	2,960	2,933	2,847	2,548	2,473	2,377
Scarborough	689	701	674	688	694	682	676
Harrogate	995	927	954	959	1,142	1,068	1,027
Bradford	2,721	2,719	2,724	2,711	2,680	2,621	2,510
Airedale	1,528	1,533	1,501	1,464	1,402	1,376	1,353
Calderdale	1,370	1,385	1,344	1,357	1,302	1,258	1,228
Huddersfield	2,625	2,389	2,391	2,391	2,321	2,235	2,059
Dewsbury	777	778	785	756	761	752	736
Leeds Western	*	*	*	3,327	3,218	3,172	3,156
Leeds Eastern	*	*	*	2,734	2,726	2,698	2,561
Wakefield	2,607	2,505	2,473	2,321	2,309	2,273	2,128
Pontefract	854	848	873	865	883	904	885
Trent Regional Health Authority							
North Derbyshire	1,722	1,674	1,701	1,668	1,673	1,684	1,749
South Derbyshire	4,208	4,323	3,913	3,935	3,929	3,734	3,535
Leicestershire	5,140	5,221	5,221	5,225	5,149	5,070	5,045
North Lincolnshire	2,815	2,749	2,693	2,653	2,581	2,420	2,100
South Lincolnshire	1,894	1,868	1,835	1,794	1,801	1,819	1,768
Bassetlaw	403	408	412	424	424	419	433
Central Nottinghamshire	1,997	1,967	1,949	1,934	1,888	1,851	1,794
Nottingham	4,198	4,088	4,041	4,029	4,000	3,958	3,931
Barnsley	962	1,013	1,014	971	1,032	1,073	1,134
Doncaster	*	*	*	1,946	1,954	1,929	1,879
Rotherham	*	*	*	1,244	1,250	1,246	1,251
Sheffield	5,233	5,075	5,032	4,922	4,800	4,799	4,771
East Anglian Regional Health Authority							
Cambridge	*	*	*	1,926	1,933	1,875	1,844
Peterborough	1,122	1,120	1,149	1,144	1,129	1,161	1,146
West Suffolk	*	*	*	1,236	1,241	1,247	1,247
East Suffolk	*	*	*	2,668	2,637	2,537	2,477
Norwich	3,928	3,979	3,991	3,822	3,915	3,697	3,512
Great Yarmouth	852	862	875	1,000	995	991	1,051
West Norfolk & Wisbech	830	882	833	817	831	841	847
Huntingdon	*	*	*	300	320	378	409
North West Thames Regional Health Authority							
North Bedfordshire	1,233	1,259	1,230	1,224	1,243	1,216	1,204
South Bedfordshire	1,653	1,649	1,649	1,630	1,606	1,549	1,553
North Hertfordshire	849	851	857	858	855	855	842
East Hertfordshire	829	763	772	791	765	742	714
North West Hertfordshire	3,288	3,310	3,277	3,198	3,175	3,185	3,175
South West Hertfordshire	2,385	2,308	2,237	2,233	2,176	2,124	2,061
Barnet	2,841	2,800	2,771	2,748	2,670	2,551	2,445
Harrow	908	902	914	938	935	878	905
Hillingdon	1,628	1,480	1,528	1,526	1,499	1,406	1,378
Hounslow & Spelthorne	*	*	*	1,548	1,497	1,447	1,382
Ealing	1,709	1,713	1,753	1,725	1,663	1,622	1,543
Brent	2,316	2,332	2,263	2,273	2,203	2,059	1,939
Paddington	1,365	1,276	1,236	1,216	1,211	1,187	1,211
Riverside**	3,226	3,042	3,035	3,946	3,845	3,708	3,465
North East Thames Regional Health Authority							
Basildon & Thurrock	1,893	1,880	1,922	1,960	1,976	1,984	1,945
Mid Essex	1,282	1,276	1,260	1,260	1,271	1,276	1,429
North East Essex	3,381	3,244	3,137	3,066	2,972	2,853	2,541
West Essex	1,256	1,174	1,187	1,214	1,210	1,199	1,192
Southend	1,937	1,941	1,924	1,942	1,933	1,912	1,793
Barking, Havering & Brentwood	3,283	3,238	3,183	3,095	3,033	2,984	2,878
Hampstead	*	*	*	1,963	1,919	1,894	1,875
Bloomsbury	*	*	*	2,487	2,490	2,344	2,116
Islington	*	*	*	1,177	1,105	1,018	917
City & Hackney	1,990	1,867	1,743	1,887	1,884	1,853	1,754
Newham	941	924	936	887	845	877	880
Tower Hamlets	1,561	1,484	1,605	1,433	1,396	1,363	1,355

Regional, District and Special Health Authority	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Enfield	1,234	1,217	1,137	1,087	1,114	1,076	1,069
Haringey	1,236	1,122	1,143	1,157	1,109	1,028	986
Redbridge	1,655	1,655	1,650	1,633	1,644	1,630	1,617
Waltham Forest	3,311	3,318	3,245	3,051	2,842	2,667	2,508
South East Thames Regional Health Authority							
Brighton	1,896	1,851	1,770	1,794	1,803	1,796	1,704
Eastbourne	1,714	1,710	1,702	1,660	1,593	1,487	1,390
Hastings	1,064	1,016	974	995	955	927	901
South East Kent	1,004	1,043	1,081	1,087	1,093	1,073	1,064
Canterbury & Thanet	2,926	2,838	2,762	2,743	2,693	2,524	2,376
Dartford & Gravesham	2,646	2,552	2,478	2,454	2,290	2,125	1,990
Maidstone	1,741	1,697	1,680	1,689	1,680	1,618	1,563
Medway	991	982	972	992	994	1,011	1,030
Tunbridge Wells	2,419	2,396	2,338	2,268	2,213	2,174	2,033
Bexley	1,653	1,667	1,635	1,585	1,543	1,468	1,435
Greenwich	1,777	1,666	1,623	1,598	1,611	1,586	1,517
Bromley	2,591	2,491	2,466	2,377	2,296	2,116	1,989
West Lambeth	*	*	*	2,100	2,119	2,066	1,993
Camberwell	1,432	1,366	1,332	1,289	1,279	1,232	1,264
Lewisham & North Southwark	2,336	2,257	2,208	2,185	2,194	2,058	2,048
South West Thames Regional Health Authority							
North West Surrey	2,138	2,041	2,001	1,996	1,970	1,886	1,721
West Surrey & North East Hants	1,743	1,773	1,712	1,704	1,688	1,725	1,757
South West Surrey	857	872	930	959	951	927	902
Mid Surrey	2,901	2,835	2,592	2,579	2,466	2,356	2,275
East Surrey	2,776	2,666	2,597	2,512	2,444	2,267	2,171
Chichester	1,255	1,244	1,250	1,237	1,225	1,204	1,180
Mid Downs	1,576	1,572	1,625	1,647	1,676	1,621	1,617
Worthing	933	925	952	945	980	982	996
Croydon	3,192	3,089	3,006	2,929	2,860	2,728	2,637
Kingston & Esher	*	*	*	1,564	1,517	1,457	1,416
Richmond, Twickenham & Roehampton	*	*	*	979	970	916	868
Wandsworth	2,871	2,689	2,543	2,476	2,494	2,534	2,338
Merton & Sutton	2,687	2,610	2,510	2,495	2,477	2,390	2,332
Wessex Regional Health Authority							
East Dorset	2,126	2,135	2,093	2,128	2,187	2,233	2,258
West Dorset	1,704	1,702	1,693	1,693	1,653	1,640	1,551
Portsmouth	3,058	3,032	3,037	3,028	2,978	2,835	2,751
South West Hants. & Southampton	3,112	3,106	3,129	3,073	3,037	3,017	3,009
Winchester	921	915	910	899	875	867	866
Basingstoke	1,634	1,623	1,617	1,598	1,573	1,545	1,458
Salisbury	999	959	960	970	968	1,030	1,036
Swindon	1,478	1,435	1,382	1,336	1,347	1,377	1,311
West Wiltshire & Bath	3,044	3,029	2,974	2,947	2,838	2,737	2,681
Isle of Wight	946	909	868	875	855	794	734
Oxford Regional Health Authority							
East Berkshire	1,773	1,775	1,759	1,726	1,668	1,642	1,607
West Berkshire	2,987	2,820	2,758	2,704	2,626	2,489	2,425
Aylesbury	*	*	*	1,610	1,556	1,546	1,483
Wycombe	778	737	724	760	757	742	741
Milton Keynes	*	*	*	209	209	354	458
Kettering	849	875	896	918	891	902	936
Northampton	2,116	2,129	2,163	2,068	2,087	2,013	1,936
Oxfordshire	3,288	3,246	3,155	3,120	3,024	3,034	2,970
South Western Regional Health Authority							
Bristol & Weston	2,276	2,278	2,254	2,220	2,140	2,105	2,035
Frenchay	2,968	2,941	2,894	2,811	2,734	2,666	2,529
Southmead	2,175	2,089	2,060	2,005	1,917	1,802	1,688
Cornwall & Isles of Scilly	2,670	2,693	2,747	2,745	2,691	2,621	2,521
Exeter	3,848	3,792	3,738	3,613	3,471	3,134	2,957
North Devon	*	*	*	640	647	659	666
Plymouth	*	*	*	2,226	2,200	2,167	2,167
Torbay	1,021	1,048	1,057	1,075	1,177	1,170	1,161
Cheltenham	*	*	*	932	942	939	929
Gloucester	*	*	*	2,248	2,201	2,088	2,060
Somerset	3,478	3,440	3,392	3,347	3,339	3,326	3,219
West Midlands Regional Health Authority							
Bromsgrove and Redditch	1,227	1,206	1,101	1,081	1,023	986	917
Herefordshire	1,174	1,151	1,126	1,106	1,064	1,019	976

Regional, District and Special Health Authority	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Kidderminster & District	1,313	1,238	1,214	1,226	1,094	1,093	1,078
Worcester & District	1,684	1,645	1,619	1,630	1,603	1,567	1,461
Shropshire	2,603	2,573	2,578	2,573	2,564	2,480	2,448
Mid Staffordshire	1,372	1,399	1,372	1,309	1,319	1,309	1,301
North Staffordshire	3,492	3,499	3,504	3,448	3,406	3,358	3,336
South East Staffordshire	1,514	1,483	1,482	1,474	1,451	1,468	1,451
Rugby	327	327	328	334	324	318	326
North Warwickshire	*	*	*	1,212	1,210	1,165	1,136
South Warwickshire	*	*	*	1,893	1,866	1,834	1,755
Central Birmingham	*	*	*	1,729	1,793	1,829	1,776
East Birmingham	966	966	988	997	990	972	961
North Birmingham	1,879	1,753	1,680	1,658	1,595	1,507	1,493
South Birmingham	*	*	*	2,723	2,525	2,353	2,262
West Birmingham	*	*	*	2,247	2,202	2,130	2,038
Coventry	1,871	1,937	1,930	1,937	1,909	1,839	1,886
Dudley	1,492	1,476	1,510	1,523	1,544	1,514	1,525
Sandwell	747	771	805	851	858	872	882
Solihull	*	*	*	1,140	1,102	1,057	1,048
Walsall	1,762	1,697	1,676	1,628	1,598	1,614	1,568
Wolverhampton	1,543	1,503	1,484	1,510	1,506	1,479	1,485
Mersey Regional Health Authority							
Chester	2,031	1,943	1,911	1,847	1,836	1,771	1,714
Crewe	2,310	2,201	2,180	1,789	1,760	1,692	1,668
Halton	452	438	445	449	406	358	396
Macclesfield	1,572	1,526	1,548	1,863	1,758	1,668	1,593
Warrington	2,991	2,974	2,917	2,797	2,705	2,620	2,496
Liverpool	4,024	4,003	3,805	3,766	3,740	3,561	3,359
St. Helens & Knowsley	2,734	2,561	2,606	2,620	2,535	2,462	2,353
Southport & Formby	1,324	1,275	1,250	1,299	1,281	1,207	1,170
South Sefton	1,755	1,709	1,740	1,750	1,681	1,668	1,718
Wirral	2,789	2,703	2,622	2,341	2,149	2,022	1,996
North Western Regional Health Authority							
Lancaster	2,645	2,601	2,508	2,512	2,406	2,352	2,217
Blackpool, Wyre & Fylde	1,564	1,576	1,664	1,733	1,732	1,737	1,756
Preston	*	*	*	2,318	2,239	2,196	2,173
Blackburn, Hyndburn & Ribble Valley	2,825	2,781	2,746	2,706	2,665	2,624	2,579
Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale	2,591	2,591	2,522	2,513	2,516	2,438	2,399
West Lancashire	886	862	854	851	851	867	812
Chorley & South Ribble	*	*	*	374	378	357	345
Bolton	1,361	1,315	1,328	1,303	1,294	1,285	1,246
Bury	716	740	786	801	812	822	810
North Manchester	2,041	2,038	2,026	1,982	1,950	1,831	1,752
Central Manchester	1,137	1,201	1,227	1,254	1,250	1,242	1,272
South Manchester	2,408	2,423	2,389	2,401	2,417	2,355	2,277
Oldham	1,045	1,028	1,004	1,003	1,029	1,019	1,026
Rochdale	953	904	875	879	869	827	824
Salford	3,098	3,089	3,017	3,008	2,972	2,876	2,688
Stockport	1,677	1,692	1,759	1,816	1,793	1,749	1,724
Tameside & Glossop	869	965	981	941	917	942	945
Trafford	836	864	869	837	827	814	775
Wigan	1,479	1,450	1,430	1,446	1,467	1,426	1,403
Special Health Authorities							
The Hospital for Sick Children	517	506	544	494	474	418	410
National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	357	355	345	356	351	341	349
Moorfields Eye Hospital	208	204	204	208	210	181	163
Bethlem Royal & Maudsley Hospitals	472	492	497	501	498	506	504
National Heart & Chest Hospitals	603	570	577	556	552	540	449
The Royal Marsden Hospital	361	361	350	340	343	333	344
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	*	*	*	891	900	917	868

* Comparable figures not readily available because of NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982.
** Hammersmith and Fulham DHA and Victoria DHA prior to 1985.

Paybeds

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide the detailed basis of calculation for calculating the capital depreciation element included in the paybed charges for each class of hospital.

Mr. Newton: The factor used to represent capital depreciation was built up in several stages. The starting point is the annuitised building, engineering and equipment replacement costs of a typical 450 bed hospital in the mainly acute category. The sum of these annuitised costs are adjusted for in-patient balance and bed occupancy, and reduced to a cost per patient day. Vehicle replacement costs are derived separately, expressed as a daily cost per patient, and added in.

The capital depreciation cost per patient day for hospitals in other charging classes is extrapolated by weighting the unit cost for hospitals in the mainly acute category. The sum of daily capital depreciation costs for all hospitals is then expressed as a percentage of the sum of their daily revenue costs. The resulting figure—18·9 per cent.—was included in paybed charges for 1985-86 and 1986-87.

NHS (Operating Theatre Costs)

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current estimated cost of operating theatre time per hour in the National Health Service in England.

Mr. Newton: The Department does not at present collect specific information on the cost of operating theatre time and we have no estimate of the overall average for the National Health Service. The new form of health authority accounts being introduced from the financial year 1987-88 will include information on operating theatre costs. This is part of the changes being made to implement the recommendations of the steering group on health services information.

Ancillary Staff Reimbursement Scheme

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present estimate of cost of ensuring equality of treatment between related and unrelated staff under the ancillary staff reimbursement scheme.

Mr. Newton: It is not possible to forecast accurately. Few of the 30,000 family doctors in Great Britain currently employ dependants. Additional costs could be substantial if the more favourable remuneration arrangements encouraged doctors to increase salaries or employ dependants where they had not previously done so. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on 30 October at columns *237-238* in which I outlined the present position in the prolonged discussions which have taken place on this matter.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to extend transitional protection arrangements to any housing benefit recipients when the revised scheme is introduced in April 1988.

Mr. Lyell: We have no present plans to extend transitional protection beyond that illustrated in the technical annex to the White Paper on Reform of Social Security, Cmnd. 9691.

Joint Replacement Operations

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average waiting period for a person needing a joint replacement operation in Basildon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I regret I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks. The numbers in the central data sample are too small for reliable estimates to be made below regional level. My hon. Friend may wish to write to the chairman of the Basildon and Thurrock district health authority about the information requested.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people resident in the Fulham constituency were receiving supplementary benefit at the latest count; and if he will indicate how many of these are *(a)* pensioners, *(b)* families with children and *(c)* others.

Mr. Lyell: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. Fulham constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Chelsea and Kensington but their boundaries are not coterminous with those of the constituency.

The table shows the number of people receiving supplementary benefit from these offices, in the three categories available, on 13 August 1986 — the latest figures available.

	Unemployed	*Over pension age*	*Others*
Chelsea	6,626	3,661	2,944
Kensington	5,197	2,415	2,194
Total	11,823	6,076	5,138

Families with children are included in each of the categories of claimant shown above.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information his Department has on the number of supplementary benefit claimants by age group in Scotland; and what percentage of each age group these numbers represent.

Mr. Lyell: The information is as follows:

Age group	*Number of claimants (thousands)*	*Percentage of population*
16-20	73	16·2
21-24	45	13·0
25-29	41	10·7
30-34	33	9·7
35-39	27	7·7
40-44	21	6·9
45-49	19	6·6
50-54	19	6·7
55-59	20	7·1
60-64	30	10·3
65 and over	141	19·4

Source: DHSS Annual statistical enquiry 1984 General Register Office of Scotland.

Home Nursing

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to develop or introduce night home nursing services for disabled or elderly people still living in their homes.

Mrs. Currie: I fully recognise that domiciliary nursing services provided at night by community nurses can be an important element in helping to maintain physically disabled or elderly people in their own homes. These services exist in many parts of the country. However, it is for individual health authorities to decide for themselves both the level of provision, and the pace and direction of further developments, in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Health Education Council

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current salary of the director of the Health Education Council.

Mr. Newton: The salary is £36,941.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for attendance allowance have been disallowed over the past five years because claims were made after the claimants had reached the age of 66 years; and if he will estimate the increased cost for each year if these claims had been allowed.

Mr. Major: None. There is no upper age limit for the allowance.

Breast Cancer (Screening)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the main recommendations of the working group chaired by Sir Pat Forrest on breast cancer screening; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I have not yet received the working group's report from Professor Sir Patrick Forrest, although I expect to receive it very shortly.

Adjudication Regulations

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each year since 1975, the number of awards given to claimants without reference to the Special Medical board under regulation 44(1) of the Adjudication Regulations 1984 and its predecessors.

Mr. Major: No information is collected about the use of regulation 44(1).

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will undertake to bring to the attention of adjudicating officers their power under regulation 44(1) of the Adjudication Regulations 1984 to make awards to claimants without reference to the Special Medical board.

Mr. Major: The duty to advise adjudication officers falls to the chief adjudication officer, whose guidance already covers this point. If the hon. Member has a specific case in mind the chief adjudication officer will be pleased to look into it.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the omission of any reference to regulation 44(1) of the Adjudication Regulations 1984 in appendix 1, point 7, to the industrial injuries handbook for adjudicating medical authorities.

Mr. Major: Regulation 44(1) of the Social Security (Adjudication) Regulations 1984 gives power to the lay adjudication officer to dispense with reference to adjudicating medical practitioners for medical reports in certain circumstances. Since the industrial injuries handbook is a guide for adjudicating medical authorities, a reference to regulation 44(1) is unnecessary.

"The Health Service Today"

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many copies of "The Health Service Today" leaflet dated July 1986 have been printed and at what cost; and how the leaflets have been distributed and at what cost.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 3 November at columns *361-363*.

Mesothelioma

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the significance of the proportion of awards of industrial death benefit to cases where mesothelioma is shown on the death certificate.

Mr. Major: There are a number of reasons why industrial death benefit is not awarded in all cases where mesothelioma is shown on the death certificate. Benefit will be awarded only if the deceased was exposed to asbestos dust when working as an employed earner. Moreover, claims are not made for all such deaths. The deceased may not have left a widow, for example.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he will give for 1985 the number of cases of mesothelioma diagnosed by each medical board centre during the claimant's lifetime, and the number of cases in which the claimant had died before a decision was made.

Mr. Major: There were 245 cases in 1985 where diffuse mesothelioma was diagnosed. Information about whether the decision was made in the claimant's lifetime could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the hospitals approved for complete closure since 1 January 1985 giving for each the health district, health region, number of beds and date approved.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the information provided by my predecessors in replies given to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 20 May 1985 at columns *317-329* and on 3 March 1986 at column *62*; and also to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) on 20 February 1986 at columns *309-10*.

Details of the hospitals approved for complete closure from January 1985 to August 1986 not shown in the replies referred to are as follows:

Hospitals approved for complete closure July 1985 to August 1986

Region/district	*Hospital*	*Number of beds*	*Date approved*
Northern			
Gateshead	Normans Riding	163	January 1986
South West Durham	Holywood Hall	49	January 1986

Region/district	Hospital	Number of beds	Date approved
Northumberland	Castle Hills, Maternity Unit	12	November 1985
North Tyneside	Moor Park	60	May 1986
Yorkshire			
Airedale	Wharfedale Childrens	65	September 1985
East Yorkshire	Northfield, Driffield	38	July 1986
Scunthorpe	Westfield	86	July 1986
Scarborough	St. Thomas'	66	January 1986
Bradford	Childrens	60	July 1986
Wakefield	County	119	June 1986
Trent			
South Lincolnshire	Carey House	39	January 1985
East Anglian			
West Norfolk & Wisbech	St. James	100	Closed September 1986
North West Thames			
Barnet	Hendon District	51	April 1986
Paddington & North Kensington	St. Mary's, Harrow Road	550	August 1986
Riverside	Banstead	671	September 1986
North East Thames			
City and Hackney	German	109	Closed by July 1986
	St. Matthews	185	Closed by July 1986
	Mothers	81	Closed by July 1986
Tower Hamlets	Bethnal Green	199	May 1986
South East Thames			
Bromley	Lennard	83	May 1986
	Beckenham	39	June 1986
Greenwich	St. Nicholas	74	January 1986
	Dreadnought Seamans	128	November 1985
South West Thames			
North West Surrey	Rowley Bristow	87	October 1985
Croydon	Queens Hospital	219	March 1986
	St. Marys	18	March 1986
Wessex			
Winchester	Victoria	34	October 1986
Bath	Claverton Down	61	January 1986
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	King Georges	72	January 1986
South Western			
Gloucester	Horton Road	259	June 1985
Southmead	Elizabeth Blackwell House	47	December 1985
West Midlands			
Kidderminster and District	Lea	243	November 1985
North Warwick	Colchester Holiday Home	25	September 1985
Sandwell	Smethwick Orthopaedic Clinic	—	February 1986
Mersey			
Southport and Formby	Sunnyside	34	April 1985
North Western			
Chorley and South Ribble	Heath Charnock	70	February 1986
Special Health Authorities			
	National Brompton	110	July 1985

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the partial hospital permanent closures approved since 1 January 1985 giving for each hospital the health district, health region, number of beds and date approved.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is as follows:

Partial hospital closures approved
January 1985 to August 1986

Region/District	*Hospital*	*Number of beds*	*Date approved*
Northern			
North Tees	North Tees General	3	March 1986
	Miners Rehabilitation Centre	60	April 1986
Yorkshire			
Scunthorpe	Brumby	7	March 1985
Trent			
Southern Derbyshire	Pastures-Grange Childrens Unit	10	April 1986
	Market Harborough and District	3	June 1986
	Rutland Memorial	5	June 1986
	St. Marys, Melton Mowbray	1	June 1986
	Ashby de la Zouche and District	6	June 1986
East Anglian			
Norwich	Hales	2 wards	Closed March 1986
	St. Andrews	2 wards	November 1985
	Kelling	14	Early 1985
North West Thames			
Ealing	Ealing	134	February 1985
North West Hertfordshire	Harpenden Memorial	8	March 1985
Paddington and North Kensington	St. Charles	12	February 1985
Riverside	St. Stephens	17	May 1986
North East Thames			
Basildon and Thurrock	Orsett	20	Not available
	St. Bartholomews	47	Closed August 1986
South East Thames			
Bromley	Beckenham	22	May 1986
South West Thames			
Mid-Downs	Horsham	11	February 1985
Wandsworth	St. James	54	September 1986
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	Farnham	28	January 1985
Oxford			
Aylesbury Vale	Tindal	24	March 1985
South Western			
Frenchay	Cossham Memorial	21	July 1985
West Midlands			
Walsall	St. Margarets	33	December 1985
Mersey			
Liverpool	Sir Alfred Jones Memorial	6	January 1985
	Newsham	16	January 1985
North Western			
Salford	Salford Royal	A and E	September 1985

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether all proposed closures of hospitals and all proposed significant partial permanent closures require his approval.

Mr. Newton: Not all proposed closures of hospitals or proposed significant partial permanent closures require the approval of my right hon. Friend. Most proposed closures are agreed locally, without reference to Ministers.

NHS Hospitals

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he will give for each year since 1979 and for each district health authority the total number of National Health Service hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of National Health Service hospitals† in England 1979-85

Regional, District and Special Health Authority	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Northern Regional Health Authority							
Hartlepool	4	4	4	4	4	4	3
North Tees	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

Regional, District and Special Health Authority	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
South Tees	18	16	15	14	13	13	13
East Cumbria	*	*	*	11	11	11	11
South Cumbria	*	*	*	10	10	10	8
West Cumbria	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Darlington	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Durham	7	7	7	7	7	6	6
North West Durham	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
South West Durham	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Northumberland	16	16	16	16	16	16	17
Gateshead	8	7	7	7	7	7	7
Newcastle upon Tyne	14	14	13	14	14	14	13
North Tyneside	7	7	6	6	6	7	7
South Tyneside	6	6	7	7	7	6	6
Sunderland	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority							
Hull	13	13	11	10	9	10	10
East Yorkshire	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Grimsby	7	7	7	7	8	5	4
Scunthorpe	11	11	11	10	10	10	10
Northallerton	7	7	7	8	8	8	8
York	16	16	16	16	14	12	12
Scarborough	7	6	6	6	6	6	6
Harrogate	10	9	9	9	11	10	10
Bradford	21	20	20	20	20	20	20
Airedale	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
Calderdale	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Huddersfield	7	7	7	7	7	7	6
Dewsbury	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Leeds Western	*	*	*	11	12	10	10
Leeds Eastern	*	*	*	7	7	7	7
Wakefield	8	8	8	8	7	8	8
Pontefract	6	6	6	5	5	5	5
Trent Regional Health Authority							
North Derbyshire	20	19	19	19	19	19	16
South Derbyshire	31	28	27	28	28	29	27
Leicestershire	37	37	38	37	37	38	35
North Lincolnshire	17	16	15	14	14	13	9
South Lincolnshire	12	12	12	12	13	13	13
Bassetlaw	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Central Nottinghamshire	13	13	13	13	13	13	12
Nottingham	17	16	16	14	14	13	10
Barnsley	3	3	3	3	3	4	4
Doncaster	*	*	*	7	7	7	7
Rotherham	*	*	*	10	10	10	8
Sheffield	27	28	26	25	24	25	26
East Anglian Regional Health Authority							
Cambridge	*	*	*	7	8	7	7
Peterborough	12	13	14	12	13	12	12
West Suffolk	*	*	*	5	5	5	5
East Suffolk	*	*	*	18	18	17	17
Norwich	25	25	25	25	25	25	21
Great Yarmouth	9	9	9	10	10	10	9
West Norfolk & Wisbech	12	12	8	7	7	7	7
Huntingdon	*	*	*	4	4	2	2
North West Thames Regional Health Authority							
North Bedfordshire	8	8	8	7	7	7	7
South Bedfordshire	6	6	6	6	6	5	7
North Hertfordshire	6	6	6	6	6	6	5
East Hertfordshire	8	7	7	7	7	7	7
North West Hertfordshire	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
South West Hertfordshire	7	7	7	6	6	6	6
Barnet	15	15	13	13	13	13	12
Harrow	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Hillingdon	7	7	6	6	6	6	6
Hounslow & Spelthorne	*	*	*	6	6	6	5
Ealing	8	6	6	6	6	6	6
Brent	8	8	8	8	8	7	7
Paddington	10	9	9	10	10	10	10
Riverside**	12	11	11	11	10	10	11
North East Thames Regional Health Authority							
Basildon and Thurrock	8	8	8	8	8	8	8

Regional, District and Special Health Authority	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Mid Essex	7	7	7	7	7	7	8
North East Essex	15	15	15	15	15	14	13
West Essex	9	7	7	7	7	7	7
Southend	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	10	10	10	10	10	9	9
Hampstead	*	*	*	4	4	4	4
Bloomsbury	*	*	*	15	15	16	17
Islington	*	*	*	5	5	4	4
City and Hackney	8	8	9	10	10	10	10
Newham	9	8	8	8	8	5	6
Tower Hamlets	8	7	6	5	5	4	4
Enfield	5	5	5	3	3	3	3
Haringey	5	5	5	5	4	4	3
Redbridge	6	5	5	4	4	4	4
Waltham Forest	11	11	11	11	11	10	9
South East Thames Regional Health Authority							
Brighton	15	15	14	15	14	15	14
Eastbourne	7	7	7	7	7	8	8
Hastings	11	11	10	10	10	10	10
South East Kent	12	10	9	9	10	10	9
Canterbury and Thanet	20	20	19	19	19	19	19
Dartford and Gravesham	9	9	9	9	9	8	8
Maidstone	7	7	7	7	8	6	6
Medway	10	10	10	10	10	11	11
Tunbridge Wells	15	15	16	16	16	15	14
Bexley	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Greenwich	9	9	7	7	7	7	6
Bromley	9	9	9	9	9	9	8
West Lambeth	*	*	*	4	4	4	4
Camberwell	5	5	5	5	5	5	3
Lewisham and North Southwark	9	7	7	7	7	7	7
South West Thames Regional Health Authority							
North West Surrey	13	13	12	12	12	12	11
West Surrey and North East Hants	5	5	5	5	5	6	6
South West Surrey	8	8	8	9	9	9	9
Mid Surrey	11	11	9	10	10	10	9
East Surrey	13	13	13	13	14	13	10
Chichester	5	5	5	5	5	6	6
Mid Downs	9	9	9	9	9	8	8
Worthing	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Croydon	10	9	9	9	9	8	7
Kingston and Esher	*	*	*	6	6	6	6
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	*	*	*	6	6	6	6
Wandsworth	12	10	8	8	9	8	7
Merton and Sutton	17	16	16	16	16	15	16
Wessex Regional Health Authority							
East Dorset	17	17	15	15	18	18	20
West Dorset	17	17	17	17	17	18	20
Portsmouth	19	18	18	19	19	21	29
South West Hants & Southampton	25	25	26	26	27	27	27
Winchester	12	12	12	13	14	14	16
Basingstoke	8	8	8	8	8	8	7
Salisbury	5	5	6	6	6	8	8
Swindon	9	9	9	9	9	10	10
West Wiltshire & Bath	27	27	27	27	27	30	32
Isle of Wight	8	8	8	8	9	9	9
Oxford Regional Health Authority							
East Berkshire	11	11	12	12	12	12	12
West Berkshire	19	18	18	18	18	16	15
Aylesbury	*	*	*	6	6	6	6
Wycombe	8	8	8	8	8	7	7
Milton Keynes	*	*	*	4	4	4	3
Kettering	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Northampton	10	8	8	8	8	8	7
Oxfordshire	29	28	27	27	27	30	29
South Western Regional Health Authority							
Bristol & Weston	18	18	20	20	19	18	18
Frenchay	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Southmead	14	14	13	13	13	12	11
Cornwall & Isles of Scilly	30	30	30	30	30	29	28

Regional, District and Special Health Authority	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Exeter	30	30	30	29	28	28	30
North Devon	*	*	*	10	10	10	10
Plymouth	*	*	*	27	26	26	26
Torbay	16	17	17	18	19	19	20
Cheltenham	*	*	*	15	15	15	13
Gloucester	*	*	*	19	20	21	23
Somerset	31	30	31	31	31	31	30
West Midlands Regional Health Authority							
Bromsgrove & Redditch	8	8	8	9	9	8	9
Herefordshire	15	15	15	15	15	13	14
Kidderminster & District	7	7	7	7	7	7	10
Worcester & District	11	11	11	11	11	10	11
Shropshire	23	23	23	23	23	21	22
Mid Staffordshire	10	11	11	11	12	9	9
North Staffordshire	19	19	19	19	19	21	21
South East Staffordshire	7	7	7	7	7	7	8
Rugby	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
North Warwickshire	*	*	*	6	6	6	7
South Warwickshire	*	*	*	12	12	12	12
Central Birmingham	*	*	*	9	10	11	11
East Birmingham	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
North Birmingham	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
South Birmingham	*	*	*	9	9	8	8
West Birmingham	*	*	*	8	8	8	8
Coventry	6	6	6	7	7	7	8
Dudley	10	10	10	10	10	11	9
Sandwell	7	5	5	5	5	5	5
Solihull	*	*	*	7	7	7	7
Walsall	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Wolverhampton	8	8	8	8	8	8	7
Mersey Regional Health Authority							
Chester	8	8	8	8	6	6	6
Crewe	13	12	10	9	9	8	8
Halton	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Macclesfield	10	10	10	11	12	9	7
Warrington	5	4	3	3	3	3	3
Liverpool	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
St. Helens & Knowsley	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Southport & Formby	8	8	8	7	7	7	6
South Sefton	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Wirral	13	11	10	11	7	5	5
Northern Western Regional Health Authority							
Lancaster	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Blackpool, Wyre & Fylde	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
Preston	*	*	*	6	6	6	5
Blackburn, Hyndburn & Ribble Vly	11	11	11	11	12	12	12
Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale	8	8	8	8	8	8	7
West Lancashire	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Chorley & South Ribble	*	*	*	3	3	3	3
Bolton	8	7	6	7	7	6	6
Bury	6	6	6	6	7	7	7
North Manchester	6	6	6	6	6	6	5
Central Manchester	4	4	4	4	4	6	7
South Manchester	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Oldham	5	5	4	4	4	4	4
Rochdale	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Salford	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
Stockport	10	10	9	10	10	9	9
Tameside & Glossop	5	5	6	6	6	5	5
Trafford	9	9	9	8	8	9	9
Wigan	9	9	9	9	9	6	6
Special Health Authorities							
The Hospital For Sick Children	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
National Hospitals For Nervous Diseases	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Moorfields Eye Hospital	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Bethlem Royal & Maudsley Hospitals	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
National Heart & Chest Hospitals	5	4	4	4	4	4	3
The Royal Marsden Hospital	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	*	*	*	5	5	5	4

† Figures are based on a count of hospitals which provided residential facilities during the year. Day hospitals and clinics are therefore not included.

* Comparable figures are not readily available because of NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982.

** Hammersmith and Fulham D H A and Victoria D H A prior to 1985

District Health Authorities

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether regional health authorities have ever referred to his Department the issue of the suitability of individuals for appointment to district health authorities.

Mr. Newton: No. Regional health authorities may, from time to time, seek general advice on the regulations and guidance governing health authority appointments, as North Western regional health authority did earlier this year in respect of an appointment to Oldham health authority about which the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) corresponded with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The appointment of individual members of district health authorities is entirely a matter for the appropriate regional health authority and the relevant local authorities.

Health Authority Banking

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the grounds for the decision to end the central negotiations between his Department and the major banks over health authority banking in favour of health authorities making their own arrangements.

Mr. Newton: Banking needs vary considerably from one health authority to another and depend upon local payment practices and the location of the hospital sites. The centrally negotiated tariff covered all National Health Service business and did not necessarily represent the most cost effective solution to meeting the needs of individual authorities.

The termination of the central tariff negotiation arrangements, making health authorities responsible for establishing local arrangements with banks, follows the general principle of making authorities responsible, wherever possible, for the local management of their own services. The new arrangements will allow authorities to retain any savings achieved from the re-organisation of their banking needs to provide better value for money. The change was made following discussion with regional treasurers.

Organ Transplants

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any proposals to introduce a required requests system in relation to organ transplants.

Mrs. Currie: The Department's Chief Medical Officer wrote earlier this year to the medical profession's representative bodies seeking their views on the introduction of a voluntary code of practice under which doctors would agree to ensure that, whenever a patient died who was clinically suitable as an organ donor, his relatives were asked for permission for the organs to be removed. I am pleased to say that the Royal College of Physicians has now established a working party which will be considering how this suggestion might best be taken forward.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for each region and for each year since 1979 *(a)* the total number of pay beds, *(b)* the average number occupied by private patients, *(c)* the total number of private in-patients and *(d)* the total number of private out-patients;

(2) if he will give for 1985 the number of private out-patient attendances and the number of private day-patient attendances for each district health authority, regional health authority special health authority-Board of governors and for England as a whole;

(3) if he will give for 1985 for each district health authority, regional health authority, special health authority, board of governors and for England as a whole *(a)* the number of pay beds, *(b)* their average occupancy by private patients, *(c)* the average private patient occupancy as a percentage and *(d)* the number of deaths and discharges of private in-patients.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for the financial years 1984-85 and 1985-86 the health authorities for which statutory auditors have issued reports of poor control over private patient income.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

District health authority

1984-85
- Southmead
- Northampton
- East Berkshire
- Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
- Milton Keynes
- Great Yarmouth and Waveney
- Aylesbury Vale
- Central Birmingham
- Mid Staffordshire
- Rugby
- Hammersmith and Fulham
- South Manchester
- Newcastle
- North West Hertfordshire
- North Bedfordshire
- Coventry
- Bath

1985-86 (Not completed)
- Exeter
- Southampton and South West Hampshire

Finance

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for 1985-86 and for each district and special health authority the total income under *(a)* section 58, *(b)* section 65, *(c)* section 66 of the National Health Service Act 1977 and *(d)* the bad debts written off in respect of private patients;

(2) if he will give for each year since 1979 the total income in each region under section 58, section 65 and section 66 of the National Health Service Act 1977; and if he will give these figures *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* deflated to take account of inflation generally, *(c)* deflated to take account of the movement of National Health Service pay and prices and *(d)* as a percentage of total National Health Service expenditure.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Private Hospitals

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each year since 1980 the proposals for private hospital development which have been notified to him or authorised by him under the Health Services Act 1976 as amended by the Health Services Act 1980 giving the health district in each case.

Mrs. Currie: Since August 1980, when amendments to the Health Services Act 1976 became effective, no applications for authorisation of the development of private hospitals have been made. The notifications received are listed in the table. Where no beds are shown, the proposal involves other facilities. Prior to April 1982 the name of the Area rather than the District Health Authority is given.

Site	*Number of beds*	*District*
1980		
22/26 Priory Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham	110	Birmingham
The Old Quarry, The Warren, Ashtead, Surrey	70	Surrey
Water Orton Road, Parkfield Drive, Castle Bromwich	80	Solihull
Walsall Road,/Rosemary Hill Road, Little Aston, Birmingham	70	Staffordshire
New Road, Impington, Cambridge	56	Cambridge
1981		
Sherwood Lodge, Burton Stump Hill, Arnold, Nottingham	70	Nottinghamshire
Ambrose Lane, Harpenden, Herts	40	Hertfordshire
Longwood House, Claverton Down, Bath	50	Wiltshire
Pinehill Hospital, Benslow Lane, Hitchin, Herts	28	Hertfordshire
Old Marillac Hospital, Warley Road, Brentwood, Essex	32	Essex
Evelyn Nursing Home, Trumpington Lane, Cambridge	24	Cambridge
Cornwater Fields, Longdale Lane, Ravenshead, Near Mansfield, Notts	100	Nottinghamshire
Claremont, Highdale Road, Clivedon, Avon	79	Avon
46-54 South Park Hill Road, South Croydon, Surrey	70	Croydon
Lister Institute, Chelsea Bridge Road, London SW1	119	Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster
Clifton Hall Nursing Home, Clifton Village, Preston, Lancs	25	Lancashire
37 Cliddesden Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire	25	Hampshire
207 Frodingham Road, Scunthorpe, Humberside	20	Humberside
Scadbury Park, Chislehurst, Kent	60	Kent
Highfield Private Nursing Home, Manchester Road, Rochdale	3	Rochdale
Fylde Coast Independent Hospital, St Walburgas Road, Blackpool	44	Lancashire
Manor Road South, Hinchley Wood, Esher, Surrey	30	Kingston and Richmond
London Jewish Hospital, Stepney Green, London E1	90	City and East London
Lansdowne Private Hospital, 67 Lansdowne Road, Bournemouth	8	Dorset
Hollywood, Chorley New Road, Bolton, Lancashire	30	Bolton
Watton Road, Colney, Norwich	56	Norfolk
Aulis and River House, Riverside Road, Liverpool 19	75	Liverpool
Branwaithe Road, Workington, Cumbria	30	Cumbria
Hainault Lodge Hospital, Romford Road/Forest Road, Hainault, Essex	56	Barking and Havering
PDSA, Woodford Bridge Road, Essex	50	Redbridge and Waltham Forest
Tremona Road, Southampton	100	Hampshire
Newcastle Nuffield Hospital, Osborne Avenue, Jesmond, Newcastle Upon Tyne	32	Newcastle
Sloane Clinic, 125-133 Albermarle Road, Beckenham, Kent	31	Bromley
Bury Old Road, Prestwich, Bury	48	Bury
The Gynsills, Gynsills Lane, Glenfield, Leicester	119	Leicester
Spetchley Road, Worcester	42	Hereford and Worcester
Coloma Preparatory School, Tavistock Road, Croydon	70	Croydon
Moormead Road, Wroughton, Swindon, Wiltshire	39	Wiltshire
1982		
Langstone Road, Langstone, Havant, Hants	56	Hampshire
Mid Bucks Nursing Home, Wendover road, West Turville, Stoke Mandevile, Bucks	46	Buckinghamshire
Chelsfield Park Hotel, Bucks Bross Road, Chelsfield, Orpington, Kent	42	Kent

Site	Number of beds	District
Gatwick Park Hospital, Povey Cross Road/Reigate Road Crawley, Sussex	58	West Sussex
Newcastle Nuffield Hospital, Osborne Road, Jesmond, Newcastle	40	Newcastle
Bartons Road, Havant, Hants	56	Portsmouth and South East Hants
Tunbridge Wells Nuffield Hospital, Kingswood Road, Tunbridge Wells	20	Tunbridge Wells
Knowle House, Sagars Road, Hanforth, Cheshire	50	Macclesfield
Clifton Hall Nursing Home, Clifton Village, Preston, Lancs	56	Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde
Adjoining Ambulance Station, Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey	42	Croydon
Area 8gl, Walderslade CDA, Chatham, Kent	60	Maidstone
Euxton Hall, Euxton, Chorley, Lancs	20	Preston
Eastern Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex	38	Southend
Damson Parkway, Solihull, West Midlands	38	Solihull
Ashhurst Park, Langton Green, Speldhurst, Kent	60	Tunbridge Wells
Corner Lodge Hotel, 33 Wilbury Gardens, Hove, Sussex	26	Brighton
The Gynsills, Gynsills Lane, Glenfield, Leicester	119	Leicester
Little Aston Hall, Streetly, West Midlands	50	North Warwickshire
Tunbridge Wells Nuffield Hospital, Kingswood Road, Tunbridge Wells	12	Tunbridge Wells
1983		
Sandling Wood, Sandling Lane, Maidstone, Kent	48	Maidstone
The Glen, Redland Hill, Bristol	70	Southmead
South Bank Nursing Home, Bath Road, Worcester	42	Worcester
Walderslade Woods and Impton Lane, Walderslade, Kent	40	Maidstone
RNVR, Kingsway, Hove, Sussex	119	Brighton
Chamberlain's Wharf, Tooley Street, London SE1	119	Lewisham and North Southwark
Somerfield Hospital, London Road, Maidstone, Kent	16	Maidstone
Roding Lane South, Redbridge,	60	Redbridge
153 Kingsway, Hove, Sussex	33	Brighton
Colchester Nursing Home, 15-25 Oaks Drive, Colchester	21	North East Essex
The Dunedin Clinic, Bath Road, Reading	20	West Berkshire
Solihull Parkway Hospital, Damson Parkway, Solihull	33	Solihull
Plymouth Nuffield Hospital, Derriford, Plymouth	16	Plymouth
St. Andrew's Brine Baths, Droitwich, Worcs	40	Worcester
Princess Margaret Hospital, Osborne Road, Windsor, Berks	11	East Berkshire
Alexandra Hospital, Mill Lane, Cheadle, Cheshire	—	Chester
Cromwell House, 82 High Street, Huntingdon, Cambs	20	Huntingdon
Girton Grange, Huntingdom road, Cambridge	42	Cambridge
Elland Hall Farm, Elland, Calderdale, West Yorks	45	Calderdale
Gablehays, Colchester Road, Chelmsford, Essex	41	Mid Essex
Humana Hospital, Wellington Place, London NW8	40	Bloomsbury
Beverley Road-Lawfield Road, Anlaby, Hull	46	Hull
BUPA Hospital, Ambrose Lane, Harpenden, Herts	16	North West Hertfordshire
Elland Lane, Elland, Calderdale, West Yorkshire	45	Calderdale
Oakhill, Roundhay Park Lane, Leeds 17	75	Leeds Eastern
Methley Lane, Methley, Leeds 26	36	Leeds Eastern
Pinehill Hospital, Benslow Lane, Hitchin, Herts	14	North Hertfordshire
Basing Road, Basingstoke, Hants	36	West Surrey and North East Hants
189 Fairlea Road, Newport, Isle of Wight	20	Isle of Wight
1984		
Gisburne Park, Clitheroe, Lancs	35	Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley
St. Vincent's Road, Torquay, Devon	40	Torbay
Birching Cross Road, Kemsing, Near Sevenoaks, Kent	30	Tunbridge Wells
Bourn Hall Clinic, Bourn, Cambridge	42	Cambridge
Lansdowne Private Hospital, 67 Lansdowne Road, Bournemouth	26	East Dorset
Rochelles Farm, Lawn Lane, Springfield, Chelmsford, Essex	66	Mid Essex
Clare Park Clinic, Crondall Lane, Crondall, Farnham, Surrey	18	Basingstoke and North East Hants
40-42 Lee Terrace, Blackheath, London SE3	64	Lewisham and North Southwark
South Bank Hospital, Bath Road, Worcester	44	Worcester
Midgery Lane, Fulwood, Preston	36	Preston

Site	Number of beds	District
Jodean Club, Street Lane, Leeds	50	Leeds Western
1985		
The Garden Hospital, 46-50 Sunny Gardens Road, London NW4	2	Barnet
Beverley Road/Lowfield Road, Anlaby, Hull	25	Hull
Gisburne Park, Clitheroe, Lancs	10	Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley
New Road, Impington, Cambridge	25	Cambridge
New Hall Hospital, Bodenham, Salisbury, Wiltshire	13	Salisbury
Belvedere Nursing Home, Belvedere Road, Scarborough, North Yorkshire	4	Scarborough
The Ipswich Surgical Home, 57-59 Fonnereau Road, Ipswich, Suffolk	12	East Suffolk
The Park Hospital, Sherwood Lodge Drive, Arnold, Nottingham	—	Nottingham
St. John of God Hospital, Scorton Road, Richmond, North Yorks	—	Northallerton
St. Edmunds Nursing Home, St. Mary's Square, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk	2	West Suffolk
Princess Grace Hospital, 42-52 Nottingham Place, London W1	—	Bloomsbury
Weston Hall, Weston Road, Stafford	23	Mid Staffordshire
Saxon Way, Eaglestone, Milton Keynes	24	Milton Keynes
Glenthorne Avenue, Shirley, Croydon, Surrey	32	Croydon
Heron House, 19 Marylebone Road, NW1	—	Bloomsbury
507-511 London Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey	55	Croydon
Wessex Nuffield Hospital, Winchester Road, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, Hants	12	Winchester
Grosvenor Nuffield Hospital, Wrexham Road, Chester	10	Chester
Purey Cust Nuffield Hosital, Precentor's Court, York	33	York
Wolverhampton Nuffield Hospital, Wood Road, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton	—	Wolverhampton
Woking Nuffield Hospital, Shores Road, Woking, Surrey	15	North West Surrey
Thames Valley Nuffield Hospital, Wexham Street, Wexham, Near Slough	6	East Berkshire
Tunbridge Wells Nuffield Hospital, Kingswood Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent	29	Tunbridge Wells
Newcastle Nuffield Hospital, Osborne Avenue, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	40	Newcastle
Plymouth Nuffield Hospital, Derriford Road, Plymouth, Devon	16	Plymouth
Lancaster and Lakeland Nuffield Hospital, Meadowside, Lancaster	32	Lancaster
Hull Nuffield Hospital, Westbourne Avenue, Hull	6	Hull
Huddersfield Nuffield Hospital, Birkby Hall Road, Huddersfield, W. Yorkshire	11	Huddersfield
Duchy House Hospital, Queens Road, Harrogate	—	Harrogate
BUPA Murrayfield Hospital, Holmwood Drive, Thingwall, Wirral, Merseyside	9	Wirral
The Grange Lawrence Nursing Home, Bottisham, Cambridge	15	Cambridge
Nanhurst, Elmbridge Road, Cranleigh, Surrey	60	South West Surrey
Parkfield Private Hospital, Parkfield Road, Rotherham	12	Rotherham
Clementine Churchill Hospital, Sudbury Hill, Harrow, Middlesex	3	Harrow
Princess Margaret Hospital, Osborne Road, Windsor	13	East Berkshire
Bourn Hall Clinic, Bourn, Cambridge	6	Cambridge
1986		
The Three Shires Hospital, The Avenue, Cliftonville, Northampton	12	Northampton
Beaumont Hospital, Old Hall Clough, Chorley New Road, Lostock, Bolton	16	Bolton
Coldean Lane/Lewes Road, Brighton	65	Brighton
Hospital of Our Lady of Compassion, Preston New Road, Blackburn, Lancs	9	Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley
Clementine Churchill Hospital, Sudbury Hill, Harrow, Middlesex	17	Harrow
Kingsway Nursing Home, 153 Kingsway, Hove, Sussex	39	Brighton
Mid Yorkshire Nuffield Hospital, Outwood Lane, Horsforth, Leeds, West Yorkshire	6	Leeds Western
Holly House Hospital, High Road, Buckhurst Hill, Essex	—	West Essex

Site	Number of beds	District
East Midlands Nuffield Hospital, Rykneld Road, Littleover, Derby	12	Southern Derbyshire
North London Nuffield Hospital, Cavell Drive, Uplands Park Road, Enfield, Middlesex	15	Enfield
Wye Valley Nuffield Hospital, Venns Lane, Hereford	—	Hereford
The Warwickshire Private Hospital, The Chase, Old Milverton Lane, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire	16	South Warwickshire
The Leicester Clinic, Scraptoft Lane, Leicester	—	Leicestershire
Wellesley Hospital, Eastern Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex	48	Southend
Thonbury Hospital, Fulwood Road, Sheffield 10	44	Sheffield
BUPA Hospital Norwich, Old Watton Road, Colney, Norwich	28	Norwich
Chaucer Hospital, Canterbury, Kent	9	Canterbury
Alexandra Hospital, Mill Lane, Cheadle, Cheshire	28	Chester
The Portland Hospital, 209 Great Portland Street, London W1	16	Bloomsbury

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for 31 December 1985 and for each health district the total number of beds in registered private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics, the total number of state registered nurses working in those institutions and the appropriate whole time equivalent figure and the total number of all nursing staff working in those institutions and the appropriate whole time equivalent figure;

(2) if he will give for 31 December 1985 and for each health district the total number of beds in registered private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics which contain operating theatres, the total number of state registered nurses working in those institutions and the appropriate whole time equivalent figure and the total number of all nursing staff working in those institutions and the appropriate whole time equivalent figure;

(3) if he will list the registered nursing homes with operating theatres in England on 31 December 1985, giving in each case the number of beds and the health district and region;

(4) what is the total number of private hospitals, homes and clinics registered on 31 December 1985 which contain both operating theatres and *(a)* pathology and *(b)* radiology departments; and if he will give the figures for each region;

(5) what were the total numbers of *(a)* private hospitals, homes and clinics registered on 31 December 1985 which contain operating theatres and *(b)* beds they contain; and if he will give the figures for each region;

(6) what were the total numbers of *(a)* private hospitals, homes and clinics registered on 31 December 1985 and *(b)* beds they contain; and if he will give the figures for each region;

(7) what were the total numbers of *(a)* nursing staff and *(b)* medical practioners employed (i) by all the private hospitals, homes and clinics registered on 31 December 1985 and (ii) by those private hospitals, homes and clinics which contain operating theatres; and if he will give the figures for each region.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested by the hon. Member will be available shortly in a summary booklet, a copy of which will be placed in the Library.

Hospital Expenditure

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for 1985-86 for each health authority the total expenditure on hospital catering, the total expenditure on services provided to hospitals by private catering companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in 1984-85;

(2) if he will give for 1985-86 for each health authority the total expenditure on hospital cleaning, the total expenditure on services provided to hospitals by private cleaning companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in 1984-85;

(3) if he will give for 1985-86 for each health authority the total expenditure on hospital laundry, the total expenditure on services provided to hospitals by private laundry companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in 1984-85;

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Health Authority Tendering

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the progress made by health authorities in putting their services out to tender in the manner of the answer to the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) on 12 June 1985, *Official Report*, c. 489-493;

(2) if he will give for each tendering exercise completed following health circular HC(P3)IP the health authority, the hospital, the successful tenderer (naming the company where relevant), the saving achieved, the date of the tender's approval, and the service concerned, laundry, catering or cleaning.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year since 1979 the percentage of the expenditure on *(a)* laundry, *(b)* domestic/cleaning services and *(c)* catering which has been paid to private contractors in the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: The information requested which is derived from the annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in England together with those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals is set out in the table. The figures for 1985-86 understate the benefits to health authorities from putting more services out to private contractors, because they do not reflect the substantial savings thereby achieved.

Percentages of the Relevant Current Expenditure Paid to Private Contractors

	Laundry	*Domestic/Cleaning Services*	*Catering*
1979-80	14·1	2·4	0·2
1980-81	12·0	2·5	0·3
1981-82	11·7	2·1	0·2
1982-83	11·5	2·0	0·2
1983-84	9·7	2·0	0·2
1984-85	11·0	2·2	0·3
[1]1985-86	12·2	5·0	0·8

[1] provisional figures

Note:
The figures are not strictly comparable over the whole period as value added tax on contracted out services became reclaimable by health authorities on 1 September 1983 thus lowering later percentages. The figures for 1985-86 do not include expenditure by family practitioner committees, following their separation from health authorities on 1 April 1985. The form of family practitioner committees' accounts does not permit a similar analysis but their total expenditure on contracted out services in these categories was a little over £200,000.

Patient Care

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for each year since 1979 the number of *(a)* in-patient discharges and deaths and *(b)* new out-patients treated among patients receiving acute treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service in England;

(2) if he will list the private institutions providing in-patient and out-patient treatment to National Health Service patients and contractual arrangements with health authorities during 1985;

(3) if he will give for 1985 for each region and for England as a whole the number of deaths and discharges among, and the number of beds occupied on 31 December by, patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service; and if he will break down these figures into the categories of *(a)* medical, *(b)* surgical, *(c)* pre-convalescent and post-operative, *(d)* convalescent, *(e)* geriatric, *(f)* diseases of the chest, *(g)* maternity, *(h)* mental illness, *(i)* mental handicap, *(j)* rehabilitation, *(k)* terminal care and *(l)* others.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each district the expenditure on contractual arrangements for patient care in 1985-86.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average number of sessions worked by a National Health Service consultant on an ordinary part-time contract.

Mr. Newton: Information is only collected centrally on sessions contracted for, and the average number of these for National Health Service consultants holding part-time contracts — that is, excluding maximum part-time — in England at 30 September 1985 was 7·4 sessions.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for 30 September 1985 and for each region and each special health authority and board of governors and for England as a whole the total number of consultants holding *(a)* full-time, *(b)* maximum part-time, *(c)* other part-time and *(d)* honorary contracts.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my predecessor's reply to him on 14 April 1986 columns *289-292* which gave the information for each region and special health authority for 30 September 1985.

Figures for England are set out in the following tables:

Number [1] of consultants at 30 September 1985 (England)

	Number
Whole-time	6,499
Maximum part-time	4,552
Other part-time	1,294
Honorary	1,657
Total	14,002

[1] Consultants holding contracts in more than one region or special health authority in England are counted once only.

Medical Boarding Centres

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the award in each successful appeal against a decision of a medical boarding centre (respiratory diseases) in 1985.

Mr. Major: This information is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what links exist between the medical boarding centres (respiratory diseases) and the Department of Employment's EMAS survey of asbestos workers.

Mr. Major: When the EMAS survey finds evidence suggesting the presence of asbestos-related disease in an asbestos worker, he or she is advised to claim disablement benefit from the Department of Health and Social Security. Those who do so are subsequently examined by a special medical board. There is also local informal liaison between EMAS and the medical boarding centres (respiratory diseases).

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the factors which account for the variation in the costs of medical boarding centres (respiratory diseases).

Mr. Major: Each medical boarding centre (respiratory diseases) serves a different area. Costs vary according to the individual centre's workload and staffing level, which in turn depend on the size of the area, its population and the extent and type of its industries. Local factors such as the cost of office accommodation also play a part.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each year since 1975, the number of cases referred to medical boarding centres (respiratory diseases) by prescribed disease claimed, and the number of awards by prescribed disease claimed.

Mr. Major: The information is as follows:

Prescribed Disease	1975		1976		1977		1978		1979		1980	
	Cases referred	Awards	Cases referred	Awards	Cases referred	Awards	Cases referred	Awards	Cases referred	Awards	Cases referred	Awards
Pneumoconiosis	16,184	981	11,650	935	10,955	832	9,793	744	8,918	797	8,072	728
Byssinosis	451	156	337	102	266	87	246	78	268	75	598	148
Diffuse mesothelioma	49	47	54	53	69	63	61	49	75	65	78	73
Occupational asthma [1]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Extrinsic allergic alveolitis (including farmer's lung)	64	19	74	27	43	7	35	3	53	10	53	19
Poisoning by oxides nitrogen	16	2	29	2	18	—	26	2	17	—	21	—
Poisoning by beryllum	4	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	2	3	2
Primary carcinoma of a bronchus or of a lung (nickel workers)	—	—	1	1	—	—	1	1	3	1	3	2
Poisoning by cadmium	9	2	22	9	30	13	18	1	11	3	15	8
Primary carcinoma of the Lung (asbestos workers) [2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bilateral diffuse pleural thickening [2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	16,777	1,209	12,168	1,130	11,382	1,003	10,183	880	9,347	953	8,843	980

Prescribed Disease	1981		1982		1983		1984		1985	
	Cases referred	Awards	Cases referred	Awards	Cases referred	Awards	Cases referred	Awards	Cases referred	Awards
Pneumoconiosis	8,283	734	7,797	733	8,036	670	4,617	577	6,983	702
Byssinosis	378	108	634	133	545	72	412	56	304	37
Diffuse mesothelioma	100	93	133	123	158	148	216	201	260	245
Occupational asthma [1]	—	—	112	95	267	183	307	137	282	166
Extrinsic allergic alveolitis (including farmer's lung)	58	18	48	15	34	13	22	4	19	8
Poisoning by oxides nitrogen	16	—	19	4	15	1	12	1	8	—
Poisoning by beryllum	3	1	2	2	3	2	—	—	1	—
Primary carcinoma of a bronchus or of a lung (nickel workers)	1	1	—	—	1	1	5	5	3	2
Poisoning by cadmium	6	2	8	3	9	4	11	4	9	2
Primary carcinoma of the Lung (asbestos workers) [2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	18	8
Bilateral diffuse pleural thickening [2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	88	61
Total	8,845	957	8,753	1,108	9,068	1,094	5,602	985	7,975	1,231

[1] Prescribed 29 March 1982
[2] Prescribed 2 April 1985

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of examinations for pneumoconiosis and byssinosis made by medical boarding centres (respiratory diseases) for 1984 and 1985 as analysed by attributable industry; and why the figures for 1984 were not included in "Social Security Statistics" at table 25.07.

Mr. Major: The information is shown in the following tables. The figures for 1984 were not available for inclusion in "Social Security Statistics 1985" because of industrial action at the Department of Health and Social Security's Newcastle central office. Figures for 1984 and 1985 will be included in "Social Security Statistics 1986", to be published shortly.

Medical Boarding Centres (Respiratory Diseases)
Examinations for pneumoconiosis and byssinosis [1], made by boards in 1984 [2], analysed by attributable industry

Number

	First examinations			Re-examination (disease not previously diagnosed)			
	Total	Disease diagnosed	Disease not diagnosed [3]	Total	Disease diagnosed	Disease not diagnosed [3]	Re-assessments
All industries	1,667	462	1,205	662	171	491	110,243
Coal mining	699	208	491	428	122	306	7,193
Refractories	8	4	4	3	1	2	66
Sandstone	6	3	3	—	—	—	33
Pottery	23	7	16	5	2	3	336
Asbestos	467	162	305	83	24	59	763
Coal trimming	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tin mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	4

	First examinations			Re-examination (disease not previously diagnosed)			
	Total	Disease diagnosed	Disease not diagnosed [2]	Total	Disease diagnosed	Disease not diagnosed [3]	Re-assessments
Haematite mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Slate mining	8	1	7	14	1	13	46
Slate splitting	12	2	10	21	4	17	102
Graphite	—	—	—	—	—	—	4
Building [4]	5	2	3	—	—	—	20
Sandblasting etc.	1	1	—	—	—	—	10
Tunnellers	5	2	3	—	—	—	24
Metal grinding	4	2	2	—	—	—	6
Steel dressers	6	2	4	2	1	1	50
Abrasive soap powders	—	—	—	—	—	—	6
Barytes mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	4
Quarrying	4	3	1	2	1	1	14
Furnace dismantling	—	—	—	1	1	—	15
Carbon electrode manufacture	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Boiler scaling	1	—	1	1	—	1	2
Iron foundry workers	19	12	7	3	1	2	183
Steel foundry workers	8	—	8	1	—	1	40
Non-ferrous foundry workers	2	1	1	—	—	—	10
Fireclay mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	14
Other clay mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Chert mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lead mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Oil shale mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Stratified ironstone mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Other mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Other scheduled occupations	9	4	5	2	1	1	49
Unscheduled occupations	61	2	59	3	—	3	38
Cotton (byssinosis)	312	41	271	93	12	81	1,191
Flax (byssinosis)	7	3	4	—	—	—	9

Source: 100 per cent. count.

Notes:

[1] Excludes cases under the Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis and Miscellaneous Diseases Benefits Scheme 1966.

[2] i.e. excludes cases diagnosed by Medical Appeal Tribunals.

[3] Cases not diagnosed are analysed by industry constituting the main risk.

[4] Stonemasons (except at sandstone quarries) and granite masons.

Medical Boarding Centres (Respiratory Diseases)

Examinations for pneumoconiosis and byssinosis[1] made by boards in 1985[2] analysed by attributable industry

Number

	First examinations			Re-examination (disease not previously diagnosed)			
	Total	Disease diagnosed	Disease not diagnosed	Total	Disease diagnosed	Disease not diagnosed [3]	Re-assessments
All industries	1,860	542	1,318	744	197	547	9,149
Coal mining	820	222	598	493	142	351	6,318
Refractories	8	3	5	—	—	—	53
Sandstone	4	1	3	1	—	1	29
Pottery	25	11	14	6	3	3	279
Asbestos	643	241	402	105	32	73	716
Coal trimming	1	—	1	—	—	—	1
Tin mining	2	—	2	—	—	—	9
Haematite mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Slate mining	4	—	4	17	3	14	77
Slate splitting	4	2	2	20	2	18	85
Graphite	1	1	—	—	—	—	2
Building[4]	9	3	6	—	—	—	21
Sandblasting etc	1	1	—	—	—	—	6
Tunnellers	3	2	1	1	1	—	19
Metal grinding	3	—	3	—	—	—	7
Steel dressers	15	6	9	1	—	1	61
Abrasive soap powders	—	—	—	—	—	—	5
Barytes	—	—	—	—	—	—	7
Quarrying	2	—	2	1	—	1	20
Furnace dismantling	—	—	—	—	—	—	14
Carbon electrode manufacture	1	1	—	—	—	—	2
Boiler scaling	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Iron foundry workers	31	16	15	6	1	5	158
Steel foundry workers	10	1	9	—	—	—	32
Non-ferrous foundry workers	2	—	2	1	—	1	7
Fireclay mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	8
Other clay mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	4
Chert mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lead mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Oil shale mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

	First examinations			Re-examination (disease not previously diagnosed)			
	Total	Disease diagnosed	Disease not diagnosed	Total	Disease diagnosed	Disease not diagnosed [3]	Re-assessments
Stratified ironstone mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other mining	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other scheduled occupations	26	6	20	1	—	1	40
Unscheduled occupations	30	1	29	2	—	2	24
Cotton (byssinosis)	210	23	187	88	13	75	1,132
Flax (byssionosis)	5	1	4	1	—	1	7

Source: 100 per cent. count.

Notes:

[1] Excludes cases under the Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis and Miscellaneous Diseases Benefit Scheme 1966.

[2] ie excludes cases diagnosed by Medical Appeal Tribunals.

[3] Cases not diagnosed are analysed by industry constituting the main risk.

[4] Stonemasons (except at sandstone quarries) and granite masons.

Special Medical Boards

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions hon. and right hon. Members have written to him about individual findings of the special medical boards in 1985.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice is available to sufferers from non-malignant respiratory diseases such as asbestosis and bilateral diffuse pleural thickening in relation to applications to special medical boards.

Mr. Major: Advice is available in leaflets NI2, NI3 and NI237 issued by the Department. In addition, staff in local social security offices are always willing to give help and advice to claimants.

Asbestos

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the ability of optical microscopes to find asbestos fibres as distinct from large asbestos bodies.

Mr. Major: Asbestos bodies and a proportion of asbestos fibres can readily be identified by the use of an optical microscope. Fine uncoated fibres are difficult to find by this method because their diameters are often at or below the limits detectable by the optical microscope.

Asbestosis

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the number of cases in 1985 in which asbestosis was not diagnosed by each medical board centre following a claim for industrial disablement benefit;

(2) if he will give the number of cases of asbestosis newly diagnosed by each medical boarding centre (respiratory diseases) in 1985.

Mr. Major: The information is as follows:

Medical Boarding Centre	Number of cases	
	Asbestosis diagnosed	Asbestosis not diagnosed
Cardiff	24	48
Glasgow	71	89
London	23	96
Manchester	46	128
Newcastle	48	52
Sheffield	45	42
Stoke	12	16
Swansea	4	4
Total	273	475

Claimants (Statistics)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for the latest available year the number of claimants under the Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis and Miscellaneous Diseases Benefit Scheme who asked for a decision to be reconsidered, and the number of reconsiderations which have resulted in the reversal of a decision.

Mr. Major: In the year ending 30 June 1986 there were 12 applications by claimants for a decision to be reconsidered. One application was subsequently withdrawn and five resulted in a reversal of the decision. A decision is awaited on one application.

Industrial Disablement Benefit

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make it his policy to collect information to determine the average length of time for which 100 per cent. industrial disablement benefit is paid.

Mr. Major: No. This would not be justified on grounds of cost.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he will give the number of cases in 1985 in which asbestosis accompanied by lung cancer was diagnosed by each medical board centre following a claim for industrial disablement benefit.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. In 1985 special medical boards diagnosed eight cases of lung cancer where there was accompanying evidence of asbestosis or bilateral diffuse pleural thickening.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the 100 per cent. disablement benefit awards made by special medical boards in 1984 were first awards as opposed to re-assessments; and how many were for asbestos-related diseases.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Industrial Death Benefit

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many awards of industrial death benefit were made in 1985 for *(a)* asbestosis, *(b)* diffuse mesothelioma, *(c)* lung cancer accompanied by asbestosis and *(d)* lung cancer without asbestosis;

(2) what percentage of deaths where the death certificate mentions mesothelioma result in awards of industrial death benefit.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Secretarial Agencies

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each region and for each year since 1979, the total expenditure by the National Health Service on services provided by secretarial agencies.

Mr. Newton: Following is the information requested as shown in the annual accounts of health authorities from 1980-81. The annual accounts for earlier years did not provide directly comparable figures.

Expenditure on Non National Health Service Staff (Agency etc.)—Typing and Secretarial Staff

£'000

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	[1]*1985-86*
Regions:						
Northern	38	19	26	30	35	63
Yorkshire	36	16	36	86	110	180
Trent	109	178	279	294	360	397
East Anglian	97	74	123	199	291	378
North West Thames	1,968	1,138	937	1,081	1,707	2,559
North East Thames	1,332	943	911	1,325	1,743	2,329
South East Thames	941	670	686	850	975	1,248
South West Thames	828	447	600	735	1,117	1,228
Wessex	89	120	204	293	322	417
Oxford	58	51	62	69	89	188
South Western	109	111	208	150	272	387
West Midlands	236	225	248	385	496	671
Mersey	5	7	22	32	25	67
North Western	165	144	187	107	137	235
Special Health Authorities for the London Postgraduate Teaching Hospitals	826	535	417	494	720	1,327
Total	6,837	4,678	4,946	6,130	8,399	11,674

[1]Figures for 1985-86 are provisional.

Notes

1. The table does not include corresponding expenditure by special health authorities and other bodies providing central services for the National Health Service. This is not separately identified in the annual accounts of these bodies but is unlikely to have been significant given the relatively small scale of their total expenditure.
2. Figures for 1985-86 are not directly comparable with those for earlier years because of the separation of family practitioner committees from health authorities which took effect on 1 April 1985. The equivalent expenditure by family practitioner committees in 1985-86 amounted to £75,000 (provisional figure).

Hospitals (Statistics)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of National Health Service hospitals and the number of beds in those hospitals which were opened in each year since 1956.

Mrs. Currie: Information from 1956 is not accessible centrally and, if available, could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information held on the beds provided in hospital building schemes each costing over £1 million completed in each year since 1979 were:

	Schemes	*Beds*	*Total cost £ million*
1979	3	1,521	33·9
1980	8	2,198	68·8
1981	10	2,146	62·0
1982	16	2,553	105·6
1983	47	4,334	232·5
1984	45	2,712	194·2
1985	49	1,696	173·6
1986[1]	39	3,310	209·3

[1] To date.

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the percentage of patients undergoing kidney transplants involving an organ not donated by a sibling who are still alive *(a)* three months, *(b)* six months, *(c)* one year and *(d)* five years after the operation;

(2) what is the percentage of patients undergoing kidney transplants involving an organ donated by a sibling who are still alive *(a)* three months, *(b)* six months, *(c)* one year and *(d)* five years after the operation;

Mrs. Currie: Information from the European Dialysis and Transplant Association on survival rates of patients transplanted between 1975 and 1984 with kidneys removed from different types of donors is as follows:

	Sibling live donor Percentage	Other live donor Percentage	Cadaver donor Percentage
Survival rate after			
Three months	97	95	92
Six months	97	93	89
One year	95	91	86
Five years	87	81	71
Number of patients at risk for the analysis	412	546	6,902

These figures need to be interpreted with some caution; they are not directly comparable because of the number of variables involved.

Kidney Disease

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what statistics exist on the prevalence of kidney disease in each year since 1970.

Mrs. Currie: The available information is set out in the table. The in-patient figures are based on a sample of cases, and those for patients dialysing or transplanted are actual numbers. It is essential to note that there is likely to be some overlap between the two groups. These figures take no account of other people with kidney disease being treated as out-patients or by general practitioners, or as yet undiagnosed.

Estimated number of in-patient cases discharged from NHS non-psychiatric hospitals in England with a main diagnosis of kidney disease[1]

Year[2]	Estimated number
1979	34,510
1980	36,600
1981	37,330
1982	39,650
1983	41,840
1984	42,360

[1] Figures from the Hospital In-patient Enquiry, International Classification of Diseases code numbers 580-593.
[2] Comparable figures prior to 1979 are not available centrally.

Number of patients in the United Kingdom being treated by renal dialysis, or with a functioning kidney transplant[1]

Year	Estimated number on treatment
1971	1,830
1972	2,264
1973	2,693
1974	3,166
1975	3,670
1976	4,154
1977	4,707
1978	5,390
1979	6,167
1980	7,077
1981	7,974
1982	8,927
1983	9,516
1984	11,235
1985	12,082

[1] Figures from the European Dialysis and Transplant Association.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available to him about the causes of kidney disease.

Mrs. Currie: I am informed that kidney disease can result from a wide variety of conditions including diabetes, inflammation, infection, tumour, stone, toxic substances, metabolic diseases, vascular diseases, congenital abnormalities and hereditary conditions.

Nursing and Residential Homes

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each year since 1978, the total social security payments supporting residents of private and voluntary nursing and residential homes, breaking the figures down into the categories *(a)* elderly, *(b)* mentally ill, *(c)* mentally handicapped, *(d)* physically handicapped and *(e)* others.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information required is not available.

Merton and Sutton Health Authority

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those who have made representations to himself and to Ministers in his Department concerning the acute services strategy up to 1994 of Merton and Sutton health authority.

Mrs. Currie: We have received two representations from hon. Members and six representations from members of the public.

Saffron Walden (Hospital Facilities)

Mr. Haselhurst asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will announce his decision about the transfer of hospital facilities in Saffron Walden.

Mrs. Currie: There are several matters to be clarified with the district health authority concerning its community health facilities. We shall announce our decision as soon as possible.

Oval Office (Relocation)

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what survey he has made of the feasibility of relocating the Oval office of his Department at Blue Star house; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: This accommodation was surveyed previously when rehousing of another DHSS local office was being considered. The survey concluded that the premises could not be economically adapted for local office use.

Broadstairs and Chatham (Staffing)

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether the funding of new staff to be recruited at Broadstairs and Chatham to take the casework that has been out-stationed from the Oval office of his Department will be paid from the underspend in central south London; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps have been taken to ensure that the new staff recruited at the Chatham and Broadstairs offices of his Department will be able to process the full range of supplementary benefit claims; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what additional staff will have to be recruited in Chatham and Broadstairs to handle the casework out-stationed from the Oval office of his Department.

Mr. Lyell: The single payments work which is out-stationed from the Department's Oval office is being processed at Chatham. Single payments work from local offices in London South Region other than Oval is being processed at both Chatham and at Broadstairs. Twenty-four additional staff have been recruited (12 at each office) and are being funded from within the region's staff budget. The new staff will be trained and deployed exclusively on single payments work for a maximum of six months after which they will be given full training.

The complements of south London offices have not been reduced to provide staff for the two out-station offices nor has the Department reduced its effort to recruit staff to fill existing and expected vacancies in south London offices.

The Oval office received an additional 16 staff above the number justified by normal staffing arrangements as its share of the extra 5,000 allocated to local offices this year.

Chiropody Treatment

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that all unemployed persons in receipt of supplementary benefit have access to regular free chiropody treatment when this has been prescribed by their doctor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Decisions on how best to use limited chiropody resources are a matter for local health authorities. Where they are unable to provide a comprehensive service they have been advised to give priority to elderly people, handicapped people, expectant mothers and school children. A general practitioner who feels that a patient needs priority treatment can, of course, notify the district chiropodist of his view.

Hip Replacement Operations

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average waiting time for a hip replacement operation for the elderly in each district health authority; and what were the corresponding figures in 1979.

Mr. Newton: I regret that I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. The numbers in the central data sample are too small for reliable estimates to be made below regional level.

Long-term Oxygen Therapy

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give *(a)* the number of people on National Health Service long-term oxygen therapy with oxygen cylinders on 1 December 1985, *(b)* the number of people on National Health Service long-term oxygen therapy with oxygen cylinders at the latest available date, *(c)* the number of people who were on National Health Service long-term oxygen therapy with oxygen cylinders on 1 December 1985 who have been transferred to National Health Service oxygen concentrators and, *(d)* the saving to date by the introduction of long-term oxygen therapy by oxygen concentrators.

Mrs. Currie: Long-term oxygen therapy is defined as the provision of oxygen for 15 hours or more a day for a prolonged period. Information on the number of patients receiving such therapy with oxygen cylinders and the numbers transferring to oxygen concentrators could be obtained only through detailed scrutiny of individual prescriptions at disproportionate cost.

In addition to patients receiving long-term oxygen therapy there are other patients, needing lesser amounts of oxygen, for whom oxygen concentrators provide a less expensive method of supply. It was estimated in 1985 that the transfer of patients from cylinders to concentrators would save some £2·5 million a year and the indications are that we are on course to achieve the sort of saving predicted.

St. Helens

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide figures for the number of people in St. Helens dependent on social security benefits, broken down by category of benefit and age group.

Mr. Lyell: Information cannot be provided in the precise form requested. The table shows the number of supplementary benefit claimants at the St. Helens local social security office. The office covers St. Helens, Prescot, Whiston and other outlying areas.

Supplementary Benefit Claimants on 13 August 1986[1]

	Number of thousands
Unemployed claimants	9,084
Pensioners	5,372
Other cases[2]	5,072
Total[3]	19,528

Notes:

[1] 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

[2] These are claimants under pension age who are not required to be available for work.

[3] A proportion of this total will be in receipt of other benefits as well as supplementary benefits.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has of the number of households in St. Helens at or below 140 per cent. of supplementary benefit level, showing type of house and age group.

Mr. Lyell: I regret that the survey statistics cannot be broken down reliably in the manner requested.

Parliamentary Questions

Dame Jill Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost to the taxpayer of answering all the questions tabled on 13 November for written answers by him on 24 November.

Mr. Fowler: A Civil Service-wide survey, based on staff by grade, estimate the average cost of answering a written question to be £43. On this basis, the cost of answering these 68 questions is £2,924.

Hospital and Bed Closures

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospitals have been closed since 1979; if he will list them; how many beds have been closed in them in each case; how many beds have been closed each year since 1979 in wards within hospitals that still remained open; and if he will list the location in each case.

Mr. Newton: The information we keep centrally records approvals for partial and complete hospital closures. It does not include temporary closures, neither does it give the date on which closures were implemented.

For information on hospitals approved for complete closure, I refer the hon. Member to the information provided by my predecessors in replies given to the hon. Member on 20 May 1985, columns *317-329* and 3 March 1986, column *62*, to to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) on 20 February 1986, columns *309-310*, and to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) today.

The information on hospitals approved for partial closure is as follows up to December 1984. For 1985 and 1986 (to August) I refer the hon. Member to the information given in the reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras today.

Partial hospital closure 1979-December 1984

District	*Hospital*	*Number of beds*	*Date approved*
Northern			
Cleveland	North Tees District General	8	July 1981
South Tees	Middlesbrough General	26	September 1984
	Poole	60	March 1984
Yorkshire			
Harrogate	Scotton Banks	26	October 1984
Leeds Western	Leeds General Infirmary	70	February 1983
Wakefield	Snapethorpe	24	November 1981
	Stanley Royd	60	November 1981
	Pinderfields General	22	March 1984
Humberside	Witherinsea	24	June 1981
Trent			
Central Nottinghamshire	Forest	16	February 1984
	Victoria	106	February 1984
Leicestershire	Ellen Towle	20	June 1983
	Leicestershire Royal Infirmary	46	June 1983
	Groby Road	87	June 1983
Lincolnshire	Skegness and District	9	May 1981
North Derbyshire	Walton	19	April 1983
Sheffield	Middlewood	73	June 1980
East Anglia			
Berkshire	Canadian Red Cross Memorial	26	February 1981
Oxfordshire	Longworth	10	January 1981
West Norfolk and Wisbech	Bowthorpe	20	May 1982
West Suffolk	St. Leonards, Sudbury	12	November 1982
North West Thames			
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	West Middlesex	7	October 1980
	West Middlesex	60	October 1981
Brent and Harrow	Shenley	20	February 1982
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	Athlone House	45	November 1980
	St. Marys, Harrow Road	147	September 1981
Hammersmith and Fulham	Charing Cross	30	August 1984
	West London	17	June 1984
Hounslow and Spelthorne	West Middlesex	34	September 1984
	Ashford	24	September 1984
East Hertfordshire	Hertford County	24	December 1984
North Bedfordshire	Clapham	20	January 1984
	Park	38	December 1983
North West Hertfordshire	Harpenden Memorial	8	October 1982
Victoria	St. Stephens	27	September 1984
	Westminster	8	September 1984
	Banstead	40	December 1983
	Banstead	48	March 1984
North East Thames			
Enfield	Highlands	23	July 1984
	Highlands	17	October 1982
Essex	Runwell	13	April 1981
Waltham Forest	Whipps Cross	12	August 1983
South East Thames			
Greenwich and Bexley	Queen Marys	20	October 1981
Maidstone	Preston Hall	31	January 1983
West Lambeth	South Western	39	December 1982
Wessex			
Hampshire	King Georges	10	January 1981
Salisbury	Westminster Memorial	8	July 1984

District	Hospital	Number of beds	Date approved
Wiltshire	Royal United	16	September 1981
	Royal United	40	April 1981
	St. Martins	215	April 1981
South Western			
Gloucester	Lydney and District	7	February 1984
Nottinghamshire	Nottingham Womens	132	May 1981
	Highbury	13	May 1981
	Newstead	58	March 1980
West Midlands			
Dudley	The Guest	59	December 1981
	Burton Road	76	December 1983
	Wordsley	12	December 1983
	The Corbett	37	December 1983
East Birmingham	Yardley Green Unit	30	October 1983
Hereford and Worcestershire	Kidderminster General	44	May 1982
North Birmingham	Highcroft	80	May 1984
Mid-Staffordshire	Chase Hospital, Cannock	10	November 1983
South Warwickshire	Warenford General	33	August 1984
	Stratford General	51	August 1984
Walsall	St. Margarets	38	February 1983
Mersey			
Cheshire	Cranford Lodge	10	August 1980
Liverpool	Royal Liverpool Childrens	39	November 1982
	Newsham	10	July 1984
	St. Pauls (Eye)	11	July 1984
	Alderhey Childrens	24	July 1984
Macclesfield	Congleton War Memorial	11	February 1983
	Collar House	Top floor wards	December 1981
Wirral	Clatterbridge	247	January 1981
North Western			
Preston	Preston Infirmary	n/a	March 1981

Notes:
1. Temporary closures are not included.
2. Dates on which closures were implemented are not shown.
3. No partial closures are recorded for 1979.

Sick Pay

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations the Government have received complaining of the complexity of the three rate system of statutory sick pay; and from what individuals or organisations they were received.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest figures for *(a)* the number of people in receipt of statutory sick pay at each of the three rates, *(b)* the number of statutory sick pay claims per year at each of the three rates and *(c)* the total expenditure per year on statutory sick pay.

Mr. Lyell: In 1983-84 there were some 5 million recorded payments of statutory sick pay at all rates and some 5·7 million for 1984-85. It is estimated that 85 per cent. of these were at the standard rate, 7 per cent. at the middle and 8 per cent. at the lower rate. The sum paid out in statutory sick pay by employers was £440 million in 1983-84 and £523 million in 1984-85.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the savings to the Government as a result of the changes proposed to the rates and structure of statutory sick pay.

Mr. Lyell: It is estimated that as a result of the changes proposed to the rates and structure of statutory sick pay there will be a saving of about £19 million.

Information Technology Staff (Training)

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average number of days' training per year given to professional information technology staff within his Department who are no longer trainees, in the most recent years available.

Mr. Lyell: The Department does not maintain separate training statistics for trainee and non-trainee information technology staff.

The average amount of IT technical training given to IT technical staff in each of the last two financial years is:

1984-85—13 days per person
1985-86—20 days per person

Child's Special Allowances

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to abolish child's special allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: A commencement order was published on Friday 21 November, which will bring section 40 of the

Social Security Act 1986 into force on 6 April 1987 when child's special allowance will be abolished except for the 780 existing beneficiaries.

Social Security Expenditure

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a table setting out social security expenditure *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* as a percentage of total public expenditure, *(c)* as a percentage of gross domestic product, *(d)* showing the real-terms percentage increase on the previous year and *(e)* the percentage of the real-terms increase spent on (i) increased numbers of claimants, (ii) real-terms increase in benefit levels and (iii) new benefits or extension of eligibility for each year from 1979-80 to 1986-87, including the autumn statement projections.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 November 1986; c. *79*]: The available information is set out in the table. Because eligibility for income related benefits is in part determined by the levels of the benefits themselves, and by the levels of other benefits, it is not possible to make a meaningful split between the effects of increases in these levels and the effect of other changes to eligibility.

Social Security Programme, 1979-80 to 1986-87

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
1. Public expenditure on social security benefits (cash £ million)	18,580	22,410	27,310	31,070	33,610	36,410	39,650	42,490
2. 1 as a percentage of total public expenditure	24·0	24·2	26·3	27·4	27·9	28·0	29·7	30·3
3. 1 as a percentage of gross domestic product	9·0	9·5	10·5	11·0	11·0	11·1	11·0	11·2
4. Real terms percentage increase of benefit expenditure over previous year		1·6	10·8	6·3	3·5	3·9	2·7	4·1
5. Percentage of the real terms increase due to								
(i) increased numbers		[1]	55	25	35	55	25	40
(ii) real terms increases in amounts of benefit paid			45	75	65	45	75	60

[1] Between 1979-80 and 1980-81, there was a real decrease in the average amount of benefit paid, offset by an increase in the number of beneficiaries.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 25 November 1986

TRANSPORT

Public Transport (Penalty Fares)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has given any more detailed consideration to the operation of penalty fares systems on public transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: Earlier this year my right hon. Friend established a working group of officials from the Home Office, the Lord Chancellor's Department, London Regional Transport, and my Department to review the principles which should apply to penalty fares schemes on public transport. The group was asked, in particular, to review the penalty fares provisions of the London Regional Transport Act 1984. This was in line with the undertakings given to Parliament by the Government on 25 June 1984, at column 765, during consideration of the relevant sections of the London Regional Transport Act, that if further improvements could be identified before the penalty fare provisions were brought into effect we would be prepared to implement them in amending legislation. The working group was also asked to examine concerns which had been raised about the different powers contained in the London Docklands Railway Acts 1984 and 1985 and London Docklands Railway (City Extension) Bill. The working group has now reported and the Government have accepted its recommendations for changes to the existing legislation. My right hon. Friend has given LRT consent to deposit a private Bill seeking to amend the penalty fares provisions of the London Regional Transport and London Docklands Railways Act to bring them into line with the working group's recommendations. I have today deposited a copy of the working group's Report — "Penalty Fares on Public Transport" in the Library.

Roads

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all road construction contracts which his Department intended to award in 1986-87 as identified in table 1 of Class VIII, Vote 1 of the Supply Estimates 1986-87, showing in each case whether the contract has been let or whether it is expected to be let during the remainder of 1986-87, and giving in each case the total value of the contract and the expansion likely to be incurred in 1986-87.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is as follows:

	Contract let	*Contract value* £ *million*	*Estimated expenditure this year* £ *million*
M63/66 Portwood-Denton	[1]	51·5	6·3
A361 Tiverton-Newtown	2/87	[3]23·0	0·3
A69 Newcastle Western Bypass	[2]	[3]64·0	0·1
A27 Havant-Chichester Bypass	9/86	20·0	4·5

[1] This scheme is being constructed under two contracts. The first was let in August 1986, the second is planned to be let very soon.
[2] Contracts for various advance works have already been let. The main works for this scheme are to be constructed in four sections. The first contract is expected to be let in summer 1987.
[3] Estimate.

Network SouthEast

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how much British Rail has spent to date on the new Network SouthEast lines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that Network SouthEast has earmarked £13·4 million for Operation Pride in 1986-87. This will pay for more capacity to relieve overcrowding, more frequent train cleaning, a better service at telephone inquiry bureaux, and some modernisation of stations. In addition, NSE has completed some major projects this year, including three electrification schemes. A number of stations, notably Dorchester, Brighton, Faversham, Ealing Broadway and Andover, have been modernised.

Ferry Services

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what undertakings were required and given about the maintenance of ferry services operated by British Rail when Sealink was sold.

Mr. David Mitchell: No undertakings were required or given that particular services would be maintained indefinitely. It was envisaged in the sale agreement that British Rail and Sealink would enter into individual contracts requiring either party to give an appropriate term of notice to the other if they wished to terminate the provision of particular connecting rail or ferry services. In fact the only such individual contracts to have been signed were those relating to Freightliner and freight train-ferry services.

Merchant Fleet

Sir William Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* setting out the net foreign currency earnings of the United Kingdom owned and registered merchant trading fleet, and the United Kingdom's net balance of overseas payments on the overall sea transport account, in each year since 1980, together with his forecast of these magnitudes in 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The following table gives figures of revenue for international activities of the United Kingdom shipping industry. Information is not available separately for the United Kingdom owned and registered trading fleet. The sea transport balance is taken from table 33 of the Central Statistical Office "Pink Book" (United Kingdom balance of payments).

£ million current prices

Year	United Kingdom shipping industry revenue from international activities	Balance of payment sea transport services
1980	3,747	141
1981	3,577	−160
1982	3,183	−623
1983	2,994	−1,013
1984	3,203	−1,132
1985	3,174	−1,157

The Department does not make forecasts of these series. However, in the first six months of 1986 the balance on the sea transport account was minus £605 million compared with minus £691 million in the equivalent period of 1985.

Sir William Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the value of investment in British owned merchant ships in each year since 1980 and his forecasts of these magnitudes in 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer my hon. Friend to articles in *British Business* of 5 September 1986 (page 42) and of 26 September 1986 (page 37), copies of which are in the Library. These give figures of the capital expenditure of the United Kingdom shipping industry as compiled by the Department of Trade and Industry.

My Department does not make forecasts of investment in the shipping industry.

Dock Labour Scheme

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest estimate available to him of the annual cost to the nation's economy of continuing with the present dock labour regime in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am not aware of any such estimate; a wide range of figures could be derived, depending on the assumptions made.

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is currently considering any proposals for the closure of a port covered by the dock labour scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. The closure of a port would usually need an Act of Parliament.

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to eliminate the dock labour scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government have consistently made it clear that they have no plans to legislate on this matter during this Parliament.

Railway Safety

Mr. Leadbitter asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many train derailments have taken place in each of the previous five years under the headings of *(a)* passenger and *(b)* freight;

(2) if he will list the reported accidents on British Rail showing the numbers injured and killed for each of the years 1976 to the latest available date.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information is given in the Department's annual reports on railway safety, published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, copies of which are in the Library.

Port Control

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport what controls exist on ships entering ports in accordance with the memorandum of understanding on port state control.

Mr. Michael Spicer: All foreign ships entering ports covered by the memorandum are subject to inspection. Each authority undertakes to achieve an annual inspection rate corresponding to 25 per cent. of the estimated number of individual foreign ships entering its ports, taking as a basis of the inspection the standards laid down in seven internationally agreed instruments dealing with safety and the prevention of marine pollution. In selecting ships for inspection special attention is paid to those which may present a special hazard, for instance oil tankers and gas and chemical carriers.

Buses

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are Her Majesty's Government's plans over bus deregulation in London.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have made it clear that it is our firm intention to extend deregulation to London in due course.

Docklands (Road Access)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans for improving road access to docklands.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Each of the trunk road schemes in east London worth nearly £600 million in total and included in the programme for completion by the early 1990s will improve access to docklands. The following are particularly relevant:

Under construction: South Woodford to Barking relief road and A2 Rochester Way relief road.

To start early in 1988: north circular, Chingford road to Hale End road.

For completion by 1993, subject to the successful completion of the statutory procedures: east London river crossing; A12, Hackney Wick to M11; and A13, West of Rainham to M25.

Transport Act

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the costs to district councils of the operation of the Transport Act 1986; what information he has about regional variations in these costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell [*pursuant to the reply*, 21 November 1986, c. *362*]: All local authorities that incur expenditure on public transport including district councils, will benefit from the improved value for money, through the competitive tendering requirement, which the Act is already providing. Those benefits can be passed on to passengers or ratepayers. Setting up public transport companies has caused some district councils costs which do not show any pattern of regional variation; but the

benefits overall of establishing transport undertakings at arm's length and on a competitive commercial basis will outweigh those costs.

MV Kowloon Bridge

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to know the results of his Department's inquiries into the loss of the MV Kowloon Bridge.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement that I made earlier today.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Namibia

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards Namibia; and what steps he is taking to seek a solution of outstanding constitutional problems there.

Mrs. Chalker: Our policy is to press for the early and peaceful implementation of the United Nations plan for Namibian independence, as endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 435. This forms the only universally accepted basis for a settlement. We continue to support United States and United Nations negotiations towards such a settlement.

ENERGY

Uranium

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy, if he will make a statement about the agreement between Britain, France and Italy by which BNFL manufactures uranium dioxide from imported enriched uranium hexafluoride and exports it to France and Italy for use in their nuclear reactors.

Mr. Goodlad: BNFL processes imported low enriched uranium hexafluoride for a variety of overseas customers. All material is covered by the relevant IAEA and EURATOM safeguards agreements and subject to the normal export licence controls.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Energy what quantity of uranium was purchased by the Central Electricity Generating Board in 1985; and from what sources it was purchased.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB informs me that, as reported in its annual reports, all deliveries of natural uranium to the CEGB in 1985 were under a contract with Rio Algom in Canada. The total quantity delivered to the CEGB that year was around 340 tonnes of uranium.

Nuclear Installations

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on how his policy towards openness about nuclear matters is to be applied to the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations; and whether that body will in future publish an annual report.

Mr. Goodlad: The Independent Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations plans to publish a report on its work early next year.

Electricity Supplies

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will obtain from the Central Electricity Generating Board a statement of current plans for development of the electricity supply system in the next 15 years, including a list of sites under consideration for new coal-fired power stations; and if he will place a copy of the statement in the Library.

Mr. Goodlad: The medium term development plan of the electricity supply industry (England and Wales) for the period 1986-93 was published by the Electricity Council last month. It includes a section on generation (pages 18-23) which covers possible sites for future power stations. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will describe what arrangements exist between his Department and the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss strategic planning of the electricity system; what forecasts and financial information are made available by the Central Electricity Generating Board for such discussions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Central Electricity Generating Board annually provides me with detailed forecasts of capital requirements for the next six years. These are considered, together with the capital and financing forecasts for the Electricity Supply Industry (England and Wales) as a whole, in the annual investment and financing review of the nationalised industries. Approvals to capital expenditure in the following three years are then given. Strategic planning features in the medium term development plan for the industry, published annually by the Electricity Council; and is also the subject of ad hoc reports to me.

Power Stations

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information his Department receives on the costs of different siting options for new power stations in England and Wales; if he will set out an illustration of the costs for two different sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Applications to site power stations in England and Wales and comparison of the costs of different siting options are matters for the Central Electricity Generating Board. The costs of a particular site would be included in the total station costs for which my right hon. Friend's investment approval would need to be obtained.

Nuclear Reactors (Safety)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy what arrangements have been made for copies of the emergency handbooks used by operators at each site of *(a)* British Nuclear Fuels plc and *(b)* the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to be deposited in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Copies of the emergency plans for BNFL sites will be deposited as soon as practicable. The plans for the UKAEA sites at Dounreay and Winfrith have already been placed in the Library of the House and those for Harwell are expected to follow shortly.

Departmental Initiatives

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list initiatives by his Department which have been of benefit specifically to the north-east, north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside regions since 1979.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Government's approach to energy matters is necessarily a national one designed to benefit all Britain's energy consumers producers and suppliers, many of whom are situated in the north-east, north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside regions.

Our aim is that energy should be produced, supplied and used efficiently and economically. We need to build on Britain's considerable heritage of coal, oil and gas, and long experience in civil nuclear power to ensure a degree of diversity in supply. We aim to ensure that the energy economy works as efficiently as possible through the discipline of the market place and with suitable financial targets for nationalised industries. A further spur to efficiency will be the privatisation of British Gas.

The improved efficiency of the gas and electricity industries has been shown clearly over the last three years. Domestic electricity and gas prices have fallen in real terms, electricity by 10 per cent. and gas by 7 per cent. In cash terms they have gone up by 2 per cent. per year for electricity and 3 per cent. per year for gas. Under the last Labour Government, electricity prices went up 11 times as fast and gas prices four times as fast. Examples of benefits attributable directly to the three regions are:

(i) I have set up the Energy Efficiency Office and launched a major campaign to promote efficiency in the use of energy. Survey grants of over £1 million have been paid to industrial and commercial consumers in the North and potential savings identified of some £780 million.

(ii) Our efforts to create a successful coal industry have resulted in substantial capital investment in British Coal's North East, Western and Yorkshire areas of some £2·4 billion since taking office. Some £370 million was invested in the 1985-86 financial year, a substantially higher level than in the final year of the Labour Government. We have been rewarded by excellent improvements in productivity of 50 per cent. in the North East and Yorkshire and 40 per cent. in Western Area. Following rationalisation of the industry, we created British Coal Enterprise Limited who have now helped to create new industries and businesses, providing over 5,000 new job opportunities in these areas. This Government has also set up the Coal-Firing Scheme under which nearly 200 companies in the North have been offered and accepted grants totalling £21·3 million to switch to coal boilers.

(iii) We have continued to support the safe and economic development of nuclear power, an industry which is concentrated in the North and is particularly important to its economy. Direct nuclear employment amounts to 24,000. In addition, CEGB's estimated investment of around £1,800 million in its latest Advanced Gas-Cooled Reactor Station at Heysham II alone has resulted in the creation of substantial new jobs in construction and manufacturing sectors over the past five years.

(iv) We have approved large-scale investment in the conventional areas of the electricity supply industry. Drax coal-fired power station complex has now been completed at a cost of around £900 million and three local Area Boards have combined annual capital investment programmes of around £100 million.

(v) The Government is funding a programme of research and development on renewable energy technologies. This includes a grant of up to £400,000 towards the cost of studies into a Mersey Barrage.

(vi) Our stable financial regime has encouraged North Sea investment and maintained interest in new developments and exploration. My Department's Offshore Supplies Office have helped Britain's offshore industry to gain an average since 1979 of 74 per cent. of the United Kingdom's market, worth in total some £3 billion a year. A considerable part of this work has come to the North where the fabrication sites are situated.

EMPLOYMENT

Work Test

58. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Paymaster General how many claimants in Coventry have had their benefit suspended or ended by the availability for work test.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Revised procedures for testing availability for work were introduced in the Coventry area on 10 November. Since then benefit has been suspended in 23 cases, but no claims have yet been formally disallowed by the adjudication officers.

Job Monitoring

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General what is the form of monitoring and report conducted by his Department or the Manpower Services Commission to establish how many people have found jobs, started self-employment, entered training or become involved in volunteer work, as either a direct result of restart or as a result of *(a)* advice given by restart interview staff, *(b)* use of a jobclub, or *(c)* advice from a restart course subsequent to volunteer work.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no means of knowing how many of those who have had a restart interview, or who have been on a restart course, subsequently find jobs, start self-employment, enter training or take up voluntary work. People have always ceased to claim benefit for those and other reasons at any time and will continue to do so.

However, when people are referred direct from restart interviews to jobs, self-employment, training or voluntary work the employers or organisations and so on are asked about the result. When people leave jobclubs they are asked whether they are going into a job, training or some other opportunity. We cannot guarantee the completeness of our returns however. We do not have any means of following up every participant. There is no sensible reason why we should devote extra staff and resources to doing so.

United States of America (Tourists)

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General if he will state the latest estimate of the number of holidaymakers who did not come to the United Kingdom from the United States of America during 1986; and how this compares to the corresponding period of 1985.

Mr. Trippier: Figures are not available for the number of people in the United States who planned to visit the United Kingdom on holiday either during 1985 or 1986, but who did not do so. Figures are available for the number of visitors who came to the United Kingdom from North America as a whole. During the first eight months of 1986 there were 1,991,000 visitors from this area, compared with 2,754,000 for the same period last year.

This represents a fall of 27 per cent. Both the British Tourist Authority and British Airways report that bookings are now returning to forecast levels.

Jobstart

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Paymaster General how many people have applied for jobstart allowances and how many have been refused jobstart allowances, for each of the jobcentres at Billingham, Eston, Guisborough, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar, Saltburn, Stockton, Thornaby and Yarm.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Jobstart was piloted in nine areas of Great Britain from January 1986 to the end of June 1986. One of the pilot areas was Billingham and during that period 13 people applied for the allowance, of whom 12 were successful and one was rejected.

Since 1 July 1986 jobstart has been extended nationally and the numbers of jobstart applications and rejections till 14 November 1986 for the offices requested are as follows:

	Applications	*Rejections*
Billingham	8	—
Eston	1	1
Guisborough	—	—
Hartlepool	5	2
Middlesbrough	28	7
Redcar	10	4
Saltburn	4	3
Stockton	9	—
Thornaby	1	1
Yarm	—	—
Total	66	18

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General if he will list the size of his Department's advertising budget from each financial year since 1979; and if he will give the estimate for the next financial year.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986]: We do not have an advertising budget as such. For figures of expenditure on the promotion of employment and training schemes to the people intended to benefit from them, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 19 November 1986, at column 216.

We have not yet set a figure for estimated expenditure on such promotion in 1987-88.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General what has been the size of the budget for information and publicity staff of each financial year since 1979; and if he will detail the number of staff employed on this work over the same time span.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986]: For the number of staff employed on this work from 1979 until the present, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 19 November, at column 217. Salary costs for these staff in 1985-86 were £455,000. Salary costs were not separately attributed to these staff in previous years.

Disabled Persons (Work Test)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General if, in the light of the letter to him dated 7 November from the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR), he has anything to add to his reply of 17 November, *Official Report*, column 66, regarding the effect on disabled people of the new guidelines on the availability for work test; why his earlier answer made no mention of the letter from RADAR; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986]: I confirm the information I gave in my reply of 17 November relating to disabled claimants. The new procedures will improve the arrangements whereby the sick, the handicapped and those who care for them can be directed to claiming the correct benefits. Although I said I had received no representations on the effect of the new guidelines on disabled people, this did not take account of the letter to me from RADAR. This did raise a point about eligibility for benefit and was provoked by our new arrangements, although I believe it was based on a mistaken understanding of the long-established relationship between invalidity benefit and unemployment benefit. I apologise for my failure to refer to this letter, to which I shall be replying shortly.

PRIME MINISTER

Westland plc

Q104. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she knew from her discussions with her office on 7 January whether Department of Trade and Industry officials had asked for the disclosure of the letter from the Solicitor-General to the then Defence Secretary to be made from No. 10 Downing street; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 17 November 1986 at columns. *49-50.*

Merchant Shipping

Sir Edward du Cann asked the Prime Minister what information she has about the tonnage by which the United Kingdom owned and registered merchant trading fleet has been reduced in the past 12 months; what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the remaining fleet to meet the United Kingdom's national defence requirements, including those for civil resupply; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The tonnage of this fleet decreased by 5·4 million dwt in the year ending September 1986.

There are sufficient vessels to meet Ministry of Defence requirements. The ability of the fleet to meet those requirements is monitored closely by the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Transport. The availability of merchant shipping to meet civil supply needs has to be assessed in terms of the capability of NATO, since the Alliance has a long-standing agreement to pool its merchant shipping in war.

Sir Edward du Cann asked the Prime Minister what information she has about the present level of investment in the British-owned merchant fleet; and what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the adequacy of

this for the creation of a future merchant fleet of a size and composition to meet the requirements of national defence partners.

The Prime Minister: In 1985 capital expenditure by the United Kingdom shipping industry on new and secondhand ships was £346 million net of disposals. In the first and second quarters of 1986, the figures were £89 million and £38 million respectively. These figures do not cover investment in ships owned by overseas subsidiaries and associate companies of United Kingdom concerns. Details were given in articles published in *British Business* on 5 and 26 September this year, copies of which are in the Library.

The "Statement on the Defence Estimates" figures in 1986 reported that a study carried out by consultants last year of future trends for those parts of the merchant fleet for which there is a defence requirement, indicated that for the foreseeable future most of these requirements were likely to be met, and that the situation was being monitored closely. The requirements for civil supply have to be viewed in NATO terms, and take into account overall NATO demand and NATO supply including overseas registered shipping beneficially owned in NATO countries and other factors such as future investment and manning, NATO wide. We are pursuing these matters with our NATO allies.

Sir Edward du Cann asked the Prime Minister what information she has about trends in the size of the merchant shipping fleets of other member countries of the North Atlantic Alliance; and when she next expects to have an opportunity to discuss the defence implications of these trends with the leaders of the United Kingdom's North Atlantic Treaty Organisation partners.

The Prime Minister: In 1985 the total tonnage of the merchant fleets of NATO members fell by 30·7 million dwt.

The NATO Planning Board for Ocean Shipping has drawn the attention of the North Atlantic Council to the implications for the Alliance of this trend, and indicated possible remedial measures. I anticipate an early discussion of the matter in the Council.

Sir Edward du Cann asked the Prime Minister if she will list in the *Official Report* the Government Departments responsible for the policy issues arising from the decline of the United Kingdom-owned and registered merchant fleet; and whether she is satisfied with the co-ordination between them.

The Prime Minister: The Department of Transport takes the lead in co-ordinating policies in respect of the United Kingdom merchant fleet, while other Departments may have a primary role in related policy areas. There is full co-ordination between Departments.

Crown Dependencies

Mr. Murphy asked the Prime Minister if she will set out the current administrative responsibilities exercised by Her Majesty's Government towards the Baliwick of Guernsey, the Baliwick of Jersey, and the Isle of Man; if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to seek to alter the present constitutional relationships between the United Kingdom and these three Crown dependencies; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Crown has ultimate responsibility for the good government of the islands and acts through the Privy Council on the recommendations of Ministers of Her Majesty's Government. By long-standing constitutional convention, the islands legislate for their own domestic affairs, but Her Majesty's Government have responsibility for the defence and the international relations of these dependencies of the Crown. We have no plans to alter the present constitutional relationships.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 November.

Mr. Dormand asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 November.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 November.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a dinner in support of the Somerville college appeal.

Reptiles and Amphibians

Mr. Corbett asked the Prime Minister if she will list the Government Departments which have responsibilities for the preservation of wild reptiles and amphibians; and whether there are plans to increase their powers and scope of responsibility.

The Prime Minister: The Government Departments which have responsibilities for the conservation of wild reptiles and amphibians are the Department of the Environment, the Scottish Office, the Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland). The Government rely for scientific advice on the conservation of these and other wildlife species on the Nature Conservancy Council. There are no plans at present to increase the powers and scope of responsibility of the foregoing Government Departments. It is possible by order to add to the list of protected animals and plants and others likely to be in danger of extinction.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

"Comic Relief" (Prosecution)

Mr. Ron Lewis asked the Attorney-General if he will prosecute the authors and publishers of the book, "Comic Relief" for blasphemy.

The Attorney-General: The investigation of any alleged criminal offence is a function of the police. If the hon. Member considers that an offence of blasphemy may have been committed the proper course is for him to refer the matter to the police so that if, after proper investigation, it is appropriate a report may be submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from the General Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland regarding the operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement; and what has been his response.

Mr. Tom King: I recently received a letter from the clerk of the General Assembly and general secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, forwarding a resolution of the general board of the church. I shall reply to it shortly.

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funds his Department will make available to Harland and Wolff in 1986-87.

Mr. Viggers: The Government have set the company's external financing limit, including trading losses and redundancy costs, at £68 million for 1986-87.

Maghaberry Prison

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) for what offences the prisoner who miscarried in October at Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry was being held in custody;

(2) if he will outline the circumstances in which a prisoner in Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry had a miscarriage in October.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986]: No prisoner miscarried in Maghaberry women's prison during the month of October. A prisoner who was committed to the prison on 27 October for seven days for non-payment of fines imposed for motoring offences was released on the following day on payment of the balance owing. It was subsequently reported in the press that she had a miscarriage on 29 October.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the practice of strip searching pregnant women in Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986]: All women prisoners are strip searched on initial reception and before discharge, and on certain other occasions; there are other circumstances in which searches are carried out on a random basis. Where a prisoner is known to be pregnant, a hospital officer is present during the search, but this did not happen in the case which gave rise to the question. However in this case, the prisoner was examined by the prison medical officer later on the day of her reception; no abnormalities were evident, and she made no complaints of any kind.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what medical or psychiatric evidence he has received concerning the extent to which strip searching was a contributory factor in the miscarriage of a prisoner in Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry in October.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986]: Naturally I regret that the woman should have had a miscarriage after her discharge from prison; but I am aware of no evidence to suggest that the searches carried out during the short period that she was in prison were in any way a contributory factor.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions a pregnant woman in Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry was subject to strip searches in the week before she miscarried; and if he will indicate the number of times over the previous seven days she was strip searched each day before her miscarriage.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986]: The prisoner was strip searched twice—on reception and prior to her discharge the following day.

Consultants (Fees)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what will be the spending of his Department on fees to outside consultants in the current year; and what it was in 1979-80 and in each intervening year.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 November 1986; c. 258]: The fees paid in the last two financial years are shown below together with the estimated expenditure for the current financial year. Information for the previous years would be available only at disproportionate cost.

	£
Expenditure 1984-85	4,723,025
Expenditure 1985-86	5,029,849
Estimated expenditure 1986-87	5,960,050

HOME DEPARTMENT

Holloway Prison

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the current level of educational lessons held at Holloway prison since the beginning of the current year; what is the number of such lessons cancelled because of staffing difficulties; how these figures compare with the two previous years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In the two months since the start of this academic year, 183 classes took place out of a planned total of 810. Prison officers, among other duties, escort prisoners to and from classes and supervise them. Cancellations of classes were due to the shortage of prison officers for such work. The comparable figures for September and October 1985 were 220 classes out of 927 and for the same period in 1984, out of approximately 800 proposed classes, none took place.

As part of a review of the deployment of staff with a view to providing as positive a regime as possible at Holloway, new arrangements, taking advantage of the accommodation offered in the new education centre, are being implemented to allow greater flexibility in the deployment of prison officers supervising education activities. These arrangements are expected to reduce the number of occasions when all classes have to be cancelled and to increase the opportunities for prisoners to take part in education. In addition, vigorous action is in hand to deal with the basic problem of the shortage of prison officers at Holloway including an intensive recruitment campaign in the London area.

Prison Deaths

Mr. Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women prisoners have been found hanged in their cells in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: The number of prisoners found hanged in prison establishments in England and Wales is as follows. Records held centrally do not show precise locations.

Year	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
1981	18	—	18
1982	21	—	21
1983	22	—	22
1984	26	—	26
1985	27	1	28

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many baths, showers and toilets are available to prisoners in Wandsworth prison; how many baths or showers each prisoner is allowed per week; and how many changes of clothes each prisoner is allowed per week.

Mr. Mellor: The numbers of baths, showers and toilets available are as follows:

	Numbers
Baths	14
Showers	58
WCs	201
Urinals	165

Each prisoner is normally allowed one shower per week and an additional shower when he makes use of the gymnasium. Additional showers are available for prisoners employed on jobs of a physically dirty nature. When appropriate for medical reasons a bath is available instead of a shower.

Prisoners at Wandsworth have one change of clothes per week consisting of two shirts, one T-shirt, two pairs of socks, two pairs of underpants and two vests. Overclothing is changed as necessary.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the maximum number of prisoners who can be employed in Wandsworth prison on any one day.

Mr. Mellor: Seven hundred and twenty.

Prisons (Staffing)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Prison Officers Association to ensure adequate staffing in prisons in England and Wales to seek to avoid the serious incidents that have recently taken place in prisons in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: It would be wrong for me to comment on the details or causes of incidents in Scottish prisons. Actions of those involved in these events may be the subject of criminal proceedings. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has announced, general complaints about conditions and the treatment of prisoners at Peterhead prison are to be the subject of a special investigation by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland.

There is frequent contact with the Prison Officers' Association about various aspects of the manning of prison establishments in England and Wales.

Criminal Trials

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals for introducing statutory time limits for the presentation of criminal trials in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. Following field trials, we plan to introduce statutory time limits in three police areas — Avon and Somerset, Kent and the West Midlands — from 1 April next year. These limits will apply to the period for which an accused may be kept in custody—

(a) while awaiting summary trial or committal by a magistrates' court in proceedings for an indictable offence instituted in any of those areas on or after 1 April, or

(b) while awaiting trial in the Crown court at Bristol, Maidstone or Birmingham, having been committed on or after that date.

In the light of experience there we shall go on to apply custody limits throughout England and Wales. We have no immediate plans to exercise the powers to apply limits to periods when the accused is not in custody; these will come later.

Eavesdropping Equipment

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to render it a criminal offence to use mobile electronic eavesdropping equipment to obtain confidential information from commercial organisations for the purposes of deriving financial gain from such information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: As my predecessor announced in the House on 12 March 1985, at column *157*, the Government intend, when an opportunity occurs, to introduce legislation based on the Law Commission's proposals that people who obtain information by "improper means" — which includes the use of mobile electronic eavesdropping equipment and other surveillance devices — would be subject to an obligation not to use or disclose that information. Under the Law Commission's proposals a person who breached this obligation would not be committing a criminal offence but would be liable at civil law to an action for breach of confidence.

Crossbows

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to extend restrictions on the use and sale of crossbows; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have been considering the matter, and my right hon. Friend will report our conclusions to the House shortly.

Ashwell Prison

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the steps being taken to implement the recommendations of the report by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons regarding Her Majesty's prison, Ashwell.

Mr. Mellor: The report of Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons was published on 23 September 1986 with an

accompanying statement by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, which outlined the action already taken to implement its observations. Work on implementing the report is continuing.

Prisoner Escapes (Salisbury)

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have escaped from the cells of Salisbury magistrates', court and the old and new Crown court in Salisbury in each of the last five complete calendar years and in the current year to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The only escapes from the cells of Salisbury magistrates', and Crown courts in the period concerned occurred from the Guildhall cells in 1985 and totalled three.

Prison Sentences

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people currently serving sentences in prison have served more than 15, 20 and 25 years, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: The latest readily available information is given in the table.

Population[1] of prisoners in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales on 30 September 1986 whose initial reception under sentence was 15 years or more earlier

Time since initial reception under sentence into a Prison Department establishment[2]	*Number of prisoners*	
	All	*Recalled[3]*
15 years but less than 20 years	119	31
20 years but less than 25 years	43	24
25 years and over	19	12

[1] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate; detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

[2] Includes time spent on licence by prisoners recalled after having been released on licence.

[3] Prisoners who had been recalled after having been released on licence.

Murder Convictions

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people convicted of murder, and given a life sentence since the abolition of the death penalty, have subsequently been found to be innocent of the charge and pardoned.

Mr. Mellor: No person convicted of murder since the coming into force of the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965 has been granted a free pardon. Four men convicted of murder and given life sentences and one man convicted of murder and ordered to be detained during Her Majesty's pleasure have had their convictions quashed following a reference to the Court of Appeal by the Home Secretary.

Firearms

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the working group on the use of firearms by the police to report to him.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We expect to receive the report very soon.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Research

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Medical Research Council to discuss research funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend met the chairman and secretary of the Medical Research Council on 5 November for a general discussion about the work of the council. The chairman drew attention to the financial pressures on the council. There was then a short discussion before turning to other topics.

Conductive Education

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his Department's attitude towards conductive education for certain categories of disabled children; and what advice he is giving local education authorities on the desirability of enabling such children to receive conductive education.

Mr. Dunn: Conductive education was developed in the context of the Hungarian educational system. The educational and other implications of introducing it here will need to be given very careful consideration before any encouragement can be given to the wider development of the system in this country. It is for the local education authority to decide what is the appropriate form of education for individual children who have special educational needs.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the meeting of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on Thursday 13 November with representatives of Rapid Action for Conductive Education.

Mr. Dunn: I was glad to have the opportunity to meet the representatives of Rapid Action for Conductive Education. They urged strongly that conductive education should be made generally available in this country for the benefit of disabled children and adults. In particular they requested that financial support should be given by central Government towards the four-year Anglo-Hungarian conductive education project which is to be established at Birmingham university. I assured them that their views would be given careful consideration.

Genetic Handicap

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether the Medical Research Council has been informed of or is involved in any current or proposed research project into genetic handicap which necessitates or would necessitate the use of human embryo;

(2) if he is aware of any publicly funded current or proposed research project into genetic handicap which involves or would involve the use of human embryo.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is not aware of any such work. I understand that the Medical Research Council is not involved in such work, nor is the council aware of any.

Burton Manor College

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement concerning the future of Burton Manor college, Cheshire.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has considered a resolution submitted to him for confirmation by the governors of Burton Manor college seeking to terminate the agreement under which the college is administered. He did not regard it as a valid and effective resolution and therefore could not confirm it. He has invited representatives of the Liverpool local education authority and the college to discuss the future of the college with the Department.

Miss M. McGoldrick

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give directions under section 68 of the Education Act 1944 to Brent council to cease disciplinary proceedings against Miss McGoldrick.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend could use his powers under section 68 only if he were satisfied that the authority was proposing to act unreasonably. The present position is that the ad hoc disciplinary sub-committee of the council's education committee is to meet shortly to consider whether or not to proceed with a disciplinary hearing. My right hon. Friend will consider the position in the light of the outcome.

Teachers (Disciplinary Matters)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to make school governing bodies the final arbiters on teacher disciplinary matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 confirms that the power of teacher dismissal rests with the local education authority. That power can be exercised only after consulting the governing body and the head teacher. The power of suspension can be exercised by the governing body or the head teacher but a suspension must be ended at the direction of the local education authority. There are no plans to introduce new legislation on this matter.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Trade Deficits

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the first eight months of the current year at an annual rate the deficit on trade in *(a)* manufactures, *(b)* finished manufactures, *(c)* precious stones, *(d)* crude oil and *(e)* total trade less crude oil to the nearest £m; and if he will provide corresponding figures for (i) 1956, (ii) 1966, (iii) 1970 and (iv) 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is as follows:

United Kingdom visible trade balances—BOP basis, £ million

	1956	*1966*	*1970*	*1979*	[1] [2]*1986*
Manufactures	n.a.	+2,098	+2,562	+2,698	−5,194
Finished manufactures	n.a.	+1,707	+2,103	+1,964	−4,262
Precious stones	n.a.	n.a.	−47	−398	−80
Crude oil	n.a.	n.a.	−469	−685	+4,173
Total less crude oil	n.a.	n.a.	+435	−2,764	−11,922

[1] January-August.
[2] Seasonally adjusted, at an annual rate.

Cigarette Sales

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what information he has concerning the total value of cigarette sales in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years; and if he will state in each of those years what percentage of the total figures was represented by sales of United Kingdom produced cigarettes and what percentage by imported cigarettes;

(2) what information he has concerning the percentage of the United Kingdom market supplied by United Kingdom manufactured cigarettes in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: Annual figures of the total value of cigarettes sales are given in National Accounts Blue Book, Table 4.8, a copy of which is in the Library. Comparable data are not available for imports as the import figures exclude duty and are valued at the point of import not at retail prices. Information on the value of United Kingdom manufacturers' sales is available in *Business Monitor* PQ 4290. These are valued at manufacturers' sale prices not retail prices, but include duty paid and are therefore also not comparable with imports.

Information is therefore not available on the proportions of the total value of sales accounted for by United Kingdom produced cigarettes and by imported cigarettes. Information is, however, available in respect of the numbers of cigarettes released for consumption in the United Kingdom as compiled by HM Customs and Excise and is as follows:

Quantities of cigarettes released for home consumption

per cent.

	Proportion accounted for by imports	*Proportion accounted for by United Kingdom manufacturers*
1981	1·4	98·6
1982	1·7	98·3
1983	1·9	98·1
1984	6·4	93·6
1985	10·6	89·4
1986[1]	11·4	88·6

[1] January to August.
Source: HM Customs and Excise.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has concerning the total number of cigarettes sold in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: The information available on quantities of cigarettes released for consumption in the United Kingdom as compiled by HM Customs and Excise is as follows:

Quantities of cigarettes released for home consumption

	Total clearances (million)
1981	109,822
1982	102,449
1983	102,611
1984	99,864
1985	99,070
1986[1]	61,013

[1] January to August
Source: HM Customs and Excise.

BTR—Pilkington Bid

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he intends to appoint inspectors to investigate the suspected insider dealing which preceded the bid by BTR for Pilkington on 20 November.

Mr. Howard: If and when I obtain information suggesting that insider dealing may have occurred, I shall take appropriate action, which might include appointing an inspector under section 177 of the Financial Services Act.

Financial Services Act

Mr. Nelson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the provisions of schedule 12 of the Financial Services Act are likely to come into force.

Mr. Howard: The provisions will come into effect on 30 April. The necessary commencement order will be laid before the House shortly.

British Overseas Trade Board

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future funding of the British Overseas Trade Board.

Mr. Alan Clark: The BOTB net expenditure budget has been set at the following levels for the next three years.

£ million

1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
27·7	28·3	28·0

The budgets for 1987-88 and 1988-89 are £1 million above the previously planned levels. No budget had previously been set for 1989-90.

Bankruptcies

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many bankruptcies have occurred in Wales in each year from 1979 to 1986; if he will specify the size of the firms concerned, showing those employing *(a)* less than 20 workers, *(b)* between 20 and 50 workers, *(c)* between 50 and 100 workers and *(d)* over 100 workers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November; col. 8.]: The number of bankruptcies in Wales in each year from 1979 to 1986 is given in the table below. No records are kept of the numbers of employees of individuals and partnerships declared bankrupt.

Year	*Number*
1979	203
1980	231
1981	306
1982	334
1983	419
1984	547
1985	444
1986[1]	352

[1] to September.

EC (Ship Scrapping Scheme)

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the proposals for a Community ship scrapping scheme put to the European Commission by the European Economic Community Shipowners' Association.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.

We have noted these proposals, which will be fully considered in discussions within the Community aimed at strengthening the position of Community fleets and improving their competitiveness.

WALES

Roads

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set out the effects of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement on the construction and maintenance of national and local authority roads in Wales in 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90, giving comparable figures for the public expenditure White Paper for January.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given on 17 November 1986 in reply to the hon. Members for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) and Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas), at columns 300-1.

Infant Schools

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been spent per pupil in Welsh infant schools since 1980; and what are the figures for each local education authority in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Figures giving expenditure per pupil in infant schools in Wales are not separately available. The equivalent figures for primary schools are given in the following table:

Primary pupil unit costs
Net recurrent institutional costs (£s at outturn prices)[1]

	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Clwyd	538	631	683	727	738
Dyfed	620	700	740	772	797
Gwent	553	634	706	750	756
Gwynedd	541	642	722	715	767
Mid Glamorgan	568	632	716	788	808
Powys	665	758	816	879	912
South Glamorgan	534	593	646	682	697
West Glamorgan	626	707	763	807	800
Wales	572	650	714	758	774

[1] Excluding school meals, milk, school transport and pupil support.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales, for 1985-86 and 1986-87 respectively, what is the total budget and estimated expenditure for each county in Wales under the all-Wales strategy for mentally handicapped people.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is given in the following table:

Approved grant and outturn expenditure reports 1985-86, 1986-87

	Approved grant 1985-86 £	Actual expenditure 1985-86 £	Approved grant 1986-87 £
Clwyd	669,000	591,900	829,000
Dyfed	310,000	221,400	664,600
Gwent	616,000	485,400	1,068,000
Gwynedd	[1]743,600	436,400	[1]1,320,000
Mid Glamorgan	[1]996,300	673,100	[1]1,762,000
Powys	268,600	187,700	360,000
South Glamorgan	735,000	706,700	825,000
West Glamorgan	783,000	762,400	900,000
Total	5,121,500	4,065,000	7,728,600

[1] Includes extra allocation for vanguard areas.

It it too soon to make reliable estimates of expenditure by counties in 1986-87.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress made so far under the all-Wales strategy for mentally handicapped people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: All 10 plans prepared by counties have been approved. The Department is currently reviewing progress and we intend publishing the conclusions in the new year.

Road Improvements

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state how many road improvement schemes on trunk roads in Wales have been abandoned during the past 12 months because acquisition of the necessary land would require a compulsory purchase order, although the Welsh Office had previously approved the scheme.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: One, a small footway widening scheme on the A487 at Heol-y-Dur, Gwynedd.

Football Violence

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state which grants are available to soccer clubs in Wales to improve their grounds in order to minimise risks of crowd violence.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Football Grounds Improvement Trust makes grants to clubs of the Football League, including the four Welsh clubs, for ground improvements. The Football Trust makes grants for a similar purpose to non-league clubs and has done so for four Welsh clubs to date.

Spectacles

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many persons obtained spectacles through the National Health Service between 1 July and 30 September in Wales; and what was the comparable figure in the corresponding period in 1985.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Between 1 July and 30 September 1986, dispensing fees paid indicate that 16,157 persons were supplied with lenses; additionally 18,470 vouchers were issued for pairs of glasses. During the corresponding period in 1985, dispensing fees paid indicate that 30,400 persons were supplied with lenses.

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are employed by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service in Wales; what were the corresponding figures for the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The number of people employed by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service in Wales on 18 November was 326½.

Information for earlier years can be provided only as at 1 April of each year. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Newport, West, (Mr. Robinson) on 22 April 1986, at column 93.

Housing

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's estimate of the number of houses in multiple occupation in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: It is estimated that there are approximately 11,700 houses in multiple occupation in Wales.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportions of dwellings in Wales unfit for human habitation are *(a)* privately owned and *(b)* owned by local authorities.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Ninety thousand nine hundred dwellings were quoted as being unfit for human habitation

in the 1981 Welsh "House Condition Survey". Of these, 61 per cent. were owner-occupied and 4 per cent. were owned by local authorities.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library the result of question 96 of the schedule section M of the Welsh "House Condition Survey" of 1981.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Yes.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if the 1986 Welsh house condition survey will be supplemented by a social survey.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Yes; the Welsh Office is conducting an inter-censal survey which will supplement the 1986 Welsh house condition survey.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each local authority in Wales his Department's estimate of *(a)* privately owned houses which are statutorily unfit for people to live in and *(b)* privately owned houses that are fit but in substantial disrepair.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information required is not currently available at district level. Information at county level is published in the Welsh "House Condition Survey 1981", a copy of which is in the Library of the House of Commons.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if the 1986 Welsh "House Condition Survey" includes a provision whereby the houses surveyed in 1981 will be revisited and surveyed again; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Three thousand seven hundred dwellings were surveyed during the 1981 Welsh house condition survey. All these dwellings were included in the Welsh inter-censal survey 1986, and those 86 per cent. that were successfully interviewed were then included with the sample for the 1986 Welsh house condition survey. Revisiting dwellings surveyed in 1981 provides the best measure of the change in conditions.

Defective Housing

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the net cost to date and in this financial year to the latest available date for each local housing authority in Wales of *(a)* refurbishment grants, *(b)* wholesale repurchases and *(c)* wholesale repurchases following rejection of a refurbishment grant application on the grounds of excessive cost under the Housing Defects Act 1984.

Mr. Mark Robinson [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 November 1986, c. *308-10*]: There were, unfortunately, errors in the answer. The correct information is as follows:

The cost to date of reinstatement grants and repurchases is given in the following table. The reasons for repurchases by authorities are not held centrally.

£ thousand

	Cost of repurchase		*Cost of reinstatement*	
	December 1984 to June 1986	*April 1986 to June 1986*	*December 1984 to June 1986*	*April 1986 to June 1986*
Aberconwy	—	—	—	—
Alyn and Deeside	43	—	—	—
Arfon	—	—	30	30
Blaenau Gwent	18	18	—	—
Brecknock	113	53	—	—
Cardiff	78	19	36	7
Carmathen	98	15	—	—
Ceredigion	—	—	—	—
Colwyn Bay	—	—	—	—
Cynon Valley	—	—	—	—
Delyn	16	—	—	—
Dinefwr	—	—	—	—
Dwyfor	—	—	—	—
Glyndwr	15	—	—	—
Islwyn	—	—	10	—
Llanelli	—	—	—	—
Lliw Valley	—	—	—	—
Meirionnydd	—	—	—	—
Merthyr Tydfil	—	—	—	—
Monmouth	356	24	12	—
Montgomeryshire	—	—	—	—
Neath	—	—	—	—
Newport	25	—	105	53
Ogwr	20	—	—	—
Port Talbot (Afan)	—	—	—	—
Preseli	86	—	—	—
Radnor	—	—	—	—
Rhondda	—	—	—	—
Rhuddlan	—	—	—	—
Rhymney Valley	—	—	249	46
South Pembrokeshire	14	—	9	—
Swansea	13	—	—	—
Taff-Ely	—	—	—	—
Torfaen	—	—	—	—
Vale of Glamorgan	36	36	159	87

	Cost of repurchase		Cost of reinstatement	
	December 1984 to June 1986	April 1986 to June 1986	December 1984 to June 1986	April 1986 to June 1986
Wrexham Maelor	—	—	—	—
Ynys Mon	—	—	—	—
Totals	931	165	610	223

SCOTLAND

Legal Aid

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for legal aid have been refused for each of the years from 1979 to date.

Mr. Lang: The number of applications for criminal legal aid which were refused was:

	Number
1979-80	6,229
1980-81	5,924
1981-82	6,100
1982-83	6,183
1983-84	7,114
1984-85	7,312
1985-86	9,297

Comparable details for civil legal aid are not readily available. The following table shows the number of applications received and the number of full legal aid certificates issued. The figures include applications for emergency certificates which may be refused even though legal aid may eventually be given on the normal basis and not all approvals result in the issue of a certificate.

	Total applications received	Full certificates received
1979-80	29,012	16,782
1980-81	32,843	17,621
1981-82	35,292	22,190
1982-83	31,006	19,475
1983-84	31,126	18,353
1984-85	31,953	16,596

Motoring Offences

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether magistrates involved in trying motoring offences are expected either to have had or to possess a current driving licence.

Mr. Lang: No.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest information his Department has on the number of those unemployed in Scotland by social class; and what percentage of each social class these figures represent.

Mr. Lang: The latest available information, which comes from the "Labour Force Survey", is shown in the table below:

Numbers of people without a job and actively looking for work during the week prior to the survey and as a percentage of those economically active in each group
Scotland, Spring 1985

Previous Occupations	Number	Percentage rate
I Professional etc. occupations	[1] ..	[2] ..
II Intermediate occupations	20,000	4·2
III Skilled occupations	88,000	7·9
IV Partly skilled occupations	51,000	12·7
V Unskilled occupations	35,000	19·6
Not classified	[3] 129,000	[2] ..
All unemployed	[4] 324,000	[4] 13·4

[1] Less than 10,000.
[2] No meaningful rate can be computed for this group.
[3] Includes people looking for work for over three years who were not asked about their previous occupation.
[4] The total number and percentage unemployed according to the "Labour Force Survey" definition of unemployment may differ from the number and percentage unemployed given by the count of claimants at unemployment benefit offices. Differences arise because, for example,
a. some people who were looking for work were not claiming benefit;
b. some people who were claiming benefit were not actively looking for work in the week prior to the survey.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information is available from the 1981 census on the number and percentage out of work in Dundee by social class.

Mr. Lang: This information is not available in the form requested.

Migrant Workers

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information is available on the extent of migrant workers in Dundee, showing the numbers of those normally resident in the city but who travel outwith the Tayside regional boundaries for work.

Mr. Lang: The most recent information on migrant workers comes from the 1981 "Census of Population". About 1,900 people whose area of residence was in the city of Dundee were reported to be working in Scotland outwith Tayside region, or in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, overseas or at sea.

Dundee (Labour Statistics)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information is available on the extent of migrant workers in Scotland who are normally resident in Scotland but who travel outwith of Scotland for work.

Mr. Lang: The most recent information on migrant workers comes from the 1981 "Census of Population". About 18,000 people whose area of residence was in Scotland were reported to be working in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, overseas or at sea.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has from the 1981 census showing the number and percentage of those unemployed in Dundee and Scotland with dependent children.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is available for Scotland only and is expressed in terms of heads of households. It is estimated that 66,150 economically active heads of household who were out of employment had dependent children, representing 52 per cent. of all economically active heads of household out of employment.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current expenditure on the National Health Service in Tayside per head of population; what was the corresponding figure in 1980-81; and if he will express both figures as constant figures.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

	Gross NHS Expenditure At Cash Prices[1] *£,000*	*Estimated Population Figures* *£,000*	*Cost Per Head At Cash Prices* *£*	*Cost Per Head At 1985-86 Prices*[3] *£*
1980-81	119,718	396,825	302	411
1985-86[2]	163,452	394,322	415	415

[1]Comprising expenditure on hospital and community services, family practitioner services and capital.
[2]The most recent year for which detailed figures are available.
[3]As measured by GDP deflator.

Jobs (Tayside)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of new jobs created in Tayside region in the latest available year; how many of these are part-time jobs; and how many of these are in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Lang: Comprehensive information on jobs created is not available. In 1985, some 1,060 new jobs and 2,170 safeguarded jobs were associated with offers of regional selective assistance made to businesses in Tayside region of which 2,200 in total were in the manufacturing sector. Similarly, some 1,100 new jobs, of which 1,000 were in manufacturing, were associated with offers of new regional development grant. It should be noted that some projects received both types of assistance. Information on the number of part-time jobs is not available.

Retail Developments

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to publish the revised national planning guidelines on the location of major retail developments.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend and I are at present studying the comments received by the Scottish Development Department on the draft of the revised guidelines which was issued for consultation on 8 May 1986. We hope to reach conclusions soon.

Strathclyde Structure Plan

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what submissions he has received from Strathclyde regional council concerning any formal alteration or addition to the Strathclyde structure plan 1981; and when he intends to respond.

Mr. Ancram: A second alteration to the plans was submitted in January 1985 and approved with modifications in December 1985. My right hon. and learned Friend has had no further formal submission but expects a third alteration to be submitted for his approval within the next month of two. The Scottish Development Department received a consultative draft relating to the proposed third alteration in September and responded on 15 October.

St. Enoch Square (Glasgow)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the extent of involvement by the Scottish Development Agency in the Glasgow St. Enoch square development; and what efforts are being made to involve Scottish construction companies in the development.

Mr. Lang: The development is taking place on a site which was assembled by the Scottish Development Agency and then transferred to the developers on terms which give the agency a stake in the development's future success. Scottish companies have won a significant number of contracts so far and the project is being handled in such a way as to enable all Scottish companies which are interested to tender for specific jobs. The eventual success of such tenders will of course depend on price and quality.

Nurses (Duke Street Hospital)

Mr. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many qualified nurses are employed at the Duke street hospital in Glasgow; and how this compares with the authorised establishment.

Mr. John Mackay: On 31 October 1986 there were 89·2* qualified nurses in post and the funded establishment was 102·3*.

* Figures are whole-time equivalents.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied with the arrangements which presently exist for consultation between the Forestry Commission and the agriculture departments, the local authorities and the Nature Conservancy Council, respectively, in relation to current and new forestry grant applications in environmentally sensitive areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied that the discussions which are taking place between the Forestry Commission and the relevant statutory authorities will lead to mutually acceptable arrangements for consultations over forestry grant applications in environmentally sensitive areas.

Agricultural Advisory Services

Mr. Pollock asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future funding of the agricultural advisory services provided by the Scottish agricultural colleges.

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future funding of the agricultural advisory services provided by the Scottish colleges of agriculture.

Mr. Rifkind: I am pleased to be able to announce that following careful consideration of the funding position of Scottish agricultural colleges I have been able to make available an additional £0·75 million for the agricultural advisory services in Scotland in each of the years 1987-88 and 1988-89.

This additional sum takes account of the capacity of the services in Scotland to raise income in the initial years of charging.

DEFENCE

Discharged Personnel (Hearing Loss)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many people have been discharged from the forces with severe hearing loss in the last year for which figures are available; in how many cases the hearing loss was attributable to service in the forces; and if he will categorise the size of the pensions awarded according to the degree of hearing loss.

Mr. Freeman: In 1985, which is the last year for which figures are available, there were 10 medical discharges of United Kingdom regular service personnel in which the principal cause was under International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 388.1 (Noise effects on inner ear). A further 54 medical discharges were made under ICD 389 (Deafness). A few of these may have been due to Service attributable causes.

The further information requested is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. I am advised however that in 1985 1,313 new awards were made by DHSS for hearing deficiencies attributable to service in the armed forces. Because there is no limitation on the period in which a person has to claim a war pension, those awards may have been made to any person who left the forces after the outbreak of hostilities in September 1939. The number of awards made to persons who left the services only during 1985 could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

I am further advised by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services that disablement is assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Service Pensions Order, notably Article 9 and Part V of Schedule 1, which requires a 100 per cent. assessment for absolute deafness. Other assessments of less disablement are based on the hearing acuity to conversational voice and audio-metric findings.

The use of the latter in assessing degree of disablement is on the basis of advice given to the DHSS by the British Associaton of Otolaryngologists. The basis of assessment from conversational voice is on advice from consultants, medical boards and tribunals.

Degrees of disablement assessed as above apply only to the deafness itself and additions have to be made in respect of complications such as chronic suppuration, tinnitus or vertigo due to the accepted condition.

If the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) has a particular case in mind, I am advised that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services would be pleased to look into the matter.

Overseas Personnel (Training)

Mr. David Howell asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether military personnel from Syria, Libya, Iraq and South Africa are being trained at present in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: Some members of the Iraqi armed forces are currently undergoing training at the Ministry of Defence establishments in the United Kingdom. No such training is being provided for members of the Syrian, Libyan or South African armed forces.

Nuclear Missiles

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for the continued need to station cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe of any future removal of comparable Russian missiles.

Mr. Stanley: The extent to which it would continue to be necessary to station ground launched cruise missiles and Pershing II missiles in Europe would depend on the extent to which the Soviet Union was willing to eliminate its SS20 and SS4 missiles in the context of an INF agreement based on zero numbers, or equal numbers above zero, and which included effective verification procedures and the necessary collateral constraints on the short-range systems.

Aircraft (Early Warning System)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what assessment his Department has made of *(a)* Nimrod's airborne early warning systems and *(b)* AWAC's G-3A ability to detect slow low-flying aircraft;

(2) what information he has on progress on the General Electric Company's avionics Nimrod airborne early warning programme in the areas of *(a)* design, *(b)* production of a new aerial, *(c)* transmitter reliability and *(d)* radar detection.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Flight trials of the Nimrod and E-3A systems have been carried out using a representative range of targets. These trials have also allowed us to make an up-to-date assessment of current system performance. We are now in the final stages of this competition and I would prefer not to comment on the relative merits of the two remaining contenders.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the number of United Kingdom jobs which could arise from exports of Nimrod's airborne early warning system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This is a matter for the company, but would, in any event, depend upon a number of factors, not least the number of orders received.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to take account of the worldwide export potential of advanced early warning systems in deciding which system to purchase.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The overseas sales potential of airborne early warning systems will certainly be a factor in the decision. But the major considerations in our evaluation of the two surviving candidates in our airborne early warning competition remain the ability of each to meet the Royal Air Force's pressing operational requirement and the comparative costs.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement giving details of the nature of the offset work offered by Boeing in its airborne early warning system bid;

(2) what assessment he has made of the offset work likely to be generated by buying AWACS.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As the Boeing Company has said, if we buy its AEW system it will be committed to offset in the United Kingdom 130 per cent. of our expenditure, within eight years. This commitment is one of the factors we shall take into account in reaching a final decision.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on progress on GEC avionics efforts to market the C-130 airborne early warning system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This is really a question for the company, but we are monitoring progress carefully and will assist where possible.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the offset work likely to be generated by the Nimrod airborne early warning system for Britain's advanced technology industries.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The term offset normally refers to work carried out by the industry of a foreign customer country. However, in this instance I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the contribution made by the Nimrod AEW programme to the maintenance of Britain's advanced technology industries and I can confirm that this is a factor we shall take into account in our decision on the way ahead on the United Kingdom's AEW requirement.

Rapier 2000

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how much his Department plans to spend on Rapier 2000 in the 1987-88 financial year;

(2) how much will be spent on the Rapier 2000 system in the 1986-87 financial year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am unable to provide this information on grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Trident

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he made in 1979 of offset work generated by buying Trident; what is his latest estimate; and how much has been created to date.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is no offset agreement and no estimate of offset work was made in 1979. I refer to the answer given at column 422 on 11 December 1984.

To date, United Kingdom companies have succeeded in winning 200 contracts from the United States Trident programme and these are valued at a total of $47 million.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of work generated in the United Kingdom as a result of the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) on 4 November at column *426*.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Lamb

Mr. Terlezki asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he intends to take to protect lamb exports from *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Great Britain from action being taken by French farmers; if he will consider reciprocal action against French dairy products exported to Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I and my right hon. and hon. Friends protested very strongly to the French Government during the recent interference to our lamb export trade. I am glad to say that this interference has now ceased. The French authorities have undertaken to pay compensation for losses and damage done and have issued fresh and firm instructions to law enforcement authorities. We are continuing to watch the position carefully.

Dumping at Sea

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will prohibit the dumping of hazardous industrial waste in the North sea; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will prohibit the burning of hazardous industrial chemicals in the North sea ; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 provides that sea disposal or marine incineration may not take place except under the terms of a licence from the appropriate Government Department. Such licences are not issued unless scientific examination shows the operation in question to be acceptable in terms of its impact on the marine environment, the living resources it supports, and human health, and unless it conforms with the relevant international conventions.

Beef

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest cost of storing the beef surplus.

Mr. Gummer: The provision in the European Community budget for 1986 for the cost of storing beef is 264 million European currency units (about £192 million) for public storage and 105 million European currency units (about £76 million) for private storage.

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the most recent figure for the annual production and consumption of beef.

Mr. Gummer: In 1985 home-fed production of beef and veal in the United Kingdom was 1,121,000 tonnes and consumption of all forms of beef and veal, expressed on a carcase-weight equivalent basis was 1,231,000 tonnes.

Mr. Latham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on his policy regarding the continuation of the European Community variable beef premium; and what action he is taking in that regard.

Mr. Gummer: As part of this year's fixing decisions, the Council of Ministers agreed that the European Commission's proposals for reforming the beef regime should be studied further with a view to decisions being taken by 31 December 1986. The regulations governing the beef variable premium scheme were accordingly extended to that date. The Commission's proposal for changes to the beef regime include a Community-wide premium scheme which is intended to replace the variable premium. We are pressing the merits of a slaughter premium scheme in the negotiations which we intend to bring to a conclusion at the December meeting of the Agriculture Council if at all possible. The Commission has, however, undertaken to propose a continuation of the variable premium scheme, taking account of the budgetary situation, if changes to the regime are not agreed in time be brought into effect by the end of the year.

Mr. Latham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list the countries from which beef taken from cattle with hormone implants is still being imported into the United Kingdom; and what action he intends to take in that regard.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The United Kingdom at present has no restrictions on imports of beef from countries which permit the use of hormone growth promoters, excluding stilbenes and thyrostatic substances, for fattening animals.

From 1 January 1988 intro-Community trade in meat from implanted animals will be prohibited. The EC Commission will negotiate arrangements with non-Community countries to provide equivalent guarantees in respect of their meat exports to the EC by the same date.

Bovine Somatotrophin

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the effect of the introduction of bovine somatotrophin products to raise milk yields.

Mr. Gummer: The use of bovine somatotrophin to increase milk yields requires either an animal test certificate or a product licence under the Medicines Act 1968. If a product licence were applied for, evidence would have to be submitted as to safety (including the safety of consumers of milk) quality and efficacy.

Imports (Ireland)

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the existing agreement on agriculture imports from Ireland and the effect on United Kingdom producers.

Mr. Gummer: Matters of this kind, including arrangements for payment of the beef variable premium, are governed by Community legislation. There is no bilateral agreement with the Irish Republic.

Livestock Allowances

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will allow small milk producers to receive livestock allowances within the less-favoured areas in accordance with the European Economic Community structures directive.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We are currently reviewing the economic conditions in the hills and uplands, and in the light of that review we shall be determining hill livestock compensatory allowances for 1987. We shall be announcing the outcome as soon as possible.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Harris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many ex-Spanish fishing vessels are now registered in the United Kingdom; what was the total 12 months ago; and how many have been removed from the register in the same period.

Mr. Gummer: Currently, out of 15,301 United Kingdom fishing vessels, 50 ex-Spanish fishing vessels are registered in the United Kingdom; a further 23 ex-United Kingdom vessels on the register are beneficially owned by Spanish interests.

At 17 November 1985, 48 ex-Spanish vessels had United Kingdom registration in addition to six ex-United Kingdom vessels which were beneficially owned in Spain. During the period 24 vessels have been removed from the register, but of this total, 11 have subsequently been reregistered.

Mr. Harris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the Spanish fishing vessels which have been arrested in United Kingdom waters giving *(a)* their home ports, *(b)* where cases against them were heard and *(c)* what penalties were imposed since the information given to the hon. Member for St. Ives on 14 March 1985, *Official Report*, columns *263-64*.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is set out in the table; it includes details of Spanish vessels prosecuted and found guilty up to 17 November 1986.

Name of vessel	*Home port*	*Where case held*	*Penalty*
1985			
Almiketxu	Pasajes	Falmouth	£500 plus costs
Capredi Dos	Gijon	Falmouth	£8,500 plus forfeiture of excess by catch and £350 costs.

Name of vessel	Home port	Where case held	Penalty
Monte-Maigmo	Vigo	Falmouth	£35,000 plus £700 costs. A prison sentence of 12 months in default of payment of the fine was also imposed.
Elife	Gijon	Falmouth	£10,000 plus costs.
Ria De Aldan	Vigo	Falmouth	£6,000 plus forfeiture of by catch and £375 costs.
Legorpe	Qudarroa	Falmouth	£35,000 and £375 costs.
Jose Cesareo	Vigo	Falmouth	£4,000 plus confiscation of net and undersized fish.
1986			
Rio Oitysen	Vigo	Falmouth	£15,000 plus £425 costs.
Toki Ali	Qudarroa	Falmouth	£20,000 plus £935 costs.
Promontoro	Santander	Falmouth	£2,000 plus retention of prohibited species and £350 costs.
Sargo	Vigo	Stornoway	£11,150.
Fato Sillero	Vigo	Stornoway	£6,900.
Mikel	Pasajes	Stornoway	£1,500 plus £245 value of illegal part of catch.
Olabarria	Pasajes	Cambleton	£2,500 plus £543 value of illegal part of catch.
Vera Cruz Segundo	Pasajes	Stornoway	£12,600.
Playa De Aldens	Vigo	Falmouth	£3,000 plus prohibited catch and £350 costs.
Vilarino	Vigo	Falmouth	£3,200 plus £350 costs.
Las Nives	Vigo	Plymouth	£750 plus £510 costs.
Foral	Marin	Falmouth	£2,650 plus £350 costs.
Uricen Uno	Pasajes	Falmouth	£2,750 plus £350 costs.

Departmental Initiatives

Mr. Silvester asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list initiatives by his Department which have been of benefit specifically to the north-east, north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside regions since 1979.

Mr. Jopling: My Department's concerns are to foster efficient and competitive agriculture, fisheries, food and drink manufacturing and distribution industries, to meet the needs of consumers and to ensure a reasonable balance between the interests of agriculture, the economic and social interests of rural areas, the conservation of the countryside and the promotion of its enjoyment by the public. This includes the very wide range of activities for the benefit of all parts of the country, from the provision and administration of support arrangements to disease eradication programmes and advice. There are a number of initiatives which have been of particular benefit to the regions listed. For example, these contain over half the holdings eligible for permanent special aids for less-favoured areas following the 22 per cent. extension of these areas negotiated in 1984. Other initiatives include exceptional weather aid in 1985, aid this year to compensate for losses arising from Chernobyl contamination, contributing to the Countryside Commission's Operation Groundwork, the launch to date of over 30 schemes approved under the farm and countryside initiative in England providing over 760 places for unemployed people, and specific flood alleviation projects. Also, a new animal health centre was opened at Barton Hall in 1985 providing services to the north-west and Yorkshire and we are establishing an environmentally sensitive area in the Pennine dales. Further, over £11 million or over three quarters of payments under schemes to restructure the fishing industry introduced in late 1983 have benefited these regions.

Sheepmeat

Mr. Latham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on his policy regarding the continuance of the European Community sheepmeat regime; and what action he is taking in that regard.

Mr. Gummer: The Community's sheepmeat regime benefits our producers and consumers through the provision of the annual premium payments on ewes and the variable premium system. The arrangements applied in the United Kingdom avoid the build-up of surplus production by enabling consumers to benefit from lower prices while providing the premium payments to make up producers' returns as necessary. At the same time the provide for continued import of lamb, especially from New Zealand, while our own industry can take advantage of its ability to supply export markets. We shall continue to resist changes which would be detrimental to United Kingdom interests.

Pesticides

Mr. Latham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on his proposals for the implementation within the county of Leicestershire of the Pesticides Regulations 1986; how many inspections of testers will be needed before the operative starting date; how many inspectors have been appointed; and how many of them are full-time.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The effective implementation of the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 is being achieved in stages. The regulations began to come into effect on 6 October and further measures will apply between now and 1 January 1989.

To assist implementation, we have embarked upon a policy of education allied to enforcement. My Department has so far issued an explanatory leaflet about the new controls and, in conjunction with the Health and Safety Executive, the book "Pesticides 1986" listing all the approved products. We have also prepared and circulated in draft codes of practice on the storage, supply and sale of pesticides and on their use and plan to bring these into effect next year.

For the purposes of enforcement in England, I have so far authorised 72 officers from my Department to enforce part III of the Act; 11 authorised ADAS officers are located in the Ministry's midlands and western region, which includes Leicestershire, and two of them deal with that county on a day-to-day basis.

Looking ahead to more comprehensive enforcement in the future I have invited the Health and Safety Commission to make the necessary arrangements and details of the relevant agency agreement are under consideration by them. My officials are also at the moment consulting the local authority associations, with a view to authorising local authority trading standards and environmental health officers to enforce part III of the Act at an early date.

Potatoes

Mr. Gale asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tonnes of potatoes were exported from the United Kingdom to South America in 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Gummer: A total of 11 tonnes of potatoes were exported to South America during this period, 5 tonnes in 1984-85 and 6 tonnes in 1985-86. The destination of both consignments was Venezuela.

Mr. Gale asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations the Potato Review Group has received from the Potato Growers Action Group, the Processed Vegetable Growers Association and the Federation of Agricultural Co-operatives (UK) Ltd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: All these organisations contributed to the review of potato support arrangements carried out in 1983-84. In announcing new support measures to enter effect on 1 July 1985 the Government made it clear that there would be a further review before the end of five years — that is to say, before 30 June 1990. Work on this second review has not yet begun, and no representations have so far been invited or received.

Monetary Compensatory Amounts

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 20 November, whether any monetary co-efficients fall to be applied to monetary compensatory amounts in respect of sales of beef under regulation 2670/88 and sales of butter under regulation 765/86; and what amount is involved in pence per pound.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when regulation 765/86 was considered by the management committee of the EEC's common agricultural policy; which nations fail to benefit from the special arrangements provided by the regulation; which nations have so far benefited from sales under the regulation; and how the representative of Her Majesty's Government on that committee voted on the regulation.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Badgers

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in implementing Professor Dunnet's recommendations on future research in relation to the problem of badgers and bovine tuberculosis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In the light of Professor Dunnet's recommendations, and with the benefit of advice from the consultative panel, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales and I are now able to outline the broad programme of future research on badgers and bovine tuberculosis that will be undertaken by the agricultural departments. In determining that programme we have had to take into account the costs and objectives of each possible research project and the likelihood that particular projects will yield useful results within a reasonable time scale.

Like Professor Dunnet, we see as a first priority the development of a diagnostic test for tuberculosis in the living badger and I am therefore taking steps to strengthen the team at the Ministry's central veterinary laboratory (CVL) in order to accelerate work on this project. We are hopeful that parallel research also being conducted at the CVL may lead to an improved diagnostic test for the disease in cattle.

My right hon. Friend and I see as a second priority the continuation of field studies on badger biology and the transmission of tuberculosis being undertaken at the Ministry's Gloucestershire study area and we have therefore approved the continuation of these studies. We have also given careful consideration to the suggestion that there is a need for further field study sites but are bound to say that, having weighed the considerable costs against the possible benefits from such sites, at this stage we accept Professor Dunnet's view that they could not be justified.

However, despite the long-term nature of the study, we believe that the Ministry's collaborative programme of work with the Middlesex hospital into a possible badger vaccine should continue and we are making resources available for that purpose. We intend to take up Professor Dunnet's suggestion that further modelling and statistical studies should be undertaken with a view to increasing both our understanding of the epidemiology of tuberculosis and the likely effect of alternative control strategies. We also intend that the national survey of badger carcases for tuberculosis should continue in order to monitor the incidence of disease in the badger population.

Overall we are convinced of the need to maintain an effective and wide-ranging research programme on bovine tuberculosis in the hope that through it we will find a more selective means of badger control or, if possible, a means to tackle this serious disease without the need for any form of badger control. The research programme will be kept under continuous review with the consultative panel and details will continue to be published in the Ministry's annual reports on bovine tuberculosis in badgers.

Pressure Stock Licences

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will investigate the extent to which pressure

stock licences are being bought in the Plymouth area and transferred to Spanish fishing vessels; and if he will make a statement about the practice of transferring pressure stock licences from British boats to boats belonging to other countries but registered in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986]: I must emphasise that in exercising Ministers' licensing powers under the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967 we are obliged to avoid any discrimination between different categories of vessels on the British fishing vessels register which cannot clearly be justified in terms of United Kingdom and Community law.

I am, however, concerned at the increasing pressure on a number of whitefish stocks subject to quotas in ICES area VII, which includes the Channel and other western waters. This situation could be seriously exacerbated as a result of the transfer of pressure stock licences from smaller vessels to larger ones. It is for this reason that I announced on 21 November an immediate moratorium on the transfer of area VII whitefish pressure stock licences from vessels below 80 ft in length to vessels over 80 ft. I shall review this before the end of the year.

In addition, we will be looking very carefully at the circumstances of all applications for pressure stock licence transfers in the light of the problems to which I have referred.

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to restrict the issue of pressure stock licences to British nationals fishing from British boats.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986]: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) on 9 December 1985, at column *482*, in which I announced new licence conditions for vessels fishing against United Kingdom quotas, to ensure that the vessels have a real economic link with this country. Some of these conditions are currently subject to challenge in the courts, but I am giving serious consideration to such enforcement action as is open to us. It would be inappropriate to comment further at this stage.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Erith and Queen Mary's Hospitals

9. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to visit Erith hospital or Queen Mary's hospital, Sidcup.

Mr. Newton: Yes. I intend to visit Bexley health authority early in the new year and will seek to include Erith hospital and Queen Mary's hospital, Sidcup in the programme.

Warnock Report

12. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Government will be taking action to implement the recommendations of the Warnock report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if the Government have yet drawn up any proposals to deal with the contents of the Warnock report; and if he will make a stateent;

(2) if the Government have any plans to introduce legislation proposed by the Warnock report; and if he will make a statement;

Mr. Maclennon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to regulate the conduct of work in the fields of human fertilisation and embryology.

Mr. Newton: The Government intend to publish before the end of the year a consultation document inviting views about those issues on which the Warnock committee thought legislation was necessary or desirable, many of which have not yet been the subject of public debate in the same way as the Report's proposals concerning embryo research. The Government's aim is to bring forward legislation in the next Parliament, which will include alternative draft clauses on embryo research so that the House would have a clear opportunity to resolve this matter on a free vote.

Abortions

14. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of abortions carried out after 28 weeks.

Mr. Newton: After 28 weeks' gestation, the delivery of a baby by medical or surgical means is classed as either a still or a live birth. In neither case, does the information collected centrally permit a comprehensive analysis of the numbers resulting from induced as opposed to spontaneous delivery.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the number of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967 upon women who are normally residents of Northern Ireland in each of the years since the implementation of that Act; and if he will state in each of those years the numbers of those abortions which were performed in emergency to save the life of the mother.

Mr. Newton: The information is shown in the table. None of these abortions was notified as having been performed in emergency to save the life of the pregnant woman.

Number of notifications of legal abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 to women usually resident in Northern Ireland, 1968-1985

England and Wales

Year	*Number of notifications*	*Year*	*Number of notifications*
1968	36	1977	1,244
1969	96	1978	1,311
1970	199	1979	1,425
1971	648	1980	1,365
1972	775	1981	1,441
1973	1,007	1982	1,510
1974	1,092	1983	1,460
1975	1,115	1984	1,530
1976	1,142	1985	1,637

Coronary Heart Disease

16. **Mr. Coombs** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to seek to reduce the incidence of coronary heart disease among the Asian communities.

Mrs. Currie: This country has one of the worst rates of premature death from coronary heart disease in the world.

We are determined to improve the situation for all our people. We are planning a major heart disease prevention campaign, to be launched next spring, directed at all sections of the community.

Severe Weather Payments

17. **Mr. Andrew Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will reconsider his decision to include a £500 capital limit in the criteria of eligibility for exceptionally severe weather payments.

Mr. Major: No. The £500 capital rule is in line with that for other single payments.

25. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the new severe weather payments will be made to all on supplementary benefit.

Mr. Major: Those who will be eligible, subject to the normal £500 capital rule, will be householders where there is a member of the family as assessed for supplementary benefit purposes who is aged 65 or over, chronically sick or disabled, or aged under two.

35. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total cost of the payments made last winter under the severe weather payments scheme.

38. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many payments were made last year under the severe weather payments scheme.

Mr. Lyell: The information is not yet available. Local offices have been asked to make a return so that the number of payments and total amount paid can be calculated.

39. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has made of the number of payments of severe weather allowance which would have been made in 1985-86 using the new criteria recently proposed by the Government.

Mr. Major: It is not possible with hindsight to make a valid estimate since amounts paid would depend on claimants' capital holding and take-up in the affected area.

53. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the new scheme for severe weather payments.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), on 20 November at columns *326-27*.

Domestic Assistance

18. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost of additional weekly payments for domestic assistance in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lyell: About £600,000.

Departmental Staff (Teesside)

19. **Mr. Tinn** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he has to increase the staffing at his Department's offices on Teesside.

Mr. Lyell: As announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 7 March 1986 a full review of staffing levels is currently in progress, together with a review of social security tasks. The results of these two reviews will be taken into account in deciding manpower requirements of the social security organisation after April 1987.

Pending the results of these reviews more than 5,000 additional staff above the number produced by the agreed complementing arrangements have been added for the current year, at a cost of over £100 million. The offices serving the Teesside area have received their share of these additional posts and no further additions are envisaged until the results of the reviews are known.

Claimants (Penalties)

20. **Mr. Lord** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the penalties suffered by claimants who fail to sign on at the correct time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: The law provides that where a person makes a late claim for unemployment benefit he cannot receive payment for days before he claimed unless he can show good cause for claiming late. We receive occasional representations from or on behalf of claimants who are not happy about the way the time limits affect their claims but I am not aware of any general dissatisfaction.

Disabled Persons

21. **Mr. Lilley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will publish the findings of his Department's survey of disabled people.

Mr. Major: Publication of the full results is expected in 1988.

Solihull District General Hospital

22. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give an estimated completion date for the new Solihull district general hospital.

Mrs. Currie: Building work on Solihull's new district general hospital is due to start in September 1988 and is expected to be completed by April 1992.

Smoking

23. **Mr. Sims** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received proposing legislation to reduce the incidence of smoking.

Mrs. Currie: A total of 60 representations have been received since 1 April when the current voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry came into effect.

Southend Hospital

24. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many letters he has now received from the general public about the proposal of the North East Thames regional health authority to close the radiotherapy unit at Southend hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We have now received 13 letters which have been referred by hon. Members, together with about 166 letters direct from members of the general public. We shall take into account all representations received if we

are required to make a final decision on the proposal to close the radiotherapy unit at Southend following public consultation.

Pharmaceutical Products (Packaging)

26. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek powers to require pharmaceutical manufacturers to pack products in tamper evident containers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We do not at this stage believe that additional powers are needed. The majority of proprietary medicinal products available without prescription are already in tamper evident packaging.

We are currently in touch with the trade associations concerned as to how tamper evident packaging might best be extended to all medicinal products and within what timescale. We have at present no reason to believe that legislation will be necessary to achieve this.

Single Payment Allowances

27. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received regarding single payment allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: We regularly receive correspondence and representations from individuals, organisations and right hon. and hon. Members, covering all aspects of social security benefits, including supplementary benefit single payments. On 23 October 1986 the hon. Member wrote to my right hon. Friend about a particular case involving a single payment for repairs to property; and I replied on 17 November 1986.

Child Benefit

28. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether it is proposed to cease issuing forms for claiming child benefit to all mothers on the birth of their child.

Mr. Major: No. The ending of non-contributory maternity grant will lead to revised arrangements for the issue of child benefit claim forms. They will be issued by local social security offices upon request.

Wessex Regional Health Authority

29. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last met the chairman of the Wessex regional health authority; and what was discussed.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend meets all regional chairmen every two months to discuss a wide range of issues. The last such meeting was on 19 November 1986.

Hospital Waiting Lists

30. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about the length of hospital waiting lists.

Mr. Newton: We receive regular representations from hon. Members, members of the public and others about both waiting lists and waiting times. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, has launched a drive designed to make a major impact on the problem over the next three years.

Artificial Limbs

31. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are waiting for artificial limbs to be *(a)* fitted or *(b)* repaired or adjusted.

Mr. Major: The artificial limb service does not operate a waiting list. As soon as a patient is referred to one of the Department of Health and Social Security artificial limb and appliance centres and following medical examination and prescription, arrangements are made for the supply of an artificial limb or limbs. Duplicate artificial limbs are generally provided to cover the eventuality of the need for repairs or other adjustments to the limbs in use. Once provided with their prostheses, patients are then given an on-demand service for repair and re-adjustments which vary greatly in the amount of work required; the majority are completed on the day. At any point in time approximately 9,000 artificial limbs are being constructed (4,500) or repaired (4,500).

In asking this question the hon. Member may have in mind the effect on patient services of the J. E. Hanger industrial dispute. Since the start of this dispute 78 patients have had their appointments postponed, several of which have now been re-instated. A larger number have experienced delay. Arrangements have been made to identify these countrywide and where necessary steps are being taken to deal with them in conjunction with the company. Additionally, I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) on 17 November at column 75.

Services (Privatisation)

32. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health authorities have put one or more services out to competitive tender; and if he will estimate the aggregate annual savings thereby achieved.

Mr. Fowler: Health authorities are continuing to make considerable progress in improving the cost effectiveness of their domestic cleaning, catering and laundry services. At 30 September 1986 virtually all health authorities had put some of these services out to tender resulting in savings of almost £73 million a year. This compares with savings of £29 million from the policy of competitive tendering only twelve months ago. Private contractors have been awarded a total of 173 contracts saving £24·6 million. In-house organisations have secured 773 tenders saving £48·1 million. The resources released are retained by health authorities and are now making a substantial contribution to the improvement of patient care services.

Hip Replacements

33. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of patients who have been awaiting hip replacement operations for more than six months.

Mr. Newton: I regret that I cannot provide my hon. Friend with information in precisely the form he seeks. Information is not collected centrally on the intended method of treatment of cases on in-patients waiting lists. However, for patients discharged in 1984, the latest year for which figures are available centrally, the interval between the date the patient was placed on the waiting list and the date of admission was approximately six months

or more in an estimated 8,840 cases admitted from the waiting list for total hip replacements and other arthroplasty of hip operations in National Health Service hospitals in England. This represents 23 per cent. of the estimated total of 37,970 cases undergoing hip operations.

Haemodialysis Units

34. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans regional health authorities have for the introduction of self-care haemodialysis units in hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: The plans submitted by regional health authorities to the Department do not include precise details as to how haemodialysis services are to be provided.

Cervical Cancer

36. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has for extending the scope of cervical cancer screening.

Mrs. Currie: The Government are committed to cutting death rates from cervical cancer by improving the effectiveness of the screening programme for all women. In January this year all health authorities were required to give priority to improving their cervical cancer screening programmes, including implementing computerised call and recall systems within two years, and ensuring that laboratories avoid backlogs. All women who are or have been sexually active should be regularly screened for cervical cancer.

Our guidance to health authorities within this framework is currently under review.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of deaths due to cervical cancer by *(a)* regional health authority and *(b)* district health authority for any available year post 1979.

Mrs. Currie: Figures for 1980-84 inclusive are published in Table 4 of "Mortality Statistics: area, series DH5" numbers 7-11, copies of which may be found in the Library. Information for 1985 is shown in the table:

Number of deaths with underlying cause of death as malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri (ICD(9) 180) by area of usual residence of woman: Wales, Regional Health Authority (RHA) and District Health Authority (DHA)

1985 *England and Wales*

Area of usual residence	*Number of deaths*
Northern RHA	147
Hartlepool DHA	4
North Tees DHA	6
South Tees DHA	17
East Cumbria DHA	9
South Cumbria DHA	11
West Cumbria DHA	10
Darlington DHA	5
Durham DHA	11
North West Durham DHA	1
South West Durham DHA	3
Northumberland DHA	19
Gateshead DHA	10
Newcastle DHA	12
North Tyneside DHA	10
South Tyneside DHA	7
Sunderland DHA	12
Yorkshire RHA	177
Hull DHA	25
East Yorkshire DHA	10
Grimsby DHA	9
Scunthorpe DHA	11
Northallerton DHA	6
York DHA	10
Scarborough DHA	2
Harrogate DHA	6
Bradford DHA	15
Airedale DHA	7
Calderdale DHA	11
Huddersfield DHA	7
Dewsbury DHA	10
Leeds Western DHA	12
Leeds Eastern DHA	17
Wakefield DHA	11
Pontefract DHA	8
Trent RHA	191
North Derbyshire DHA	18
Southern Derbyshire DHA	17
Leicestershire DHA	34
North Lincolnshire DHA	16
South Lincolnshire DHA	15
Bassetlaw DHA	—
Central Nottinghamshire DHA	5
Nottingham DHA	25
Barnsley DHA	7
Doncaster DHA	10
Rotherham DHA	14
Sheffield DHA	30
East Anglian RHA	59
Cambridge DHA	8
Peterborough DHA	5
West Suffolk DHA	4
East Suffolk DHA	13
Norwich DHA	18
Great Yarmouth and Waveney DHA	5
West Norfolk and Wisbech DHA	3
Huntingdon DHA	3
North West Thames RHA	91
North Bedfordshire DHA	8
South Bedfordshire DHA	13
North Hertfordshire DHA	4
East Hertfordshire DHA	8
North West Hertfordshire DHA	9
South West Hertfordshire DHA	6
Barnet DHA	6
Harrow DHA	2
Hillingdon DHA	4
Hounslow and Spelthorne DHA	5
Ealing DHA	7
Brent DHA	7
Paddington and North Kensington DHA	2
Riverside DHA from 1.4.85	10
North East Thames RHA	130
Basildon and Thurrock DHA	7
Mid Essex DHA	5
North East Essex DHA	11
West Essex DHA	16
Southend DHA	9
Barking, Havering and Brentwood DHA	12
Hampstead DHA	6
Bloomsbury DHA	8
Islington DHA	8
City and Hackney DHA	5
Newham DHA	6
Tower Hamlets DHA	6
Enfield DHA	8
Haringey DHA	7
Redbridge DHA	6
Waltham Forest DHA	10

Area of usual residence	Number of deaths
South East Thames RHA	123
Brighton DHA	11
Eastbourne DHA	10
Hastings DHA	12
South East Kent DHA	15
Canterbury and Thanet DHA	7
Dartford and Gravesham DHA	10
Maidstone DHA	5
Medway DHA	7
Tunbridge Wells DHA	5
Bexley DHA	7
Greenwich DHA	7
Bromley DHA	5
West Lambeth DHA	4
Camberwell DHA	10
Lewisham and North Southwark DHA	8
South West Thames RHA	86
North West Surrey DHA	5
West Surrey and North East Hampshire DHA	10
South West Surrey DHA	7
Mid Surrey DHA	4
East Surrey DHA	3
Chichester DHA	8
Mid Downs DHA	6
Worthing DHA	7
Croydon DHA	8
Kingston and Esher DHA	5
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton DHA	9
Wandsworth DHA	4
Merton and Sutton DHA	10
Wessex RHA	92
East Dorset DHA	22
West Dorset DHA	7
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire DHA	16
Southampton and South West Hampshire DHA	14
Winchester DHA	5
Basingstoke and North Hampshire DHA	3
Salisbury DHA	4
Swindon DHA	8
Bath DHA	8
Isle of Wight DHA	5
Oxford RHA	73
East Berkshire DHA	14
West Berkshire DHA	18
Aylesbury Vale DHA	1
Wycombe DHA	4
Milton Keynes DHA	1
Kettering DHA	10
Northampton DHA	13
Oxfordshire DHA	12
South Western RHA	129
Bristol and Weston DHA	16
Frenchay DHA	13
Southmead DHA	9
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly DHA	15
Exeter DHA	14
North Devon DHA	10
Plymouth DHA	10
Torbay DHA	13
Cheltenham and District DHA	7
Gloucester DHA	11
Somerset DHA	11
West Midlands RHA	185
Bromsgrove and Redditch DHA	1
Herefordshire DHA	6
Kidderminster and District DHA	3
Worcester and District DHA	—
Shropshire DHA	17
Mid Staffordshire DHA	12
North Staffordshire DHA	20
South East Staffordshire DHA	6
Rugby DHA	1
North Warwickshire DHA	9
South Warwickshire DHA	8
Central Birmingham DHA	5
East Birmingham DHA	13
North Birmingham DHA	7
South Birmingham DHA	8
West Birmingham DHA	9
Coventry DHA	5
Dudley DHA	13
Sandwell DHA	12
Solihull DHA	4
Walsall DHA	15
Wolverhampton DHA	11
Mersey RHA	148
Chester DHA	9
Crewe DHA	9
Halton DHA	8
Macclesfield DHA	12
Warrington DHA	15
Liverpool DHA	31
St. Helens and Knowsley DHA	30
Southport and Formby DHA	8
South Sefton DHA	8
Wirral DHA	18
North Western RHA	183
Lancaster DHA	5
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde DHA	17
Preston DHA	10
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley DHA	19
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale DHA	8
West Lancashire DHA	5
Chorley and South Ribble DHA	10
Bolton DHA	11
Bury DHA	6
North Manchester DHA	9
Central Manchester DHA	—
South Manchester DHA	7
Oldham DHA	10
Rochdale DHA	11
Salford DHA	12
Stockport DHA	12
Tameside and Glossop DHA	9
Trafford DHA	8
Wigan DHA	14
Wales	139
Clwyd DHA	16
East Dyfed DHA	19
Pembrokeshire DHA	5
Gwent DHA	14
Gwynedd DHA	13
Mid Glamorgan DHA	31
Powys DHA	6
South Glamorgan DHA	19
West Glamorgan DHA	16

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place the regional and district health authority reports on cervical cancer in the Library.

Mrs. Currie: Regional health authorities' "outturn reports" to the Department for 1985-86, which in turn are based on district health authority reports, cover a wide range of issues and are not intended for publication. The latest available information on the position on cervical cancer as at 31 March 1986, based on the information in regions, outturn reports, has already been published in my previous replies to the hon. Member and to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson).

AIDS

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many haemophiliacs tested for HIV have proved positive; and what proportion this represents of haemophiliacs receiving blood products from the National Blood Transfusion Service.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 November 1986, c. 78]: The most recent figures available show that:

Two thousand two hundred and twenty eight patients with Haemophilia A have been tested and 902 have been found with HIV antibody positive (40·5 per cent.)

Three hundred and eighty six patients with Haemophilia B have been tested and 26 have been found HIV antibody positive (6·7 per cent.)

Three hundred and twenty seven patients with von Willebrand's disease have been tested and nine have been found HIV antibody positive (2·7 per cent.)

No comparable figures are yet routinely available to demonstrate the absence of HIV infection in haemophiliacs treated exclusively with heat treated products whether made commercially or by the National Health Service.

Northern Region (New Hospitals)

37. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much has been spent on new hospital schemes in the Northern region since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: The information is not available in precisely the form requested. I understand, however, that the Northern regional health authority's total expenditure, excluding joint finance monies, on all capital schemes during the period 1 April 1979 to 31 March 1986 was some £268,708,000.

This figure includes expenditure on the following hospital schemes costing over £1 million which were started on site between 1 April 1979 and 31 March 1986:

Project scheme	*Approved tender figure* £	*Contract dates*		*Actual or estimated completion*
		Start	*Complete*	
Blyth community hospital and health centre	4,211,371	10 December 1984	10 June 1987	10 June 1987 E
Fenham blood transfusion service centre	3,537,500	31 May 1983	30 June 1985	30 June 1985 A
Freeman hospital	2,865,079	4 March 1985	4 March 1987	31 August 1987 E
Furness general scheme 1 phase 2	1,496,159	8 December 1980	7 December 1982	24 May 1983 A
Hartlepool DGH scheme 2 phase 1	4,886,628	26 January 1981	26 January 1984	24 May 1984 A
Hartlepool DGH scheme 3 phase 1	2,391,391	14 January 1985	14 April 1987	14 April 1987 E
Hartlepool DGH scheme 3 phase 4	1,900,440	14 November 1983	31 January 1985	31 January 1985 A
Jarrow community hospital	3,314,250	21 November 1983	20 May 1986	14 August 1986 A
Middlesbrough general hospital	1,565,825	9 September 1985	9 March 1987	9 March 1987 E
North Tyneside scheme 1 phase 1	10,364,538	14 April 1980	13 January 1984	13 December 1983 A
North Tyneside scheme 2 phase 1	4,137,500	7 January 1985	7 May 1987	7 May 1987 E
Queen Elizabeth Gateshead scheme 3 phase 1	6,139,179	1 September 1981	31 December 1984	26 April 1985 A
Queen Elizabeth Gateshead scheme 3 phase 2	1,762,698	10 January 1983	9 October 1984	9 October 1984 A
South Cleveland general scheme 2 phase 1B	6,154,060	28 May 1985	28 November 1987	12 December 1987 E
South Cleveland general scheme 2 phase 1C	1,034,004	9 December 1985	7 June 1987	7 June 1987 E
Number of schemes = 15 Total	55,760,622			

Note: All costs shown are capital costs only, excluding fees etc.

Skilled Staff

40. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase the number of skilled staff currently available in the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The number of skilled staff which health authorities employ is a matter for them to determine in the light of local circumstances. Their plans for the future, however, do show a continuing growth in the number of skilled staff and particularly in the area of direct patient care.

Cancer (Black Report)

41. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his Department's planning of studies to implement recommendations 1, 2 and 3 of the Black report on the incidence of cancer in West Cumbria.

Mrs. Currie: No. I have nothing to add to my replies to the hon. Member on 6 November, at columns *593-94*.

Mobility Allowance

42. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he gives to the medical adjudicating authorities about the assessment of claims for mobility allowances for patients suffering from conditions involving fluctuating conditions.

Mr. Major: Revised guidance notes for medical practitioners dealing with mobility allowance claims are in the course of preparation and contain the following information about the assessment of walking ability where a claimant has a fluctuating condition.

"Intermittent impairment of walking

Where a claimant's walking ability is only intermittently interrupted because of their physical condition, it is a question of degree and frequency whether this means they can be considered virtually unable to walk throughout any period for which an award might be made. For instance, if a claimant suffers from epilepsy or the effects of renal dialysis, you will need to consider whether the condition and its more continuous effects on walking ability (eg balance impairment, anaemia resulting in excessive tiredness, etc.) are so extreme as to render the claimant virtually unable to walk for most of the time".

AIDS

43. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend's speech to the House on 21 November at columns 801-10.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, for purposes of planning the future allocation of resources within the National Health Service, what epidemiological assumptions he is using in respect of the increasing incidence of acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have died of acquired immune deficiency syndrome, and in which health districts.

Mr. Newton: By mid-November 565 cases of AIDS in the United Kingdom had been reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre, of whom 284 had died. A breakdown of deaths on a regional basis is as follows:

	Numbers
Northern Region	12
Yorkshire	3
Trent	2
East Anglian	3
North West Thames	126
North East Thames	43
South East Thames	17
South West Thames	13
Wessex	9
Oxford	3
South Western	9
West Midlands	7
Mersey	7
North Western	12
Wales	7
Northern Ireland	2
Scotland	9

Community Hospitals

44. **Mr. Harvey** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many community hospitals have been opened in Britain since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: Comprehensive information is not available centrally in the form requested. Health building returns show that two community hospital schemes have been completed since 1979 and that nine more are due to be completed by 1989. This almost certainly underestimates the number of schemes planned or brought into use because

(a) full details of all health authority capital schemes costing between £1 million and £5 million have been collected centrally only since January 1986;

(b) community hospitals established by the adaption of existing premises with a capital cost of less than £1 million will not appear in health building returns.

My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales are responsible for community hospitals elsewhere in Great Britain.

Pensioners

45. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the changes in state support for pensioners in real terms as between 1979 and now.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Prestwich Hospital

46. **Mr. Sumberg** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received any representations in connection with the proposed shopping development at Prestwich hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: One on 30 October 1986, from my hon. Friend. North Western regional health authority has wide ranging plans to improve its services for mentally ill patients, in particular to develop community services.

North Western regional health authority and the district health authority concerned do not believe they need to retain all the land at Prestwich hospital to provide these services. Some land, they believe, should be sold and the proceeds re-invested in developing services to patients. They are therefore seeking outline planning permission for retail, leisure and housing use for some of the land. My hon. Friend may wish to take up any particular concerns with the regional health authority chairman or with Bury metropolitan district council, the planning authority concerned.

Invalid Care Allowance

47. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce measures to ensure that the invalid care allowance is paid to those widows and others who *(a)* do not currently qualify and *(b)* lose equivalent dependants benefits under existing arrangements.

Mr. Major: We have no plans to do so.

Health Authorities (Performance)

48. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to improve the monitoring of health authorities performance.

Mr. Newton: The Department monitors regional health authorities' performance in a range of ways including scrutiny of regions' strategies and annual short-term programmes and implementation report; statistical and financial returns, and performance indicators. These information sources have been used in annual accountability reviews between Ministers and regional chairmen, supplemented this year by performance reviews held between the National Health Service management board

and regional general managers. Next year we plan further developments to the review system. The introduction of new information systems for the National Health Service in April 1987 will also improve the timeliness and relevance of statistical returns, which in turn will assist the development of an improved performance indicator package.

NHS (Union Meetings)

49. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what subjects he expects to discuss at his next meeting with trade union representatives of people employed in the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: There are no immediate plans for such meetings at a national level. When Ministers meet trade union repesentatives at a local level, for example in the course of visits to National Health Service facilities, the subjects for discussion would be a matter for the local staff to determine.

Preventive Medicine

50. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps his Department is taking to encourage preventive medicine.

Mrs. Currie: The Government recognise the essential role preventive medicine has to play in improving the nation's health. There is a wide range of preventive activity including vaccination and immunisation, health screening, health education, genetic counselling and medical research. All regional health authorities were asked to include policies for prevention in their 10-year strategic plans and all have done so. Implementation of these policies is monitored through the regional review process. We are also expanding our links with the Faculty of Community Medicine and the Royal College of General Practitioners in the field of prevention.

Our particular concern over the high incidence of premature death and disability from coronary heart disease, the major contributor to premature death in Britain, has led us to prepare a major heart disease prevention campaign to be launched next spring. We have been at pains to involve health professionals at an early stage by a series of conferences and seminars.

Wrightington Hospital (Children's Ward)

51. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to make a decision about the future of the children's ward at Wrightington hospital, Lancashire.

Mrs. Currie: We hope to make an announcement shortly.

NHS (Expenditure)

52. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of spending on the National Health Service in 1986-87.

Mr. Newton: Spending on the National Health Service in Great Britain in 1986-87 is estimated to be £18,900 million, including the likely proceeds of National Health Service land sales. This represents an increase in real terms of 26 per cent. since 1978-79 and a growth in spending in real terms of 4·2 per cent. in the current year alone.

Unemployed Persons (Mortgage Interest)

54. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to announce his proposals with regard to mortgage interest payments for the newly unemployed.

Mr. Major: We shall be making an announcement as soon as our considerations are complete.

Residential Homes

55. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on the permitted scale of supplementary benefit available to residents in *(a)* private sector nursing homes and *(b)* private sector residential retirement homes.

Mr. Major: In the spring of this year the Government reviewed the supplementary benefit limits for private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes in the light of the findings of an extensive programme of monitoring and research. There was no evidence to support a general increase in all of the limits but it was decided to make improvements in some areas. These were effective from 28 July. The changes were:

An increase in the basic limit for the elderly from £120 to £125.

A new limit for the very dependent elderly of £140.

A London premium of £17·50 on top of the appropriate limit for people in all homes in the greater London area.

An increase of up to £10 for people whose benefit is transitionally protected to meet increases in fees.

The revised schedule of limits is set out in the table.

Residential Care and Nursing Home Limits from 28 July 1986

	General national limit £	*London limit* £
Residential care category		
Elderly	125	142·50
Very dependant or blind elderly	140	157·50
Mentally ill	130	147·50
Drug or alcohol dependant	130	147·50
Mentally handicapped	150	167·50
Physically disabled:		
Disabled under pension age	180	197·50
Disabled over pension age	125	142·50
Very dependant elderly	140	157·50
Others	125	142·50
Nursing home category		
Mentally ill	180	197·50
Drug or alcohol dependant	180	197·50
Mentally handicapped	200	217·50
Terminal ill	230	247·50
Physically disabled:		
Disabled under pension age	230	247·50
Disabled over pension age	170	187·50
Others (including elderly)	170	187·50

Drugs (Over-prescribing)

56. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent steps he has taken to reduce over-prescribing of National Health Service drugs by doctors.

Mr. Newton: We are co-operating with the medical profession in initiatives to encourage more effective and economic prescribing by general medical practitioners, including encouraging doctors not to prescribe when no

medicine is necessary. Our plans are outlined in the "Primary Care Discussion Document" published earlier this year, which is currently the subject of widespread public consultation.

Hospitals (Manchester)

57. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received concerning hospital services in Greater Manchester.

Mrs. Currie: Since 1 October there have been five parliamentary questions, 30 letters from hon. Members and 55 letters from members of the general public.

Mentally Handicapped Children

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many mentally handicapped children are currently in local authority care; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not available centrally on the numbers of mentally handicapped children who have been received into or committed to local authority care since mental handicap in itself is not a reason for the admission of a child into such care.

However, in 1985 there were 1,500 mentally handicapped children in England under the age of 16 in local authority residential accommodation or in local authority sponsored places in voluntary or private homes or in private households. We do not know how many of those children had been formally placed in care.

NHS (Civil Defence Planning)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the existing guidance on civil defence planning in the National Health Service currently being revised.

Mrs. Currie: The Department invited comment from health authorities and other bodies on a draft consultation document issued in June 1985 about civil defence planning in the National Health Service. Having regard to the comments received, officials prepared revised guidance which has recently been forwarded to Ministers for consideration.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to include the new increased 13-week exclusion period of disallowance from benefit for industrial misconduct and so on as a period of exclusion from the one-year's entitlement to unemployment benefit.

Mr. Major: Section 18(4) of the Social Security Act, 1975 provides regulation-making powers to treat days of disentitlement or disqualification for receiving unemployment benefit as days of entitlement for the purpose of determining whether a person has exhausted his 312 days of benefit. The application of this power in connection with days of disqualification under section 20 of the Act in cases of voluntary unemployment, industrial misconduct and so on, is currently being considered.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy that any young person who is completing an A-level or other part-time further education course and who completes the declaration form to say he or she is genuinely prepared to withdraw from the course should an employment opportunity arise, will continue to be regarded as available for work and entitled to benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The current rules governing part-time study by people who are receiving supplementary benefit as unemployed are: the course must not be designated full-time by the institution and must not require more than 21 hours per week of supervised study; a qualifying period of three months in receipt of benefit or on a YTS course must be completed; and the claimant must be willing to terminate the course immediately if a suitable vacancy becomes available. We have no plans to change this policy.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many severely disabled people are estimated to be currently receiving additional payments with their supplementary benefit because of their disability which total more than the illustrative rates which the severely disabled will receive under the provisions of the Social Security Act.

Mr. Major: I refer the right hon. Member to tables 1A and 1B, and 10A and 10B of the technical annex to the White Paper, "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691) and to pages 9-14 of the annex which explain the basis on which the tables were constructed. The tables illustrate the effect of income support on sick and disabled people eligible for the disability premium, as compared to their entitlement to supplementary benefit, including additional payments.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest estimate of the number of people claiming supplementary benefit board and lodging allowances.

Mr. Lyell: The latest available information on numbers of boarders is from the "Annual Statistical Enquiry" at December 1984. This shows 164,000 supplementary benefit claimants in ordinary board and lodging and hostels and 42,000 in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes.

Medicines (Information)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money is spent by his Department on providing doctors with impartial information about medicines; what restrictions his Department places on the amount drug companies can spend on promoting drugs to general practitioners; and if he will express the amount allowed in terms of the amount per general practitioner.

Mr. Newton: In the financial year 1985-86 almost £2 million was spent by the Department on providing impartial information about drugs to professional staff working in the National Health Service. This expenditure is not broken down by professional group. It excludes the cost of advice given by the Committee on Safety of Medicines to doctors and also the arrangements under the Medicines Act for regulating the prescribing information to doctors by pharmaceutical companies. In addition,

health authorities provide their own drug information services. It is not possible to separate the cost of such services from the total pharmaceutical services provided by health authorities.

Restrictions on drug promotion costs are not related to promotion to general practitioners only. They relate to all drugs provided to the NHS for prescriptions by doctors and dentists, whether in hospital or in general practice. The formula used has a differential effect for different companies but the overall limitation is 9 per cent. of the total NHS drugs bill in any year.

Drugs (Product Licences)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the new drugs given product licences in each of the last five years were new chemical entities.

Mr. Newton: The figures for 1981 are not available in a comparable form. The published figures for the four most recent years are as follows:

	Total product licences granted	*Total product licences containing a new active substance*
1982	934	49
1983	783	26
1984	641	9
1985	649	19

Differences between the years in the number of licences containing a new active substance must be treated with caution since the year in which the licence was granted may be dependent on arbitrary factors and since the number of licences may depend on the number of dosage forms needed, and so on.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people are in receipt of the higher rate attendance allowance; and what percentage live on their own;

(2) how many people are currently in receipt of the higher rate attendance allowance and are living alone; and for how many of these people there is someone receiving an invalid care allowance in respect of that person's care needs.

Mr. Major: At 31 March 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, the estimated number of people in receipt of attendance allowance at the higher rate is 222,000. It is not known how many live on their own. Information is not kept for either attendance allowance or invalid care allowance to indicate whether an attendance allowance beneficiary lives alone.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have been denied the severe disablement allowance because of the 10-in-20-years test; and how many of these were members of service families.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hospital Drug Formularies

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospitals in the National Health Service are known to operate a drug formulary system; how many district health authorities have a system which applies to all their hospitals; how many regional health authorities have a policy on hospital drug formularies; and what is the policy of his Department on the use of such formularies.

Mr. Newton: Figures giving the number of hospitals using drug formularies and their distribution within the National Health Service are not held centrally. The introduction of a hospital drug formulary is a matter for district health authorities in the light of local circumstances.

To promote the rational and economical use of drug therapy the Department has encouraged the formation of local multidisciplinary drug and therapeutic committees. In appropriate circumstances the use of hospital drug formularies is one of the means these committees adopt to achieve this objective.

Drugs

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of drug substances available on the British market; and what is the minimum and maximum number that are on hospital formularies.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. Medicines may contain single active substances or combinations and each strength of each dosage form is licensed individually. Not all licensed products will necessarily be available on the market at any point in time. As to the maximum and minimum number that are on hospital formularies, I regret that this information is not collected centrally.

Severe Disablement Premium

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the adequacy of the provision for a severe disablement premium in the Social Security Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Since Royal Assent we have received representations from the main organisations representing disabled people. I aim to meet them shortly to discuss our proposals for the severe disability premium.

Patients (Waiting Lists)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish a list of district health authorities in rank order according to the number of patients waiting for urgent treatment;

(2) if he will categorise district health authorities according to whether the number of urgent cases waiting for treatment is *(a)* zero, *(b)* one to nine, *(c)* 10 to 99, *(d)* 100 to 999, *(e)* 1,000 to 1,999 and *(f)* 2,000 or over; and if he will explain the reasons for the variations in the numbers on the waiting lists.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is given in the table. There are many possible reasons for the variations between districts in the numbers of urgent cases on the

waiting list including the size and age structure of the population and differing local clinical judgments on what constitutes an urgent case.

District health authorities listed in order of the number of urgent cases on the in-patient waiting list at 31 March 1986

District health authority	*Number of urgent cases*	*Rank order*	*Category*
Bexley	0	1	
Chorley and South Ribble	0	1	
East Yorkshire	0	1	
Greenwich	0	1	
Huddersfield	0	1	
Hull	0	1	
North Tees	0	1	
North West Hertfordshire	0	1	
Northallerton	0	1	
Rugby	0	1	
Sandwell	0	1	
Scunthorpe	0	1	
Solihull	0	1	
South Bedfordshire	0	1	
South Tyneside	0	1	
South West Durham	0	1	
Southport and Formby	0	1	
Warrington	0	1	*no urgent cases*
Calderdale	1	19	
North Devon	1	19	
North Hertfordshire	1	19	
East Cumbria	2	22	
North Bedfordshire	2	22	
Dewsbury	4	24	
Halton	4	24	
North West Durham	4	24	
Darlington	5	27	
Bury	6	28	
Cheltenham	6	28	
Bromley	7	30	
Wycombe	7	30	
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	8	32	
East Hertfordshire	8	32	
Grimsby	8	32	
Harrow	8	32	
St. Helens and Knowsley	8	32	
Walsall	9	37	
York	9	37	*1–9*
Kidderminster and District	13	39	
South Cumbria	14	40	
South East Staffordshire	14	40	
Huntingdon	15	42	
South East Kent	19	43	
Kettering	21	44	
North Tyneside	21	44	
Durham	22	46	
Dartford and Gravesham	23	47	
Mid Essex	23	47	
Bassetlaw	24	49	
Trafford	25	50	
Isle of Wight	27	51	
Brent	28	52	
West Lancashire	28	52	
West Cumbria	33	54	
Worcester and District	33	54	
North Warwickshire	39	56	
Bolton	40	57	
Peterborough	40	57	
Bromsgrove and Redditch	41	59	
Enfield	41	59	
Milton Keynes	41	59	
Gateshead	42	62	
Eastbourne	43	63	
Scarborough	43	63	
Hampstead	49	65	
Harrogate	50	66	
Southmead	50	66	
Chester	55	68	
Swindon	56	69	
North Birmingham	61	70	
Wakefield	61	70	
West Essex	61	70	
West Suffolk	61	70	
Newham	62	74	
Mid Staffordshire	65	75	
South Lincolnshire	66	76	
Hartlepool	69	77	
Preston	72	78	
West Birmingham	72	78	
Aylesbury Vale	74	80	
Wigan	74	80	
Central Nottinghamshire	76	82	
North West Surrey	78	83	
West Berkshire	83	84	
Oxfordshire	87	85	
Frenchay	88	86	
Torbay	89	87	
Barnsley	90	88	
Redbridge	95	89	
Herefordshire	98	90	
Mid-Downs	98	90	
Maidstone	99	92	*10–99*
Airedale	101	93	
South Warwickshire	101	93	
South West Surrey	103	95	
Tameside and Glossop	106	96	
Hastings	109	97	
Winchester	109	97	
North Lincolnshire	112	99	
Rotherham	114	100	
South Sefton	114	100	
Lancaster	118	102	
West Norfolk and Wisbech	120	103	
Rochdale	122	104	
Exeter	131	105	
Mid Surrey	131	105	
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	134	107	
Wolverhampton	134	107	
Camberwell	135	109	
East Suffolk	137	110	
East Surrey	146	111	
Paddington and North Kensington	150	112	
Chichester	151	113	
Macclesfield	158	114	
Haringey	160	115	
Nottingham	160	115	
South West Hertfordshire	160	115	
Dudley	161	118	
Sunderland	167	119	
Croydon	180	120	
South Tees	180	120	
North Manchester	187	122	
Southern Derbyshire	189	123	
Waltham Forest	190	124	
Wirral	195	125	
Medway	200	126	
Northumberland	202	127	
Plymouth	206	128	
North Derbyshire	211	129	
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	216	130	
East Birmingham	234	131	
Brighton	241	132	

District health authority	Number of urgent cases	Rank order	Category
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	246	133	
West Dorset	250	134	
Kingston and Esher	253	135	
Salford	261	136	
Bradford	269	137	
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	284	138	
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	286	139	
Salisbury	300	140	
Islington	318	141	
Oldham	323	142	
Gloucester	331	143	
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	333	144	
Central Manchester	350	145	
Shropshire	356	146	
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	358	147	
Canterbury and Thanet	364	148	
Ealing	364	148	
Worthing	377	150	
Tunbridge Wells	395	151	
Stockport	404	152	
Merton and Sutton	406	153	
Doncaster	407	154	
Bath	446	155	
Wandsworth	447	156	
North East Essex	461	157	
Bristol and Weston	473	158	
Crewe	484	159	
Barnet	499	160	
Hounslow and Spelthorne	503	161	
Pontefract	508	162	
Somerset	524	163	
East Berkshire	542	164	
Liverpool	575	165	
Bloomsbury	584	166	
Southend	584	166	
Leeds Western	587	168	
Leeds Eastern	604	169	
Cambridge	619	170	
Coventry	664	171	
West Lambeth	669	172	
Northampton	703	173	
South Manchester	753	174	
Riverside	771	175	
Hillingdon	773	176	
South Birmingham	788	177	
Central Birmingham	807	178	
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	843	179	
Basildon and Thurrock	883	180	
Leicestershire	891	181	
North Staffordshire	943	182	
East Dorset	964	183	*100–999*
Lewisham and North Southwark	1,072	184	
Newcastle	1,154	185	
Sheffield	1,175	186	
Southampton and South West Hampshire	1,214	187	
Norwich	1,279	188	
West Surrey and North East Hants	1,429	189	
Tower Hamlets	1,657	190	*1,000–1,999*
City and Hackney	2,192	191	*2,000 and over*

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department issues guidance on the criteria for deciding whether patients waiting for hospital treatment are to be treated as urgent or non-urgent cases.

Mr. Newton: No. Whether a patient waiting for hospital treatment is to be treated as an urgent or non-urgent case is a matter for clinical judgment.

Lithotripsy

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the waiting list for treatment on the lithotripter at *(a)* St. Thomas's hospital and *(b)* among National Health Service patients using the machine at the Devonshire hospital.

Mr. Newton: About 1,000 patients are on the waiting list for treatment on the St. Thomas's hospital lithotripter. I regret that no information is available centrally about National Health Service patients awaiting treatment on the machine operated by the Devonshire hospital.

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether it has yet been possible from experience of the lithotripter machine at St. Thomas's to assess the number of machines estimated for the total needs of the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Currie: There are many factors involved in assessing the number of lithotripters needed for the United Kingdom. These include whether the particular type of machine chosen can be used only for the destruction of kidney stones or whether it can be used for other purposes, whether the existence of the lithotripter will affect the balance between acute and conservative treatment for patients with kidney stones and whether the distance between the patient's home and the lithotripter centre affects length of stay and thus the balance between revenue and capital costs.

Experience at St. Thomas's hospital and information about new machines coming on to the market both indicate that a larger number of machines will be required than was at first suggested. It is for this reason that my right hon. Friend, the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Hayhoe), announced in August that he had concluded that lithotripsy would best be developed as a regional service.

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will issue guidelines as to the use of lithotripters under co-operative arrangements between health authorities.

Mrs. Currie: We have no plans at present to issue guidelines on co-operative arrangements for the use of lithotripters by health authorities. These arrangements are for the authorities to set up in the light of their local needs. Officials are, however, keeping a close eye on the development of the machines and possible extensions of their use and are willing to provide information and assistance to authorities who are deciding how they might provide a service.

Health Authorities (Staff)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many non-medical staff are employed by each regional health authority and each health district.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Conductive Education

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the recent meeting of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), with representatives of Rapid Action for Conductive Education on 13 November.

Mrs. Currie: I was pleased to be present at the meeting between my hon. Friend, the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), and representatives of Rapid Action for Conductive Education. This Department will continue to liaise with the Department of Education and Science on this issue.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for each tendering exercise completed following health circular HC(P3)IP the health authority, the hospital, the successful tenderer (naming the company where relevant), the saving achieved, the date of the tender's approval, and the service concerned, laundry, catering or cleaning;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the progress made by health authorities in putting their services out to tender in the manner of the answer to the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) on 12 June 1985, *Official Report*, columns 489-93.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986]: Health authorities are continuing to make considerable progress in improving the cost effectiveness of their domestic cleaning, catering and laundry services. At 30 September 1986 over two-thirds of these services had been subject to competitive tendering resulting in savings of almost £73 million a year. This compares with savings of £29 million from the policy of competitive tendering only 12 months ago. Private contractors have been awarded a total of 173 contracts saving £24·6 million. In-house organisations have secured 773 tenders saving £48·1 million. The resources released are retained by health authorities and are now making a substantial contribution to the improvement of patient care services. Details are as follows.

Table A summarises the progress and savings made by each health authority. Table B lists the results of tendering exercises of which we are aware.

Districts	*Percentage of Service put out to Tender*			*Estimated Annual Savings £000*
	Catering	*Domestic*	*Laundry*	
Northern RHA				
Hartlepool	100	100	100	42
North Tees	100	100	100	114
South Tees	100	100	100	500
East Cumbria	nil	100	100	217
South Cumbria	nil	100	100	209
West Cumbria	nil	3	100	1
Darlington	100	100	100	300
Durham	100	100	100	167
North West Durham	100	100	100	141
South West Durham	2	2	nil	7
Newcastle	86	84	100	1,370
North Tyneside	nil	100	100	176
South Tyneside	38	100	nil	295
Sunderland	3	87	100	135
Northumberland	42	50	29	276
Gateshead	100	100	nil	375
Yorkshire RHA				
Hull	54	35	nil	296
East Yorkshire	nil	100	56	566
Grimsby	76	62	100	327
Scunthorpe	100	71	100	289
Northallerton	100	nil	100	16
York	100	100	nil	697
Scarborough	75	71	100	92
Harrogate	21	34	nil	41
Bradford	nil	67	nil	463
Airedale	100	44	nil	159
Calderdale	100	100	100	530
Huddersfield	31	100	44	762
Dewsbury	nil	47	100	397
Leeds Eastern	nil	nil	nil	nil
Leeds Western	24	27	100	272
Wakefield	11	86	100	369
Pontefract	100	100	100	556
Trent RHA				
North Derbyshire	100	98	100	608
South Derbyshire	nil	91	nil	114

Districts	Percentage of Service put out to Tender			Estimated Annual Savings £000
	Catering	Domestic	Laundry	
Leicestershire	46	80	nil	1,756
North Lincolnshire	100	100	100	219
South Lincolnshire	100	100	nil	319
Bassetlaw	nil	100	100	112
C Notts	nil	100	nil	453
Nottingham	100	100	100	416
Barnsley	100	100	100	326
Doncaster	100	57	100	221
Rotherham	100	100	100	100
Sheffield	74	73	100	628
East Anglian RHA				
Cambridge	100	85	nil	481
Peterborough	nil	100	nil	115
Huntingdon	100	100	100	498
Great Yarmouth/Waverley	100	100	100	319
West Norfolk/Wisbeach	100	100	100	399
Norwich	100	100	100	1,193
West Suffolk	nil	100	100	421
East Suffolk	19	79	100	417
North West Thames RHA				
North Bedfordshire	100	100	100	436
South Bedfordshire	nil	100	100	653
North Hertfordshire	nil	100	100	18
North West Hertfordshire	31	21	100	305
South West Hertfordshire	nil	65	nil	223
East Hertfordshire	nil	100	100	50
Barnet	100	100	100	258
Harrow	100	100	100	422
Hillingdon	100	100	100	457
Ealing	100	100	100	656
Hounslow/Spelthorne	nil	100	100	1,412
Riverside (Hammersmith/Fulham)	nil	100	100	1,097
Paddington and North Kensington	100	100	100	1,088
Riverside (Victoria)	100	100	75	1,385
Brent	nil	nil	nil	nil
North East Thames RHA				
Barking	100	78	100	784
Basildon	nil	100	100	543
Bloomsbury	nil	nil	100	265
City and Hackney	nil	49	100	1,039
Enfield	nil	71	100	395
Hampstead	nil	50	67	26
Haringey	55	100	nil	661
Islington	2	24	nil	146
Mid Essex	nil	100	100	896
Newham	80	100	100	382
Redbridge	nil	55	nil	165
Tower Hamlets	nil	86	100	325
Waltham Forest	10	68	100	1,012
West Essex	95	97	100	497
Southend	nil	100	100	499
North East Essex	72	60	nil	224
South East Thames RHA				
Bexley	100	100	100	334
Brighton	100	100	100	131
Bromley	100	100	100	1,174
Camberwell	100	100	100	56
Canterbury/Thanet	100	100	nil	493
Dartford/Gravesham	100	59	100	nil
Eastbourne	100	72	nil	310
Greenwich	nil	nil	nil	nil
Hastings	100	65	100	105
Lewisham/North Southwark	nil	nil	nil	nil
Maidstone	62	71	100	496
Medway	100	100	nil	326
South East Kent	100	100	nil	337
Tunbridge Wells	13	26	nil	215
West Lambeth	5	25	100	217
South West Thames RHA				

Districts	Percentage of Service put out to Tender			Estimated Annual Savings £000
	Catering	Domestic	Laundry	
North West Surrey	nil	100	100	462
West Surrey/North East Hants	10	91	94	253
East Surrey	0	78	36	463
Mid Surrey	30	90	30	107
South West Surrey	93	94	nil	399
Mid Downs	100	100	100	393
Chichester	45	92	100	389
Worthing	100	100	nil	330
Kingston/Esher	8	53	94	564
Croydon	28	65	62	318
Richmond/Twickenham/Roehampton	72	66	93	799
Wandsworth	65	98	100	903
Merton/Sutton	54	100	26	1,170
Wessex RHA				
East Dorset	100	100	nil	959
West Dorset	100	100	100	69
Portsmouth	100	100	100	771
Southampton	nil	78	100	507
Winchester	100	85	100	157
Basingstoke	75	100	100	134
Salisbury	100	100	100	392
Swindon	100	100	100	180
Bath	100	100	100	644
Isle of Wight	100	100	100	15
Oxford RHA				
East Berkshire	nil	79	100	109
West Berkshire	6	28	0	263
Aylesbury Vale	54	100	100	526
Milton Keynes	100	100	nil	99
Wycombe	nil	100	nil	134
Kettering	nil	100	nil	167
Northampton	38	92	100	215
Oxford	nil	76	nil	705
South Western RHA				
Cheltenham	100	24	100	129
Gloucester	62	72	100	185
Frenchay	37	36	nil	76
Bristol/Weston	nil	94	100	593
Southmead	40	25	100	241
Somerset	100	100	100	907
Exeter	11	14	100	172
North Devon	nil	100	100	131
Torbay	100	100	100	271
Plymouth	100	nil	100	60
Cornwall/Isles of Scilly	26	89	100	811
West Midlands RHA				
Mid Staffordshire	99	100	nil	328
South Warwickshire	96	95	100	177
Kidderminster	nil	48	100	222
Shropshire	100	92	100	545
North Staffordshire	69	82	nil	284
Coventry	87	79	95	9
Bromsgrove and Redditch	nil	40	100	103
Herefordshire	nil	64	nil	132
Rugby	100	100	100	51
North Warwickshire	97	60	100	176
Solihull	97	98	nil	556
Wolverhampton	100	100	100	589
Walsall	100	100	nil	129
North Birmingham	100	38	100	102
Dudley	nil	95	100	677
Sandwell	nil	16	100	nil
East Birmingham	nil	97	79	371
Central Birmingham	100	100	100	1,294
South Birmingham	23	71	100	381
South East Staffordshire	43	92	nil	455
Worcester	nil	73	nil	144
West Birmingham	nil	83	100	196
Mersey RHA				

Districts	*Percentage of Service put out to Tender*			*Estimated Annual Savings £000*
	Catering	*Domestic*	*Laundry*	
Southport/Formby	100	100	100	158
South Sefton	nil	100	100	386
St. Helens/Knowsley	100	nil	100	817
Wirral	100	100	100	576
Liverpool	100	100	100	0
Macclesfield	nil	84	nil	398
Halton	100	100	100	47
Warrington	45	97	nil	829
Chester	100	100	100	1,086
Crewe	43	100	100	598
North Western RHA				
North Manchester	46	100	100	27
Central Manchester	100	100	100	657
Wigan	100	81	100	350
Stockport	100	100	100	356
Tameside/Glossop	28	100	100	2
Bolton	100	94	100	563
Bury	100	100	0	429
Chorley/South Ribble	100	100	100	153
Preston	100	100	100	94
Lancaster	100	100	100	198
Blackpool	100	86	100	37
Burnley	100	100	100	90
South Manchester	100	100	100	76
Trafford	nil	98	100	189
Oldham	100	100	nil	150
Salford	46	100	64	189
West Lancashire	nil	100	100	25
Blackburn	100	36	100	7
Rochdale	100	100	nil	30
Special Health Authorities				
Bethlem and Maudsley	100	100	100	87
Eastman	100	100	100	nil
Hammersmith and Queen Charlottes	nil	90	100	969
Hospital for Sick Children	nil	nil	100	nil
Moorfields	nil	100	100	30
National Heart and Chest	nil	76	100	50
National Hospital for Nervous Diseases	nil	nil	100	nil
Royal Marsden	46	100	100	214

Table B
Results of tendering exercises

Health authority	*Hospital*	*Contractor or in-house*
DOMESTIC SERVICES		
Northern regional health authority		
Durham	County Hospital	In-house
Durham	St. Margaret's	In-house
Durham	Chester-le-Street General Hospital	In-house
East Cumbria	Penrith/Wigton	In-house
Newcastle	Community	In-house
Newcastle	Freeman Hospital	In-house
North Tees	North Tees General	In-house
Northumberland	Prudhoe Hospital	In-house
Northumberland	Tynedale Unit	In-house
South Tyneside	Ingham Infirmary	In-house
South West Durham	Horn Hall Hospital	In-house
Sunderland	Monkwearmouth	In-house
Sunderland	Ryhope	In-house
Yorkshire regional health authority		
Airedale	Craven	In-house
Bradford	Brierley/others	In-house
Bradford	Westwood	Berkley Taylor—Plan
East Yorkshire	District	In-house
Grimsby	Maternity	Berkley Taylor—Plan
Huddersfield	St. Lukes/Mill Hill	In-house
Hull	Brandes—Burton	In-house
Scarborough	Scarborough General	In-house
York	Naburn	In-house

Health authority	Hospital	Contractor or in-house
Trent regional health authority		
Barnsley	Mount Vernon	In-house
Bassetlaw	Victoria	In-house
Bassetlaw	District General Hospital	In-house
Leicestershire	Carlton Hayes	In-house
Leicestershire	Towers	In-house
Leicestershire	Glenfirth Unit	In-house
Leicestershire	LoughboroughGeneral/Regent	In-house
North Derbyshire	Whittington Hall	In-house
North Lincolnshire	Maternity	In-house
North Lincolnshire	Health Centres	In-house
Nottingham	Mapperley	In-house
Rotherham	Badsley Moor	In-house
Rotherham	Health Centres	In-house
Sheffield	Lodge Moor	In-house
Sheffield	Northern General	In-house
Sheffield	Weston Park	In-house
South-Derbyshire	Community	In-house
South Lincolnshire	Grantham	In-house
East Anglian regional health authority		
East Suffolk	General Acute Unit	In-house
East Suffolk	St. Audry's	In-house
Norwich	Mental Handicap	Reckitt
West Suffolk	West Suffolk/Thetford	In-house
North West Thames regional health authority		
Barnet	Edgware Hospital	ICC
Barnet	Napsbury	In-house
Barnet	Barnet	Exclusive
Barnet	Community Unit	In-house
East Hertfordshire	District	In-house
Harrow	District	In-house
North Bedfordshire	Acute Unit	In-house
North Bedfordshire	Geriatric Unit	In-house
North Bedfordshire	Community Unit	In-house
North Bedfordshire	Mental Health Unit	In-house
North West Hertfordshire	St. Albans	In-house
Paddington	Princess Louise	In-house
South Bedfordshire	Luton/Dunstable	In-house
South Bedfordshire	Community	In-house
South West Hertfordshire	Community	In-house
North East Thames regional health authority		
Barking	St. George's	In-house
Barking	Rush Green	In-house
Barking	Warley	In-house
Barking	Community	AIPS
Basildon	Orsett	Exclusive
Basildon	Basildon Hospital	Mediclean
Basildon	South Ockendon	In-house
Basildon	St. Andrews and Mayflower	In-house
City and Hackney	City	In-house
Enfield	Highlands	Exclusive
Haringey	St. Ann's	In-house
Islington	Acute Royal Northern	In-house
Mid Essex	Broomfield	ICC
Newham	Albert Dock	In-house
Redbridge	Chadwell Heath	In-house
Southend	Southend	In-house
Tower Hamlets		In-house
Waltham Forest	Langthorne and Chingford	In-house
Waltham Forest	Whipps Cross	RCO
West Essex	St. Margaret's	In-house
West Essex	Princess Alexandra	In-house
South East Thames regional health authority		
Brighton	New Sussex	In-house
Bromley	Orpington	In-house
Eastbourne	District General/St. Mary's	In-house
Hastings	Bexhill/Evesfield	In-house
Maidstone	Oakwood	In-house
Tunbridge	Pembury	In-house
South West Thames regional health authority		
Croydon	Mayday	In-house

Health authority	Hospital	Contractor or in-house
East Surrey	Caterham	In-house
Mid-Downs	Forest	In-house
South West Surrey	Royal Surrey County	In-house
West Surrey	Farnham	In-house
West Surrey	Frimley Park	Exclusive
Worthing	Southlands	In-house
Wessex regional health authority		
Basingstoke	Treloar Chase	In-house
Bath	Royal United Sector	In-house
Bath	Devizes Sector	In-house
Bath	Trowbridge Sector	In-house
Bath	St. Martin's Sector	In-house
Bath	Chippenham Sector	In-house
Bath	Roundway Sector	In-house
East Dorset	St. Anns/Herbert	In-house
East Dorset	Royal Victoria	In-house
East Dorset	Poole General	Mediclean
East Dorset	Westbourne	In-house
Isle of Wight	County Hospital	In-house
Portsmouth	Gosport Peninsula	In-house
Portsmouth	Fareham	In-house
Portsmouth	St. Mary's	In-house
Salisbury	Newbridge	In-house
Southampton	New Forest (1)	In-house
Southampton	Southampton General	In-house
Southampton	Royal South Hants/Others	In-house
Southampton	New Forest (2)	In-house
Swindon	St. Margaret's	In-house
Swindon	Princess Margaret	In-house
West Dorset	Herrison	In-house
West Dorset	Bridport	In-house
West Dorset	Dorset County	In-house
Winchester	East Leigh Health Centre	In-house
Winchester	St. Paul's	Mediclean
Oxford regional health authority		
East Berkshire	Community Clinics	VWGCS
East Berkshire	Old Windsor	In-house
East Berkshire	King Edward VII	In-house
Kettering	General Hospital	In-house
Northampton	Danetree	In-house
Northampton	St. Crispin/Princess Marina	In-house
West Berkshire	Newbury	In-house
West Berkshire	Battle	RCO
South Western regional health authority		
Bristol	Bristol Royal Infirmary	Mediclean
Bristol	Children's/Maternity	In-house
Bristol	Central Clinic	In-house
Bristol	Windford Hospital	In-house
Cheltenham	St. Pauls/Delancy	In-house
Cornwall	Falmouth/Budock	In-house
Exeter	Miscellaneous Premises	OCS
Gloucester	Gloucester Royal Hospital	In-house
Gloucester	Standish	In-house
Somerset	Tone Vale	In-house
Somerset	Musgrove	In-house
Torbay	Torbay DGH	In-house
Torbay	South West Sector	In-house
West Midlands regional health authority		
Central Birmingham	Maternity	In-house
Central Birmingham	General	In-house
Dudley	Burton Road Hospital	In-house
Dudley	Wordsley	In-house
Dudley	Guest	In-house
East Birmingham	General Unit	HHS
Hereford	General Hospital/Others	In-house
Kidderminster	General Hospital	In-house
Mid-Staffordshire	Rugeley	In-house
Mid-Staffordshire	Chase	In-house
Mid-Staffordshire	Trent	In-house
Mid-Staffordshire	Kingsmead	In-house
North Warwickshire	Community	In-house

Health authority	*Hospital*	*Contractor or in-house*
Rugby	St. Cross/Others	In-house
Shropshire	North Telford	In-house
Shropshire	Northern Unit	In-house
Solihull	Middlefield	In-house
Solihull	Community	In-house
South Birmingham	Rubery Hill	In-house
South East Staffordshire	Burton District	In-house
Walsall	General Hospital	In-house
Wolverhampton	The Royal Hospital/Patshull	In-house
Wolverhampton	Penn/Eye	In-house
Wolverhampton	Beeches/Community	In-house
Worcester	Evesham/Pershore	Crothalls
Worcester	Malvern General/Others	In-house
Mersey regional health authority		
Crewe	North Peripherals	In-house
South Sefton	Fazakerley	RCO
Wirral	Victoria General	Mediguard
North Western regional health authority		
Blackburn	Clitheroe	In-house
Blackpool	Lytham	In-house
Blackpool	Fleetwood	In-house
Blackpool	Rossall	In-house
Bolton	Royal Infirmary	Crothalls
Bolton	Bolton General/Others	In-house
Burnley	Calderstones	In-house
Central Manchester	District	In-house
Chorley	Chorley Hospital/Others	In-house
Lancaster	Royal Albert	In-house
Lancaster	Queen Victoria	In-house
Lancaster	Beaumont	In-house
North Manchester	Ancoats	In-house
Oldham	Oldham District General	In-house
Preston	Sharoe Green (1)	In-house
Preston	Ribbleton	In-house
Preston	Royal Preston (2)	In-house
Preston	Community	In-house
Preston	Royal Preston (1)	In-house
Rochdale	Group 5	In-house
Rochdale	Group 6	Halls
South Manchester	Christie	In-house
South Manchester	Wythenshawe	In-house
Stockport	Community	Hall Hospital Service
Trafford	Bridgewater	In-house
West Lancashire	Community (2)	In-house
Wigan	Billinge	In-house
Wigan	Community	In-house
CATERING SERVICES		
Northern regional health authority		
Newcastle	Newcastle General	In-house
Northumberland	Ashington	In-house
South Tees	District	In-house
Yorkshire regional health authority		
Airedale	Airedale General/Craven	In-house
Huddersfield	St. Lukes/Mill Hill	In-house
Hull	Maternity	In-house
Hull	Hull Royal	In-house
Pontefract	District	In-house
Trent regional health authority		
Doncaster	Montague	In-house
Leicestershire	General Hospital	In-house
Leicestershire	Leicester Royal Infirmary	In-house
Leicestershire	Community	In-house
North Derbyshire	Cavendish	In-house
North Derbyshire	Chesterfield/North Derbyshire	In-house
North Derbyshire	Royal Hospital	In-house
Nottingham	Mapperley	In-house
Rotherham	Wathwood	In-house
Sheffield	Nether Edge	In-house
Sheffield	Royal Hallamshire	In-house
Sheffield	Childrens	In-house
South Lincolnshire	Pilgrims/M H Unit	In-house

Health authority	Hospital	Contractor or in-house
East Anglian regional health authority		
Great Yarmouth	Northgate/St. Nicholas	In-house
Huntingdon	Papworth	In-house
Huntingdon	Hinchingbrooke	In-house
North West Thames regional health authority		
Barnet	Edgware	In-house
Ealing	District	Gardner Merchant
North West Hertfordshire	St. Albans	In-house
North East Thames regional health authority		
Newham	Newham General	In-house
North East Essex	Turner Village	In-house
West Essex	St. Margarets	In-house
West Essex	Uttlesford Sector	In-house
South East Thames regional health authority		
Brighton	Royal Sussex	In-house
Brighton	Chailey	In-house
Camberwell	Kings College Dulwich/St. Francis	In-house
Canterbury	Mental Unit	In-house
Canterbury	Canterbury	In-house
Canterbury	Thanet General	In-house
Tunbridge	East Grinstead	In-house
South West Thames regional health authority		
Croydon	St. Lawrences	In-house
Mid Downs	Crawley	In-house
Mid Downs	St. Francis/Others	In-house
Mid Downs	Forest	In-house
South West Surrey	Royal Surrey County	In-house
South West Surrey	St. Lukes	In-house
Wessex regional health authority		
East Dorset	Alderney	In-house
East Dorset	Herbert Day	In-house
East Dorset	St. Anns	In-house
East Dorset	Gloucester Road	In-house
East Dorset	Christchurch	In-house
Portsmouth	Coldeast	In-house
Portsmouth	Queen Alexandra	In-house
Swindon	Princess Margarets	In-house
West Dorset	Weymouth	In-house
West Dorset	Dorset	In-house
West Dorset	Herrison	In-house
West Dorset	Bridport	In-house
West Dorset	Blandford	In-house
Winchester	Royal Hampshire/St. Pauls	In-house
Portsmouth	Community	In-house
Oxford regional health authority		
Milton Keynes	District	In-house
South Western regional health authority		
Cheltenham	District	In-house
Exeter	East Devon	In-house
Somerset	Yeovil LMT	In-house
Somerset	Musgrove Park	In-house
Southmead	Southmead	In-house
Southmead	Various	In-house
West Midlands regional health authority		
Central Birmingham	Maternity	In-house
Coventry	Whitley	In-house
Mid Staffordshire	S.G.I	In-house
North Birmingham	Good Hope	In-house
North Birmingham	Highcroft	In-house
North Staffordshire	St. Edwards	In-house
North Staffordshire	Bucknall	In-house
North Staffordshire	Fanny Deakin	In-house
North Staffordshire	Westcliffe	In-house
North Staffordshire	Royal Infirmary	In-house
North Warwickshire	Chelmsley/Coleshill Hall	In-house
Solihull	Solihull Hospital	In-house
Solihull	Middle-field	In-house
South Warwickshire	Weston	In-house
South Warwickshire	Abbeyfields	In-house

Health authority	Hospital	Contractor or in-house
Wolverhampton	Eye Infirmary/Others	In-house
Wolverhampton	Penn	In-house
Mersey regional health authority		
Warrington	Winwick	In-house
Wirral	Victoria General	In-house
North Western regional health authority		
North Manchester	Northern Hospital	In-house
Stockport	Offerton House	In-house
Stockport	Ollersett View	In-house
Stockport	Cherry Tree	In-house
Special health authorities		
Royal Marsden	Royal Marsden, Sutton	In-house
LAUNDRY SERVICES		
Northern regional health authority		
East Cumbria	District	In-house
Yorkshire regional health authority		
Grimsby	District	In-house
Trent regional health authority		
North Derbyshire	Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Royal Hospital	In-house
North East Thames regional health authority		
Tower Hamlets	District	In-house
South East Thames regional health authority		
Bexley	District	In-house
Brighton	Brighton General	In-house
Wessex regional health authority		
Swindon	District	In-house
West Dorset	Portwey	Co-Op
Oxford regional health authority		
Norhampton	Linen Services Unit	Initial
South Western regional health authority		
Bristol and Weston	District	Health-text
Cornwall	St. Lawrence's	In-house
Exeter	District	In-house
Torbay	Torbay DGH	In-house
West Midlands regional health authority		
West Birmingham	District	In-house
Mersey regional health authority		
St. Helens and Knowsley	District	In-house
Southport and Formby	District	In-house
North Western regional health authority		
Stockport	Stepping Hill	In-house
West Lancashire	Ormskirk	In-house
Wigan	District	In-house

ENVIRONMENT

Sheltered Accommodation

59. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to review charges for sheltered accommodation.

Mr. Tracey: Local authorities, housing associations and other public and private sector bodies provide a wide range of sheltered housing schemes, with varying facilities and support services. It is for them to decide the level and nature of rents and charges that are appropriate in particular cases subject to any statutory protection such as that afforded to tenants under the Rent Acts or to occupants of flats and maisonettes under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a breakdown of each local authority's housing gross capital expenditure on public sector provision and on support to the private sector by programme for each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Tracey: I am today placing a set of tables in the Library containing a breakdown, by programme, of each English local authority's housing capital expenditure as reported in their housing investment programme returns.

Angling

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of people who partake in the sport of angling.

Mr. Tracey: The latest figures available in the "General Household Survey 1983" estimate that 3·9 per cent. of the population in England and Wales—1·5 million people—over the age of 16 participate regularly in the sport. From these and other figures from the "General Household Survey" on participation in sports, the Sports Council concludes that angling is the third most popular outdoor sporting activity after walking/rambling and swimming.

Local Authorities (Political Propaganda)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce further legislation to make it illegal for local councils to issue political propaganda; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: The Government have made clear their intention to introduce legislation later this Session to restore the effects of amendments made in another place to the publicity provisions of the Local Government Act 1986.

Transport (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Cabom asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why the same per capita level has not been applied to every passenger transport authority for calculating the grant-related expenditure assessment; and why the grant-related expenditure assessment for south Yorkshire is the lowest measured on a per capita basis.

Mr. Chope: The grant-related expenditure assessments for passenger transport authorities are not made on a simple per capita basis. Factors relating to car ownership and density of settlement are regarded as being more appropriate in assessing the need for bus revenue support and concessionary fares. South Yorkshire's grant-related expenditure is the lowest measured on a per capita basis because it is the least densely populated of the passenger transport authority areas.

Mortgages

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many formerly owner-occupied properties were taken into possession by *(a)* building societies, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* other mortgages in the 12 months ended June 1986; and how these figures compare in actual and percentage terms with those for each 12 month period for the 12 months ended June 1979 to the 12 months ended June 1985.

Mr. Tracey: The available information is as follows:

Properties taken into possession by building societies: United Kingdom

Year ending	*Number*	*Per cent. of outstanding mortgage loans at end of period*
December 1979[1]	2,530	0·048
December 1980[1]	3,020	0·056
December 1981[1]	4,240	0·077
June 1982	5,090	0·091
June 1983	6,680	0·116
June 1984	9,140	0·149
June 1985	13,040	0·200
June 1986	20,020	0·290

Source: Building Societies Association.
[1] Figures for calendar years only before 1981.

Properties taken into possession by local authorities[1]: England

	Number	*Per cent. of outstanding mortgage loans at end of period*
1978-79	1,800	n/a
1979-80	1,100	n/a
1980-81	1,000	0·14
1981-82	1,100	0·16
1982-83	950	0·14
1983-84	840	0·13
1984-85	750	0·13

n/a = Not available.
[1] Figures for financial years only.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households with mortgages from *(a)* building societies, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* other sources, were known to be more than six months in arrears at end of June 1986; and how these figures compare in actual and percentage terms with the figures for June 1979 and each June between then and 1985.

Mr. Tracey: The available information is as follows:

Mortgages over 6 months in arrears Building Societies: United Kingdom

	Number	*Per cent. of outstanding mortgage loans*
December 1979[1]	8,420	0·16
December 1980[1]	13,490	0·25
June 1981[1]	15,880	0·29
June 1982	23,840	0·43
June 1983	33,910	0·59
June 1984	36,780	0·60
June 1985	52,890	0·81
June 1986	66,930	0·97

Source: Building Societies Association.
[1] Figures before 1982 are only those in arrears 6 to 12 months. Figures for end of December only before 1981.

Local authorities[1]: England and Wales

	Number	*Per cent. of outstanding mortgage loans*
March 1983	13,200	1·9
March 1984	14,500	2·3
March 1985	14,900	2·6

[1] Figures for end of financial year only.

Imported Building Materials

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by value the major 25 imported building materials in 1985, stating the import as a percentage of the United Kingdom market and show how this compares by value and import penetration with the position five years ago.

Mr. John Patten: I will answer this question shortly.

County Expenditure

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish figures showing the cost per capita for each shire county of each of the following services: education, social services, county surveyors' departments and any other service consuming 10 per cent. or more of county council funds showing also total county council costs per capita in each case according to the numbers of population in the county at the time and the overall average in each case.

Mr. Chope: The net current expenditure per capita by service for each shire county in 1985-86 is as follows. Separate information on the cost of surveyors' departments is not available.

Shire counties' net current expenditure per head by service 1985-86 (£)

	Education	*Personal Social Services*	*Police*	*Local Transport*	*Local Environmental Services*	*Other Services*	*All Services*
Avon	205·55	47·19	49·71	27·15	8·10	39·01	376·71
Bedfordshire	232·28	40·61	43·22	25·09	5·39	36·99	383·57
Berkshire	213·90	40·34	41·03	18·82	5·50	31·30	350·90
Buckinghamshire	224·41	37·26	38·99	24·84	4·33	32·93	362·77
Cambridgeshire	208·97	34·72	42·37	25·87	1·72	32·65	346·29
Cheshire	233·98	42·17	40·63	28·57	8·60	38·04	392·00
Cleveland	250·13	45·82	57·62	34·99	10·64	54·23	453·44
Cornwall	192·78	33·47	42·81	34·53	6·57	31·95	342·10
Cumbria	225·68	41·09	49·82	30·42	10·66	37·14	394·81
Derbyshire	225·17	49·25	44·68	30·39	9·13	38·16	396·78
Devon	185·63	34·96	47·55	35·58	5·89	33·55	343·16
Dorset	175·29	35·95	47·00	27·08	5·52	28·07	318·91
Durham	222·67	39·23	48·82	29·93	9·72	39·44	389·81
East Sussex	161·32	43·51	41·36	22·49	5·33	36·27	310·28
Essex	211·46	33·02	39·10	24·52	6·54	36·11	350·75
Gloucestershire	200·19	31·40	47·01	22·53	5·05	38·01	344·19
Hampshire	197·35	31·27	42·64	22·59	7·05	31·11	332·01
Hereford and Worcester	208·57	33·92	42·39	26·74	7·03	28·64	347·30
Hertfordshire	216·39	32·69	35·23	26·04	5·39	31·52	347·26
Humberside	237·60	45·96	52·33	30·58	6·17	45·16	417·81
Isle of Wight	203·13	39·96	33·97	31·22	8·11	35·30	351·69
Kent	193·24	34·80	42·44	25·19	6·08	34·58	336·33
Lancashire	225·41	47·79	49·23	33·16	−1·51	40·01	394·09
Leicestershire	230·16	43·00	42·28	25·97	11·91	35·75	389·07
Lincolnshire	204·90	35·33	45·77	32·99	4·10	31·50	354·59
Norfolk	189·41	35·67	38·33	24·45	5·88	30·78	324·52
Northamptonshire	220·61	42·39	42·30	16·57	8·58	41·11	371·56
Northumberland	226·72	41·42	53·45	38·65	12·65	38·39	411·28
North Yorkshire	210·42	34·76	42·49	33·51	7·43	33·36	361·97
Nottinghamshire	232·32	53·22	47·57	26·88	5·01	41·93	406·92
Oxfordshire	179·71	35·44	40·24	21·33	5·91	40·24	322·86
Shropshire	226·07	28·34	42·92	26·50	3·12	35·68	362·62
Somerset	196·71	36·36	41·38	31·56	7·70	36·43	350·14
Staffordshire	225·92	32·27	41·99	24·56	6·09	32·90	363·73
Suffolk	195·98	30·98	42·08	25·42	5·68	30·79	330·92
Surrey	187·36	29·61	35·17	30·66	8·29	32·71	323·81
Warwickshire	216·80	36·24	42·10	25·76	7·74	35·95	364·59
West Sussex	171·26	33·21	41·92	28·11	5·53	30·63	310·67
Wiltshire	210·00	35·39	43·34	28·05	4·81	27·62	349·22
Shire Counties England	209·63	37·95	43·67	27·67	6·60	35·54	361·06

Forth and Clyde Canal

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost of maintaining the remaindered Forth and Clyde canal in each of the past five years; and what have been the receipts during the corresponding period.

Mr. John Patten: Responsibility for the maintenance of the Forth and Clyde canal is a matter of day-to-day management by the British Waterways Board. The figures are as follows:

	£000	
	Total Direct Expenditure	*Income*
1981	200	100
1982	283	140
1983	365	119
1984-85 (15 months)	481	163
1985-86	400	75

Property Services Agency

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all Ministry of Defence Property Services Agency land disposals in the southern and eastern region.

Mr. Chope: The following is the list of MOD properties currently within the PSA for disposal for which a contract has yet to be exchanged.

Description	*Area (hectares)*
Southern Region	
Land at Bicester	4·01
Land at Shortheath Common, Bordon	2·08
Land at Bicester	3·29
"Springhill", Normandy Aldershot	1 house
Land at Parsons Barracks, Aldershot	0·85
Land at Jacobs Field, Bramley	3·14
Land at Westcott, Bucks	3·32
Land at Sopley, Christchurch	15·09
Land at Hertfordbridge, Minley, Hants	1·69
Land at Shenley Brook End, Bletchley	7·90
Oakbridge Road, Basingstoke	1 flat
Land at Shrivenham, Nr Swindon	0·63
Flowerdown, Winchester	14 houses
Land at Bordon	0·50
Land at Arncutt, Bicester	60·70
Land at Pirbright Common, Nr Guildford	26·89
Land at Brizewood, Brize Norton	0·08
Land at The Meadows, Camberley	30·89
Land at Liphook	0·78
Land at Barton Stacey	0·343
Land at West End Common, Woking	50·180
Bordon	205 houses
Farnborough Road, Farnborough	10 houses
Borehole Site, Barton Stacey	0·199
Land at Kingsley Village	0·861
Land at Hawley Green, Camberley	0·281
Land at Queens Road, Bisley	1·209
Land at Former Infants School Site, Tadley	0·333
Warnford Road, Tilehurst, Reading	1 house
Whitley Wood, Reading	4 houses
Building Plot at Calcot, Reading	0·032
Aldermaston	46 houses
Burghfield, Reading	11 houses
RAE Farnborough	43 houses
Land at Ewshot Lane, Ewshot	0·077
Land adjoining Brook Cottage, Thursley, Elstead	0·467
Land adjoining Range End, West End, Woking	0·291
195 Sandy Lane, Cove	1 house
32 Cody Road, Cove	1 house
Land at Hawley Green, Camberley	0·28
Stoneleigh Drive, Brize Norton	3 houses
Ampney Orchard, Bampton	7 houses
Building plot adj. to 31 Halton Village	0·100
Land at RAF Bicester for road improvements	1·84
Land at Bordon	1·43
Artington Cold Store, Guildford	4·144
CD Bramley, Hampshire	404·685
Balmore House, Reading	2·647
AIB Bramshott, Fleet, Hants	2·222
Bassingbourne Estate, Farnborough	5 houses
Peninsula Barracks, Winchester	6·288
Rafborough Estate, Farnborough	68 houses
Rhine Bank, Cove	2·169
Vauxhall Barracks, Didcot, Berks	9·105
RNSD Woolston, Southampton	15·985
Eastern Region	
Land at RAF Station, Bentwaters	0·28
Land adjacent to A52, Bentwaters	0·19
Land at Cardington	32·00
Land at Abbots Road, Colchester	12·80
Land at Bounstead Road, Colchester	0·11
Land at Lethe Grove, Colchester	3·00
Land at Duxford	2·50
Land at Enfield	0·12
Land at Sculthorpe	6·00
Perring Close, Sharnbrook	1 house
Land at Victoria Drive, Shoeburyness	0·09
Wakering Road, Shoeburyness	1 house
Land at Wakering Road, Shoeburyness	0·08
Wakering Road, Shoeburyness	2 bungalows
Land at RAF Station, Wattisham	0·70
Leavesden Airfield	107·24

Council House Sales

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council tenants in Great Britain have bought their homes under the right-to-buy provisions of the Housing Act 1980 and subsequent legislation in financial year 1980-81 and each subsequent year for which figures are available; and what are his estimates for such sales in future years.

Mr. Tracey: Following are the available figures of right-to-buy sales of dwellings by English local authorities:

	Number
1980-81	2,300
1981-82	105,200
1982-83	167,100
1983-84	106,300
1984-85	77,500
1985-86	[1]73,200
1986-87	[2]82,500
1987-88	[2]72,500

[1] Provisional.
[2] Forecast.

For sales elsewhere in Great Britain, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales.

Home Improvements

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to establish in Bradford one of the new centres to give advice about home improvements; what assessment has been made of the efficacy of agencies in Bradford already providing such advice; if he has consulted Bradford council on this matter; how the new centre will be funded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1986; c. 374]: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs, and Construction gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) on 19 November at columns 244-45. The new schemes are to be established by the National Home Improvement Council (NHIC) and Care and Repair Ltd. It will be for them to establish the efficacy of

existing agency schemes in consultation with the relevant local authority before setting up new projects. I understand that initial discussions have taken place between the NHIC and officers of Bradford city council, but no decisions have yet been taken.

Housing Staff College

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Environment if he has decided his policy towards the proposal by the Audit Commission in the report, "Managing the Crisis in Council Housing", for a housing staff college.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 November 1986, c. 46]: I agree with the Audit Commission that it is essential to improve the training of housing managers. A great deal is already being done by the local authorities, the Local Government Training Board, the National Federation of Housing Associations, the Institute of Housing and educational institutions.

We are providing studentships for two new post-graduate housing management courses at the LSE and Sheffield polytechnic and our intention is to extend this initiative to other regional centres.

I am not convinced that an entirely new body as the Audit Commission suggests, would be the most cost-effective solution. We are therefore discussing with the Institute of Housing and other bodies the best way in which the new grant powers in the Housing and Planning Act could be used in combination with existing resources to provide more effective training at all levels.

THE ARTS

Departmental Initiatives

Mr. Silvester asked the Minister for the Arts if he will list initiatives by his Department which have been of benefit specifically to the north-east, north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside regions since 1979.

Mr. Luce: My Department encourages and facilitates developments in the arts throughout the country. Recent initiatives in the regions referred to have included the following:

"Tate in the North" A new gallery to be housed in the Albert dock complex in Liverpool; being built 1985-88.

National Museum of Photography, Film and TV An outstation of the Science museum, recently opened in Bradford.

National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Awarded national status and now funded from the central arts programme.

Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry Awarded national status and now funded from the central arts programme.

Henry Moore extension to Leeds City Musuem New gallery dedicated to Henry Moore's work.

Sculpture exhibition at the International Garden Festival, Liverpool, 1984 A major outdoor exhibition, forming a significant part of the festival.

Sculpture at the Gateshead Festival Gateshead is to put on a similar garden festival in 1988, and sculpture is already under way.

Phoenix Dance Company A major new company started in Leeds in 1982.

Yorkshire Dance Centre Adaptation of a disused factory in Leeds to incorporate six dance studios.

Dance City Newcastle A major teaching centre, in adapted industrial premises.

Cornerhouse, Manchester A new multi-media centre, with the emphasis on film and photographs.

In addition major arts companies such as Opera North, Northern Ballet and the Royal Exchange, Manchester, are funded in the regions concerned.

CIVIL SERVICE

Delegate Responsibility

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Minister for the Civil Service what steps have been taken to delegate responsibility within the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: More delegation is one of the objectives of our reforms of personnel and financial management. The central departments have delegated a wide range of authorities to spending departments, while maintaining where necessary common standards and rules across the Civil Service. Departments in turn delegate many authorities to line managers. But we are doing more to give individual managers clear authorities and responsibilities for the people and resources that they manage.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Balance of Payments

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide his estimate of the balance of payments surplus or deficit for each quarter in (i) the current financial year and (ii) next financial year.

Mr. MacGregor: Figures published by the Department of Trade and Industry today show that the current account was in surplus by £379 million in the second quarter of 1986, and in deficit by an estimated £634 million in the third quarter. The current account was estimated to have returned to a surplus of £65 million in October. The Industry Act forecast published with the autumn statement projected the current account to be in broad balance for 1986 as a whole and to be in deficit by £1½ billion in 1987. In line with normal practice the quarterly path was not given but no further deterioration is expected in the current account in 1987 compared with the second half of 1986.

Cigarette Duty

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has concerning the average duty and excise which has been paid upon *(a)* United Kingdom produced cigarettes and *(b)* imported cigarettes in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Brooke: The excise duty on cigarettes consists of two elements: a fixed charge per 1,000 cigarettes and an ad valorem charge calculated as a proportion of the retail price. The following table shows excise duty as a proportion of the weighted average December price of both United Kingdom produced and imported cigarettes. Duty is calculated at the rates applicable in December of each year.

Excise duty as a percentage of price

	Imported	*United Kingdom produced*
1981-82	59·1	60·8
1982-83	59·8	60·6

	Imported	United Kingdom produced
1983-84	61·3	60·0
1984-85	63·6	61·0
1985-86	67·4	61·4

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Cartwright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many people claim mortgage tax relief; how many of these people also claim the married man's tax allowance; how many of those people who do not claim the married man's tax allowance claim mortgage tax relief in respect of the same property as another person who claims mortgage tax relief; and how many of those people who do claim the married man's tax allowance claim mortgage tax relief in respect of the same property as another person who claims mortgage tax relief;

(2) on how many dwellings mortgage tax relief is claimed; on how many of these dwellings two or more unmarried people claim mortgage tax relief; and on how many such dwellings mortgage tax relief is claimed on more than £30,000;

(3) what is the estimated saving to the Exchequer of limiting mortgage tax relief to individual residences rather than to individual taxpayers as suggested in Cmnd. 9756.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Independent Taxation

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will tabulate the number of winners and losers under the Green Paper on independent taxation; and how many will win or lose by less than *(a)* £1 per week, *(b)* £1-2, *(c)* £2-3, *(d)* £3-4, *(e)* £4-5, *(f)* £5-7, *(g)* £7-10, and *(h)* more than £10 per week.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to annex 4 of the Green Paper "The Reform of Personal Taxation", in particular tables 1-5 and 10-12. These provide information about the effects of introducing transferable allowances on two alternative assumptions.

Counterfeit Goods

Mr. Oakes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the value of goods in each of the last five years seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise as being counterfeit.

Mr. Lawson [*pursuant to the reply*, 24 November 1986]: The value of goods seized by Her Majesty's Custom and Excise under section 17 of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 as being counterfeit in each of the last five years was as follows:

	£
1981	Nil
1982	30,549
1983	6,000
1984	Nil
1985	Nil

Customs have also seized considerable quantities of goods under section 16 of the Trade Descriptions Act, which prohibits the importation of goods bearing a false indication of the country of manufacture. Some of these goods have also been counterfeit, but the records available do not indicate which.

Direct Cosmetics Ltd

Mr. Latham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the letters sent to Mr. W. F. Doody of Direct Cosmetics Ltd of Oakham dated 28 April and 20 May by Mr. G. R. Burgess of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise advising Mr. Doody to take Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to court were sent with his authority; and on how many other occasions in 1986 officials of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have written to taxpayers advising them to undertake litigation against Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986]: The advice was given to draw attention to Mr. Doody's right to an impartial review and was intended to be helpful. No authority to advise in this way was required. I regret that information on the number of occasions similar advice has been given is not available.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate has been made of the revenue consequences of applying value added tax to those areas which are currently zero-rated, but which are required by the European Community Commission to be subjected to value added tax; and what account has been taken of these estimates in preparing the Government's spending and borrowing plans.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986]: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 7 November at column 627.

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the Government's submissions to the European Court of Justice in respect of the application made by the European Community Commission to the court for a declaration concerning United Kingdom value added tax zero-rating; and if he will also publish any correspondence with the Commission on the same subject.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986]: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on 6 November at column 516.

Media Advertising

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the estimated spending of all Government Departments and agencies on television, radio and newspaper advertising, respectively, and other promotional literature in the current year; and what was the total in 1979-80 and each intervening year.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1986, c. 363]: Expenditure by the Central Office of Information on behalf of all Government Departments since 1979-80 is listed in the table below.

£'000s

	Television Advertising	Radio Advertising	Press Advertising	Other Promotional Material
1979-80	8,143	299	13,187	2,141
1980-81	7,531	769	13,691	4,362
1981-82	8,676	329	10,718	4,826
1982-83	6,082	449	12,952	4,652
1983-84	10,173	299	12,270	8,679
1984-85	6,433	436	13,220	10,997
1985-86	7,547	907	13,820	8,367

Figures for current financial year are not available in the requested format.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 26 November 1986

PRIME MINISTER

Westland plc

38. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister why no disciplinary action has been taken against any member of her staff over their conduct in the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 17 November, at columns 49-50.

State Security

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what is the estimated cost to public funds of Her Majesty's Government's case against Peter Wright in Australia which cannot be recovered regardless of the outcome of the judgment.

The Prime Minister: It is not possible at this stage to estimate the cost to public funds of Her Majesty's Government's case against Peter Wright in Australia which could not be recovered regardless of the outcome of the judgment.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Prime Minister if she will refer the matter of conversations between the Attorney-General, the right hon. and learned Member for Wimbledon (Sir M. Havers) and Mr. Chapman Pincher on 1 January 1983 on security issues to the Security Commission; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. I have no reason to believe that the conversations referred to raise any matters of concern to the Security Commission.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Prime Minister (1) if she will issue notes of guidance to Ministers drawing their attention to the inadvisability of discussing matters of security at social functions; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will issue notes of guidance to Ministers drawing their attention to the advisability of discussing security matters only on a need-to-know basis; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. Steps are already taken to draw Ministers' attention to these matters.

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister what factors led to the decision to send Sir Robert Armstrong as Her Majesty's Government's principal witness in the Wright case in Australia; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Sir Robert Armstrong is my principal official adviser in relation to matters of security. He accordingly swore the affidavits which form a significant part of the evidence relevant to the case and has appeared as the Government's principal witness in the proceedings.

WALES

A44 (Aberystwyth-Llangurig)

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to improve the A44 trunk road between Aberystwyth and Llangurig during the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Improvements are planned at Capel Bangor and Penllwyn crossroads. Their timing will depend on the completion of statutory procedures and the availability of financial resources.

All Wales Committee on Drug Misuse

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is in a position to announce the membership of the All Wales Committee on Drug Misuse, its aims and the date of its first meeting.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I have today announced the names of the 21 members of the All Wales Committee on Drug Misuse. The names and details of each member are contained in a press notice which I have placed in the Library.

The committee will be concerned with the development of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation services in response to the growing menace of drug misuse. The aims of the committee will be to keep under review the extent and nature of drug and solvent misuse in Wales; to help to disseminate good practice throughout Wales by advising statutory and voluntary local providers of service; and to suggest appropriate all-Wales responses to the problems identified. The membership, which is drawn from all over Wales, has a broad base of interests and includes a wide range of expertise and experience. I will inaugurate the committee on 4 December, when it will hold its first meeting.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Ahmadiyya Muslim Association

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in view of the problems faced by the supreme head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association on his arrival at Sheerness on 4 November, what action and discussion he has taken to ensure that such an incident does not take place again; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Mr. Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the supreme head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, arrived with a party of 10 other persons, all of whom were subject to immigration control. They were travelling in two cars, which arrived at the control kiosk towards the front of the queue of the 70 cars disembarking from the ferry. Only one immigration officer was immediately available to clear the car passengers. The passengers in the other cars were not subject to full immigration control and could be cleared more quickly. The chief immigration officer judged that the overall clearance rate of all vehicles would be more quickly achieved by requesting the party to wait until the other cars had been examined. The officer explained that his decision was based solely on grounds of operational efficiency and apologised for the delay. No discourtesy was intended to the supreme head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association and his party, and indeed

the chief immigration officer was not aware of the very important position which Mr. Ahmad held, but I regret the delay and inconvenience caused. Suitable advice has been given to the staff at Sheerness to prevent a recurrence.

Holloway Prison

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of acknowledged mentally disturbed inmates of Holloway prison who have been punished at disciplinary hearings since the beginning of the current year; how this figure compares with the two previous years; if he has any proposals to stop this practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The term "mentally disturbed" is not a medical term. Once a decision to charge any inmate has been taken, it is for medical officers to assess the inmate and bring to the governor's attention cases where the inmate is unfit for adjudication and punishment. Inmates who are mentally disordered are marked unfit for adjudication. Board of visitors adjudicating panels are provided with full medical reports, and it is always open to them to disagree with the assessment of fitness, and to defer or dismiss the charges. My right hon. Friend has no plans to change the current practice. Information on disciplinary hearings at Holloway prison is not available in the form requested. However, the following details are available for women in Holloway's psychiatric wing (C1 unit) and the main hospital (B4 unit).

	Number placed on report	*Assessed as unfit by MO*	*Found Guilty*	*Found not Guilty*	*Other*
C1					
1 April 1985—31 March 1986	199	31	166	1	1
1 April 1986—21 November 1986	123	75	48	0	0
B4					
1 April 1985—31 March 1986	102	24	75	2	1
1 April 1986—21 November 1986	61	25	36	0	0

Animal Welfare

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions were brought for cruelty to animals in the last year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Information on proceedings for offences of cruelty to animals is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, Volume 1" [table S1·1(A) of the 1985 issue under offence classification 108].

Crime Statistics

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes in which a firearm was used there were in the United Kingdom in 1985 and 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information for England and Wales relates to notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used and is published in table 3·1 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1985". The latest available figures for Scotland are for 1983 and were published in Scottish Home and Health Department "Statistical Bulletin", issue 4/1985.

Departmental Initiatives

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list initiatives by his Department which have been of benefit specifically to the north-east, north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside regions since 1979.

Mr. Hurd: Initiatives by my Department which have benefited these regions since 1979 include the crime prevention and community programme. Since this began in October 1985 some 61 community programme projects have been established, offering 2,904 places in the MSC north-west region, 28 projects offering 756 places in the MSC Yorkshire and Humberside region and 43 projects offering 1,419 places in the MSC northern region (comprising Northumbria, Tyne and Wear and Co. Durham). Five local crime prevention demonstration projects were also announced in October 1985; one of these is in Bolton and another in North Tyneside. These projects are designed to show how crime and the fear of crime can be reduced by co-ordinated action by local agencies and concentrate on particular local crime projects.

Following the announcement in 1985 that dedicated drugs wings would be created in all regional crime squad areas, drugs wings have been set up in three areas covering the north of England, providing seven wings, all of which are now operational. These wings are intended to increase the effectiveness of police operations against drug offences.

A substantial amount of building has also been undertaken in these regions since 1979. Capital allocations for police buildings, magistrates' courthouses and probation offices have been made to authorities in the areas named to enable them to provide in recent years some 40 major schemes which are now completed, under construction or in planning; a further 36 major schemes in these areas have been accepted for eventual inclusion in the capital allocation programmes. An extension to a protected underground control centre in Preston was completed in 1982 and a building with training facilities for UKWMO in Carlisle was completed in 1983.

Since 1979 my Department has completed three new prison establishments in these areas—Frankland, Thorn Cross youth custody centre and Lindholme—and two further establishments—Full Sutton and Garth—are still under construction. In addition, refurbishment and redevelopment work has been completed or is in progress at 13 existing prison establishments.

In respect of the Fire Service, for which I have a general statutory responsibility, during 1979 to 1985 major

building projects were undertaken in these areas which included four brigade HQs, four control centres, seven fire stations and two training centres.

Arrangements have also been made for increased posts in some areas which fall within my Department's responsibilities. Since May 1979 the following increases have been approved in the police establishments of forces in these areas:

	Number of additional police posts
North East	
Cleveland	63
Durham	8
Humberside	33
Northumbria	53
North Yorkshire	40
South Yorkshire	129
West Yorkshire	50
North West	
Cumbria	42
Greater Manchester	208
Lancashire	40
Merseyside	228
Cheshire	40

In order to make special provision for services to persons of Commonwealth origin my Department has substantially increased since 1979 the amount paid to local authorities for posts funded under section 11 of the Local Government Act in these areas. The Home Office has also provided 80 per cent. specific grant towards the cost of increases in the manpower of area probation services in the North of England.

In addition, the Home Office dispersed over 300 posts to Merseyside between 1981 and 1983.

Child Abuse

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the number of prosecutions for child abuse which were brought in the last year for which figures are available; and how many of the defendants in these cases were *(a)* the natural father of the child, *(b)* the natural mother of the child, *(c)* the stepfather of the child and *(d)* the stepmother of the child.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information for 1985 is brought together in the following table. For other types of offences of violence and sexual offences it is not possible from the records of the results of court proceedings to distinguish the age of the victim. Similarly, the data collected centrally do not contain details about the relationship between offender and victim, except in cases of homicide.

The information provided on those offences marked with an asterisk is published annually in "Criminal statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary tables, Volume 1" [table S1.1(A) in the issue for 1985].

Defendants proceeded against at all courts for certain violence against the person or sexual offences where the victim is known to be aged 16 or under
England and Wales—1985

	Number
Indictable offences	
Murder of infants under one year of age	6
Infanticide*	4
Cruelty to or neglect of children*	113
Abandoning child under two years*	6
Child abduction*	38
Buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	180
Attempt to commit buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	14
Indecent assault on a male person under 16	578
Indecent assault on a female person under 16	1,705
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13*	137
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16*	405
Incest with a girl under 13	55
Inciting girl under 16 to have incestuous sexual intercourse	1
Householder permitting unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16	5
Abduction of unmarried girl under 16	11
Gross indecency with children*	265
Summary offence	
Cruelty to a child, etc.*	3

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information he has concerning the number of suspected child abuse cases which have been reported in each region in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and how many of these reported cases involved children who were either illegitimate or members of single-parent families;

(2) what information he has concerning the numbers and percentages of all child abuse cases in the latest year for which figures are available in which the child concerned had been born illegitimate.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not collected centrally. Estimates of the numbers of children under 16 who were victims of certain violent and sexual offences recorded by the police in 1984 have been published in table 2 of Home Office "Statistical Bulletin" issue 29/86.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Domestic Violence

36. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will make a statement on the new guidelines issued to the police on domestic violence.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The revised guidelines have been made public. I have already arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library and copies are being made available to parties on request.

Mr. Alan J. Pocock

Mr. Kennedy asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he is yet in a position to make a statement on the case of Mr. Alan J. Pocock.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The case is being referred to the High Court by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland in terms of section 263 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975.

EMPLOYMENT

Enterprise Allowance

Mr. Colvin asked the Paymaster General if he will make the enterprise allowance available to those working in agriculture.

Mr. Trippier: The enterprise allowance is available to all unemployed people who can fulfil the eligibility conditions of the enterprise allowance scheme. Currently 4 per cent. of scheme participants are engaged in businesses in agriculture and horticulture.

Small Businesses

Mr. Ashdown asked the Paymaster General if he will give the latest estimate of the total size of the small business sector, including that represented by the self-employed; and if he will give the latest estimate of those employed within this sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: While accurate information is not available, small firms probably account for around 96 per cent. of the 1·4 million firms registered for VAT in the United Kingdom.

In June 1986 and estimated 2·7 million people in the United Kingdom were in self-employment, some of whom will have been in firms registered for VAT. In all, small firms probably provide employment for over one quarter of the employed labour force.

Self-employed Persons

Mr. Ashdown asked the Paymaster General if he will give the latest figures available for the total number of self-employed; and if he will indicate what trades and professions are represented in that total.

Mr. Lee: The latest provisional estimate of the number of self-employed persons in Great Britain, as shown in the regular quarterly self-employment series, is 2,665,000 as at June 1986. This series is not classified by occupation.

The labour force survey provides information on a different basis but allows an analysis by occupation. Estimates from the 1985 labour force survey are given in the table.

Self-employed Persons—Great Britain, Spring 1985

Occupation Order		*All Self-employed persons Thousands*
I	Professional and related supporting management and administration	187
II	Professional and related in education, welfare and health	160
III	Literary, artistic, sports	106
IV	Professional and related in science, engineering, technology and similar fields	77
V	Management	846
VI	Clerical and related	70
VII	Selling	157
VIII	Security and protective service	—
IX	Catering, cleaning, hairdressing and other personal service	140
X	Farming, fishing and related	62
XI	Processing, making, repairing and related (excluding metal and electrical)	205
XII	Processing, making, repairing and related (metal and electrical)	227
XIII	Painting, repetitive assembling, product inspecting, packaging and related	97
XIV	Construction and mining	263
XV	Transport operating, materials moving and storing	108
XVI	Miscellaneous	8
	Inadequately described not stated	3
	All occupations	2,714

Source Labour Force Survey

Labour Statistics

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing quarterly levels and changes in the United Kingdom employed labour force since 1979, together with the estimated average hours worked by each category of workers and the full-time equivalent level of the employed labour force for each quarter, identifying separately *(a)* employees in employment, *(b)* the armed forces and *(c)* the self-employed and, where possible, giving a breakdown of these categories by hours and sex.

Mr. Lee: The available estimates of the employed labour force are given in table 1.

TABLE 1 *Employed labour force in the United Kingdom* *seasonally adjusted thousand*

	Analysis by sex			of which						Full-time employees in employment	Part-time employees in employment
	Employed labour force			Employees in employment		Self-employed		HM Forces			
	Total	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	All males and full-time females[1]	Part-time females[2]
1979											
March	25,263	15,306	9,958	13,457	9,587	1,548	355	300	15	19,253	3,791
June	25,378	15,339	10,038	13,474	9,664	1,567	359	299	15	19,296	3,842
September	25,437	15,362	10,075	13,484	9,692	1,576	367	303	16	19,311	3,865
December	25,480	15,360	10,121	13,463	9,728	1,594	376	303	16	19,312	3,880
1980											
March	25,418	15,318	10,100	13,391	9,700	1,621	385	305	16	19,187	3,905
June	25,305	15,249	10,056	13,303	9,646	1,639	393	307	16	19,034	3,914
September	25,062	15,087	9,975	13,115	9,556	1,657	402	315	17	18,800	3,872
December	24,785	14,907	9,878	12,915	9,450	1,675	411	317	17	18,530	3,836
1981											
March	24,538	14,731	9,807	12,722	9,371	1,693	419	317	17	18,279	3,813
June	24,321	14,573	9,748	12,546	9,303	1,710	428	317	17	18,054	3,795
September	24,203	14,459	9,744	12,428	9,289	1,712	439	319	16	[3]17,905	[3]3,811
December	24,057	14,354	9,703	12,325	9,237	1,713	450	316	16	17,736	3,827
1982											
March	24,006	14,303	9,703	12,277	9,226	1,715	461	312	16	17,653	3,850
June	23,892	14,228	9,665	12,203	9,177	1,716	473	309	15	17,539	3,841
September	23,770	14,155	9,615	12,129	9,115	1,718	484	308	15	17,375	3,870
December	23,635	14,064	9,560	12,039	9,050	1,719	495	306	15	17,247	3,842
1983											
March	23,558	14,009	9,549	11,983	9,027	1,721	507	306	15	17,144	3,866
June	23,603	13,978	9,625	11,951	9,090	1,722	518	306	16	17,101	3,940
September	23,738	14,022	9,717	11,941	9,163	1,771	538	309	16	17,095	4,009
December	23,882	14,063	9,819	11,933	9,246	1,821	557	309	16	17,097	4,082
1984											
March	23,978	14,095	9,883	11,915	9,290	1,870	577	310	16	17,080	4,125
June	24,067	14,138	9,929	11,909	9,316	1,919	596	310	16	17,064	4,161
September	24,149	14,174	9,975	11,926	9,353	1,936	606	312	16	17,086	4,193
December	24,270	14,220	10,050	11,956	9,418	1,953	616	311	16	17,118	4,256
1985											
March	24,337	14,227	10,109	11,947	9,467	1,970	626	310	16	17,123	4,291
June	24,399	14,251	10,148	11,955	9,496	1,987	636	309	16	17,116	4,335
September	24,448	14,245	10,204	11,931	9,539	2,005	649	309	16	17,094	4,376
December	24,545	14,281	10,263	11,952	9,585	2,022	662	307	16	17,127	4,410
1986											
March	24,577	14,264	10,313	11,918	9,622	2,039	675	306	16	17,075	4,465
June	24,595	14,252	10,342	11,890	9,638	2,057	688	305	16	17,020	4,508

[1] Includes all employees in Northern Ireland, whether full time or part time.
[2] Great Britain.
[3] The Census of Employment shows that there were 17,092 full time and 4,624 part time employees in the United Kingdom in September 1981.

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) provides information on a different basis but identifies the average total usual hours worked by employees and the self-employed. Estimates from the 1985 LFS for Great Britain are presented in table 2.

Table 2
Labour Force Survey estimates of average total usual hours worked[1] —Great Britain, spring 1985

	Males	Females	Hours All persons
Employees	43·4	29·8	37·4
Self-employed	51·5	33·5	47·0
Employees and self-employed[2]	44·6	30·1	38·5

[1] Including overtime, excluding meal-breaks.
[2] Includes those who did not state if they were employees or self-employed.

The available quarterly estimates are insufficiently detailed to form the basis of a calculation of a full-time equivalent series.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Paymaster General if he will list the 50 constituencies in which unemployment shows the largest fall over the past 12 months.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the 50 parliamentary constituencies in Great Britain at 9 October 1986, where in percentage terms unemployment had the greatest fall in the previous 12 months.

Parliamentary Constituency	Percentage Decrease per cent.
Pembroke	19·2
Aberavon	14·6
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	14·2
Corby	13·4
Mole Valley	13·2
Basingstoke	13·0
Westminster North	12·1
Reading West	12·0
Maidstone	12·0
The City of London and Westminster South	11·7
Stockton North	10·4
Preston	10·3
Norwood	10·3
Woodspring	10·3
Stoke-on-Trent South	10·2
Wantage	9·9
Braintree	9·7
Eddisbury	9·7
Gloucester	9·3
Hartlepool	9·2
Oxford West and Abington	9·2
Medway	9·1
Dumbarton	9·0
Oxford East	8·9
Northavon	8·9
Neath	8·9
Stoke-on-Trent Central	8·9
Warwick and Leamington	8·9
Rutland and Melton	8·8
Upminster	8·7
Newbury	8·6
North Wiltshire	8·4
Shipley	8·4
Gillingham	8·3
Alyn and Deeside	8·2
Delyn	8·2
Stockton South	8·2
Worcester	8·2
Winchester	8·2
Swansea West	8·1
Sunderland North	8·0
Barking	8·0
Swansea East	7·8
Wrexham	7·8
Knowsley South	7·7
Hornchurch	7·7
Hyndburn	7·6
Tunbridge Wells	7·6
Staffordshire Moorlands	7·6
Workington	7·5

Note: Comparisons of unemployment between October 1985 and October 1986 are affected by the change in the timing of the compilation of unemployment statistics in March 1986.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing information available to him on the size of the employed labour force or the nearest alternative statistic in 1979 in each country in the European Community and in each subsequent year up to 1985 including estimates or projections where official data are not available, and showing *(a)* the source and coverage of all figures and *(b)* the time frame of each figure.

Mr. Lee: The employment information requested is given in the attached table.

Civilian employment

(Figures in thousands)

Country	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
United Kingdom	25,083	25,005	24,008	23,589	23,299	23,757	24,090
Belgium	3,707	3,706	3,627	3,578	3,542	3,546	3,573
Denmark	2,544	2,576	2,471	2,476	2,500	2,497	2,556
Germany	25,516	25,797	25,610	25,1[illegible]	24,793	24,828	25,000
Greece	3,311	3,356	3,529	3,501	3,540	3,552	3,589
France	21,317	21,347	21,226	21,240	21,168	20,978	20,916
Ireland	1,129	1,141	1,131	1,132	1,108	1,090	1,056
Italy	20,057	20,313	20,361	20,297	20,350	20,423	20,508
Luxembourg	156	157	158	158	157	158	160
Netherlands	4,821	4,973	5,005	5,010	4,932	4,966	5,106

Sources 1982-85 Eurostatistics Data for short-term economic analysis.
1979-82 OECD Labour Force Statistics 1964-84 Except United Kingdom (DE).

Disabled Persons

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General whether he has received any representations from any disablement organisation in relation to the recent European Community recommendation on the employment of disabled people; whether these representations express satisfaction or otherwise with the contents of the recommendations; and whether Her Majesty's Government supported or opposed the changes which took place in the final recommendation from the provisions of the earliest draft recommendation.

Mr. Lee: My Department received comments on the draft recommendation from the national advisory council on employment of disabled people and from the Spastics Society. Both organisations broadly supported the recommendation but expressed some reservations on points of detail. Ministers and officials took an active part in negotiations on the recommendation, and I believe the final text provides a clear but flexible framework for the continued development of measures to help the employment of disabled people.

Dock Workers

Mr. Lawler asked the Paymaster General how many new registered dock workers have entered the national

dock labour scheme in each of the last three years; and how many he estimates to be needed in the next three years.

Mr. Lee: The figures are:

	Number
1984	74
1985	37
1986[1]	44

[1] to date.

Of these new entrants, the majority replaced men who had left the industry through natural wastage. While it is not possible to predict requirements over the next few years, they are unlikley to be significantly different in scale.

Benefits

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General whether he will take steps to ensure that the questionnaire designed to discourage those who are not available for work from claiming benefits does not discourage claimants from taking up voluntary work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The introduction of the new procedures has made no change at all to the long-standing requirements for people who undertake voluntary work whilst claiming unemployment benefit to be available for work.

The established legal rules have always provided that voluntary work in itself does not prevent payment of benefit providing a claimant:

(1) can be readily contacted about a job opportunity;

(2) can on each day of their claim obtain release from the voluntary work to attend a job interview, or an interview in connection with employment prospects given at least 24 hours notice;

(3) can on any day of the claim relinquish the voluntary work to take up a suitable job given 24 hours notice;

(4) in respect of voluntary work either clearly:

(a) does not receive payment, or

(b) satisfies the "engaged in employment" rules (if claiming unemployment benefit).

In addition to the new availability questionnaire, all new claimants are issued with leaflets [UBL18 and NI 12] which draw their attention to the separate rules affecting voluntary work. A further and fuller leaflet [NI 240] is also issued on request.

Tooting

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Paymaster General (1) what is the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female disabled people who have been interviewed by his officials in the Tooting constituency as part of the availability for work scheme;

(2) what is the number of people over the age of 50 years who have been interviewed by his officials in the Tooting constituency as part of the availability for work test;

(3) what has been the number of people interviewed by his officials in the Tooting constituency as part of the project to see which people are available for work;

(4) what has been the number of people living in the Tooting constituency who have been refused benefit after being interviewed by his officials under his availability for work test.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Tooting A and B unemployment benefit offices took part in the experimental testing of the availability for work of new claimants and also those existing claimants over the age of 50 years who attend quarterly. The Tooting A office was a control for the experiment carried out in Tooting B office.

The information collected in the experiment is not available in the form requested. In the new claims experiment a total of 2,139 people completed questionnaires. Only in those cases where doubts arose about availability for work were interviews carried out but we do not keep a separate total of the number of interviews.

Similarly, we did not collect separate information about the numbers of disabled people involved.

The number of people who were subsequently disallowed benefit by the independent adjudication authorities on availability grounds was 44.

The experiment with those over the age of 50 years who attend quarterly is not yet complete but 338 questionnaires have been issued. The claim of one claimant in receipt of benefit has been disallowed and the crediting of a further 40 claimants in receipt of national insurance credits only, have been disallowed.

Restart Scheme

Mr. Raynsford asked the Paymaster General how many long-term unemployed people there were in the Fulham constituency before the introduction of the restart scheme; how many there are currently; and how many have in the meantime been interviewed as part of the restart scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 10 April 1986, the last date before the restart scheme was introduced nationally for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the number of claimants in the Fulham constituency who had been unemployed for over one year was 2,176. The comparable figure on 9 October 1986 was 2,193. We do not have figures for the number of people who have been interviewed and offered help and advice as part of the restart scheme in the Fulham constituency, but the Hammersmith restart team which covers the boroughs of Hammersmith, Fulham and Kensington and Chelsea has interviewed 4,764 people up to 13 November 1986.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further measures he has taken to improve the supply of mathematics, physics and craft and design and technology teachers since the publication of the recent consultative document.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Since the publication of the consultative document, I have asked the National Advisory Body to allocate expenditure—amounting to £2·1 million in the first year 1987-88 — for the development of courses by local authority institutions of higher education to increase the supply of teachers of the shortage subjects, namely mathematics, physics and craft, design and technology. The voluntary colleges have been allocated £250,000 in 1987-88 to enable them to participate in this initiative. The UGC, at my request, has set aside £1 million a year from 1987-88 onwards for similar initiatives in the universities. The Open University will receive up to £1·5 million in grant over the next three financial years for new work in support of shortage subject teachers, including the development of an in-service training package for physics.

The new in-service training grant power provided by the Education Act that reached the statute book earlier this month will permit local authorities to claim 70 per cent. central Government grant for in-service training schemes in national priority areas. Expenditure totalling £16·5 million on maths, science and CDT teachers will be eligible for such grants in 1987-88.

The Government and the local authorities are setting up a national unit to publicise career opportunities in teaching. Mr. J. Dodds, the assistant director of education of Kirklees, has been appointed to head this unit on secondment from his authority.

My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is today announcing that in future expenditure on industrial secondments to local education authorities, and educational institutions maintained by them, will be deductible for tax purposes. This new tax relief will complement the existing relief, introduced in 1983, for secondments to charities including universities, many other educational institutions, and, prospectively, the new city technology colleges. The new tax relief will encourage firms to offer help and British Petroleum, for example, has already decided to second employees to work in two local authorities to help relieve teacher shortages. British Petroleum has also joined the Government in sponsoring the Open University's physics pack for teachers.

With the support of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Industry, I have commissioned BBC Schools Television to produce a set of programmes to help maths and science teachers develop new and more effective ways of teaching their subjects and to respond positively to the challenge of the GCSE.

I am greatly encouraged by the number of proposals for action that the Department has received from many quarters. I shall be giving careful thought to all these suggestions. My aim is to develop policies that will tap new sources of supply, including women with family responsibilities who need part-time training opportunities and students changing from non-shortage subjects.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing *(a)* current non-clinical academic university salaries, *(b)* salaries for school teachers as foreshadowed in his statement of 30 October and *(c)* the salaries in the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service agreement of 15 November, showing starting salaries and salaries at age 27 years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is set out in the following table:

	(a) *Non-clinical academic university salaries*	*(b)* *School teacher salaries proposed in the Secretary of State's 30 October statement*	*(c)* *School teacher salaries proposed in 15 November ACAS agreement*
	£	£	£
	1 April 1985	*1 October 1987*	*1 September 1987*
Starting Salary	8,020	8,500	7,893
Salary at 27 years	9,495	11,400	10,800

1. The starting salary for university non-clinical academics is the minimum of the assistant lecturer/lecturer grade. The minimum salary at age 27 is three incremental points further up that scale.
2. Under the Government's proposals a good honours graduate would enter teaching at a salary of £8,500. In 1985 74 per cent. of new entrant teachers entered at the equivalent level or better. By age 27 such an entrant would rise another four incremental points on the main scale, to £11,400.
3. Under the proposals outlined in the 15 November ACAS agreement, (signed by NUT, AMA, SHA, and PAT on 21 November) new entrants to the teaching profession would all start at £7,893. There are no automatic increments for higher academic qualifications. By age 27 salary would rise another four incremental points on the main scale, to £10,800.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

GCSE

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that information about the GCSE is available to parents whose first language is not English.

Mrs. Rumbold: Leaflets for parents explaining the new GCSE are being issued this week by my Department in the following translations: Bengali, Chinese, Greek, Gujerati, Hindi, Punjabi, Turkish and Urdu. This is part of the continuing process of explaining the new examination to parents and employers.

Research

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his policy towards the funding of scientific research in each of the Welsh universities.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has endorsed the UGC's policy of selectivity in research funding and the committee's plans for developing that policy in conjunction with the research councils, as described in the *Official Report* for 6 November at columns *494-496*. The funding of scientific research in the constituent institutions of the University of Wales will depend upon decisions made by the University Grants Committee and by the institutions themselves, and their success in attracting funds from the research councils, industry and other sources.

Student Support

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total amount spent on student support for each year since 1976 both in cash terms and in real terms.

Mr. Dunn: Total expenditure on student maintenance excluding fees was as follows:

England and Wales

Academic years	Cash terms £ million	Real terms £ million
1976-77	227·5	495·6
1977-78	280·6	542·7
1978-79	327·9	570·3
1979-80	395·8	577·9
1980-81	467·4	590·1
1981-82	519·5	604·1
1982-83	557·3	609·1
1983-84	594·9	622·3
1984-85	579·0	579·0

Education Costs

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will initiate a review of the implications of transferring all the costs of the state sector of education to the national Exchequer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave to him on 5 November at column *435*.

Special Needs Project

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received the report by the Institute of Education on the Education Act 1981. "Policy and Provisions for Special Needs Project"; what action he proposes to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The report was received on 31 October. Its findings were presented at a national seminar held at the University of London Institute of Education on 10 November. My right hon. Friend now intends to study these, along with the findings from two complementary projects, with a view to considering whether amendments are needed, either to the legislation or to the current guidance issued to authorities.

ENVIRONMENT

Low-spending Councils

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the county councils currently regarded by his Department as low spenders.

Mr. Chope: In the Government's view every local authority has scope to obtain better value for money through increased efficiency. Therefore no local authority can be described as a low spender in the sense that it cannot make further economies.

Nuclear Installations

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on making available to independent researchers all records held by his Department of environmental monitoring around licensed nuclear installations, for all years that records exist; and if he will describe the arrangements under which such records may be used by independent researchers.

Mr. Waldegrave: The records which are held by this Department of environmental monitoring carried out near nuclear installations include information obtained by nuclear site operators. This information remains the property of the operators and requests to consult it should be addressed to them. Information gathered directly by this Department is obtained as a check on the accuracy and reliability of the operator's measurements. This material can be made available for inspection by independent researchers on written application to Her Majesty's Radiochemical Inspectorate.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of repairs and special grants to private owners were mandatory grants in each calendar year since 1979 in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* London.

Mr. Richard Tracey: Mandatory grants were introduced by provisions in the Housing Act 1980 and figures were first collected from English authorities for the June quarter of 1981; after the March quarter of 1986, numbers of mandatory repairs grants are to be reported annually. The available estimates are as follows. For Welsh figures, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mandatory repairs grants as per cent. of all repair grants[1]

	England	London
April to December 1981	9	21
1982	6	18
1983	4	11
1984	5	8
1985	11	16
1st quarter 1986	13	21

Mandatory special grants as per cent. of all special grants.

	England	London
April to December 1981	70	69
1982	75	78
1983	69	76
1984	79	87
1985	86	89
1st half 1986	91	93

[1] Mandatory grants to owners are not separately reported.

Notes: Percentages are based on numbers including estimates for missing returns.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number and amount of special grants paid to the owners of houses in multiple occupation in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* London;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number and amount of renovation grants paid by type of grant, to *(a)* owner-occupiers, *(b)* landlords and housing associations, *(c)* private sector tenants and *(d)* public sector tenants in : (i) England, (ii) Wales and (iii) London.

Mr. Tracey: Estimated figures for 1985 and first half 1986, with additional details for second quarter 1986, are given for England and London. For Welsh figures, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Renovation grants paid
By type of grant and type of recipient

	Number of dwellings				Amount (£ thousand)	
	Private owners		Tenants			
	Owner occupiers	Landlords and HA's	Private sector	Public sector	Private owners	Tenants
Conversion and improvement grants						
(i) *England*						
1985	40,060	9,720	440	2,840	267,234	6,472
1986 1st half P	17,400	3,560	220	2,260	99,414	3,438
(ii) *London*						
1985	5,920	1,730	100	150	47,257	819
1986 1st half P	2,280	600	50	40	19,715	231
Intermediate grants						
(i) *England*						
1985	20,680	5,470	340	580	76,369	1,391
1986 1st half P	9,390	2,490	180	390	34,446	807
(ii) *London*						
1985	3,260	990	70	100	15,709	373
1986 1st half P	1,410	530	30	40	6,922	171
Repairs grants						
(i) *England*						
1985	43,880	10,340	340	10	166,549	944
1986 1st half P	17,060	3,650	110	10	62,011	479
(ii) *London*						
1985	13,730	3,890	130	—	68,784	485
1986 1st half P	3,850	1,540	30	—	23,614	112

Amount of grants paid: 2nd quarter 1986

(£ thousand)

	Private owners		Tenants	
	Owner occupiers	Landlords and HA's	Private sector	Public sector
Conversion and improvement grants				
(i) England	35,503	7,303	173	692
(ii) London	6,797	1,333	73	36
Intermediate grants				
(i) England	12,096	3,343	186	171
(ii) London	2,320	781	41	70
Repairs grants				
(i) England	26,165	4,848	85	—
(ii)-London	9,522	2,563	6	—

Special grants to owners of houses in multiple occupation

	Number of houses		Amount (£ thousand)	
	England	London	England	London
1985	1,960	850	8,516	3,859
1986 1st half P	1,110	470	5,234	2,500

Notes:
Figures include estimates of missing returns: numbers of grants are rounded to the nearest 10.
— = Fewer than 5 grants paid in the year.
P = Provisional.

Angling

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will seek to make further facilities available for the sport of angling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The responsibility for considering the general need for further facilities lies with the Sports Council, with of course the angling bodies. Although most of the existing and potential amenities are owned by the British Waterways Board and local and water authorities. The Sports Council recognises angling's importance as a popular sport and provides financial and other support to aid its development.

Housing (Energy Efficiency)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice on energy efficiency will be available from the new housing advice centres which his Department is to fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Both the organisations which the Department is to fund, Care and Repair Ltd. and

Neighbourhood Revitalisation Services (NRS), are aware of the importance of energy efficiency measures to the repair and improvement of the housing stock. NRS already works closely with Neighbourhood Energy Action and is shortly to employ an energy surveyor to promote energy efficiency at its pilot project in Hillsborough, Sheffield. NRS hopes that experience in Sheffield will provide a model for incorporating energy efficiency into future projects. Care and Repair projects also give clients advice on and help with improved insulation and other efficiency measures and expect to liaise with existing specialist agencies, such as those run by Neighbourhood Energy Action, in the areas where schemes are established.

Homeless Young Persons

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish statistics on the numbers of homeless young people; and what advice he has given to local authorities on the subject of housing provision for such young people.

Mr. Tracey: The statistics that we collect from local authorities on homelessness do not contain a breakdown by age or household composition.

Individual homeless young people may fall into one of the priority need categories (including the vulnerable) for whom authorities have a duty to secure accommodation. In our code of guidance we have asked authorities to treat as vulnerable young people at risk of sexual or financial exploitation, and, where resources permit, to do all they can to ensure that accommodation is secured by homeless people outside the priority need categories. Authorities also have a duty under section 22 of the Housing Act 1985 to give a reasonable preference to homeless people among others in the selection of their tenants, and we have urged authorities to allocate tenancies on the basis of housing need. It is, however, for individual authorities to decide on their own housing priorities within their areas.

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action his Department is taking to deal with the problem of homeless young people.

Mr. Tracey: Young people stand to benefit from a range of Government measures, including new housing association schemes for young people wishing to move to take up employment, our hostels initiative, the facilitating of subletting by council tenants and other more general measures to relieve homelessness. We are also helping to fund a leaflet by the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless Trust aimed at preventing homelessness among young people and advising them on accommodation prospects before they take the decision to leave home.

Chemical Compounds

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's Government conduct research designed to discover the possible environmental effects of all new chemical compounds (i) known to be entering the environment and (ii) upon commencement of production with a view to their inclusion on either black or grey lists of the Oslo commission, Paris commission or the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: New chemicals are subject to the provisions of the Notification of New Substances Regulations 1982. These implement European Community directive 79/831/EEC which requires manufacturers or importers to submit a package of information and technical data on new substances prior to placing them on the market in the European Community. The information submitted covers environmental effects and the onus is on the notifier to carry out the appropriate tests to get the information required to satisfy the competent authority (the Health and Safety Executive and my Department acting jointly). It is not necessary for the Government to commission research, therefore. The information submitted is assessed by my Department to establish the potential environmental hazards of the notified substance. If the assessment of a substance showed that it met the criteria laid down by the Oslo or Paris commissions or by the European Community, this could lead to a recommendation that the substance be included on the black or grey lists.

Play Board

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the East Midlands Play Association opposing his decision to integrate Play Board with the Sports Council; and what reply he has sent.

Mr. Tracey: None. However, I am aware that the proposals to merge Play Board's functions with those of the Sports Council have not been fully understood and, as a result, have caused some concerns. The proposals are not, as seems to be widely believed, designed to merge "play" into "sport"; they are aimed at achieving a strengthening of the campaign to raise the profile of play.

Over the past three years Play Board has succeeded in bringing to the fore the needs of children for proper play facilities and opportunities. I agree with the board that more remains to be done and a national focus for play remains important. I believe, however, that this role needs to be given added impetus through having an ability to grant-aid facilities and projects, for which additional funds from the private sector should be generated. It is for this purpose that I consider play should be brought within the structure and role of a major, established body—one with a track record for achieving results, for raising private sector funds, and value for money.

Consequently I have proposed to Play Board that its function and role should be merged with the Sports Council. The two bodies have agreed to enter into negotiations with us to identify the best way forward acceptable to both parties and to the Government. Those negotiations started on 25 November and I know that "play's" separate identity and needs are going to form an important part of the future discussions. Nevertheless, I am hopeful that the two organisations will reach agreement on future arrangements for the greater benefit of children's play.

Political Propaganda

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will now introduce legislation to repeal sections in the Local Government Act 1986, concerning political propaganda on the rates;

(2) if he will seek to redefine "prohibited material" in the Local Government Act 1986 to include partisan as well as party political propaganda on the rates.

Dr. Boyson: I refer to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on Tuesday 25 November 1986. My right hon. Friend will consider all the options for restoring the effects of the words deleted by their Lordships.

Private Lettings (Fair Rents)

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the total number of lettings by private landlords, excluding housing associations, currently in existence in Greater London, and as to what percentage of these involve fair rents set by the rent officer.

Mr. Tracey: From the annual "Labour Force Survey" it is estimated that there were some 400,000 households in Greater London renting from private landlords in the spring of 1984; these included job—or business-related lettings and other lettings to which the Rent Act does not apply. There were an estimated 130,000 regulated tenancies in London at the end of June 1984, for which a fair rent had been registered within the previous 24 months.

Camden (Housing)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will use his powers under section 23 of the Housing Act 1980 in respect of the London borough of Camden; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I am most concerned over the council's inadequate performance in the handling of right-to-buy applications, which is formally monitored by the Department. The case for advising the Secretary of State to use his powers of intervention will be kept under review. I shall write to my hon. Friend.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Rolls-Royce plc

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultations he proposes to have with employees of Rolls-Royce prior to privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: Consultation with the employees of Rolls-Royce is a matter for the company.

Calor Gas (Takeover)

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has recently received concerning the proposed takeover of Calor Gas.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations from hon. Members and others about this proposed acquisition. They have been drawn to the attention of the Director General of Fair Trading, who is currently examining the proposal with a view to advising my right hon. Friend whether the proposal should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for investigation.

Takeover Bids

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his Department's policy towards the conditional disposal of assets proposed in takeover bids of British companies by overseas concerns.

Mr. Howard: The current policy on references of merger proposals to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is that they are made primarily on competition grounds, but under the Fair Trading Act 1973 each qualifying merger proposal is considered individually on its own merits. Any proposals for the conditional disposal of assets would be included in this consideration, but there is no presumption that such disposals are intrinsically objectionable, whatever the nationality of the bidder.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to provide for the principle of one-person one-vote in future internal elections in Hong Kong; if he has discussed this matter with the Chinese Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: There will be a review of the further development of representative government in Hong Kong in 1987. This review will consider all aspects of the subject, including the question whether direct elections to the Hong Kong Legislative Council should be introduced. Decisions on this must await the outcome of the review. My right hon. and learned Friend explained our position on the review to Chinese leaders when he visited China with Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place with the Chinese Government, or are planned, about the future of the walled city in Hong Kong.

Mr. Renton: There is a very wide range of issues affecting Hong Kong which we are or will be discussing with the Chinese Government. Such discussions are, however, confidential unless otherwise agreed.

Daya Bay Nuclear Reactor

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the proposed Daya Bay nuclear reactor; if he has raised this issue with the Chinese Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: One. During his recent visit to China my right hon. and learned Friend discussed the proposed nuclear power plant at Daya Bay with senior Chinese officials. They assured him that the Chinese Government are fully alive to concerns of Hong Kong people about safety aspects of the project. We shall remain in touch with the Chinese authorities, both on our own behalf and on behalf of Hong Kong.

Elgin Marbles

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations

Her Majesty's Government have received during the past 12 months concerning restitution of the Elgin Marbles to Greece.

Mr. Eggar: We have not received any official representations concerning the restitution of the Elgin Marbles to Greece since a reply was given to the request for their return through UNESCO in October 1985. We have received 12 separate representations from private groups and individuals on this subject within the past 12 months.

Indonesia (Political Prisoners)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received, in the context of the Foreign Ministers' meeting at Jakarta last month, concerning political prisoners in Indonesia; whether he took these questions up with the Indonesian authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Several hon. Members have written to me about the recent executions of nine people in Indonesia. In early October Her Majesty's ambassador in Jakarta expressed to the Indonesian authorities at a high level the collective concern of the Governments of the member states of the European Community about these executions. He also lodged a strong appeal for clemency for others currently under sentence of death. The Indonesian Government were fully aware of our views when my right hon. and learned Friend visited Jakarta for the EC-ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting. He did not therefore raise the matter with them again on that occasion.

Iran

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Administration on the co-ordination of their embargoes on lethal arms sales to Iran.

Mr. Renton: None. Our policy remains as described by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 18 November that:

(i) We should maintain our consistent refusal to supply any lethal equipment to either side;
(ii) Subject to that overriding consideration, we should attempt to fulfil existing contracts and obligations;
(iii) We should not, in future, approve orders for any defence equipment which, in our view, would significantly enhance the capability of either side to prolong or exacerbate the conflict;
(iv) In line with this policy, we should continue to scrutinise rigorously all applications for export licences for the supply of defence equipment to Iran and Iraq.

Cambodia

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to give assistance to forces which are resisting the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to him on 20 November, at column 312. It is our policy to continue to give humanitarian assistance to the non-Communist resistance. We have pledged £200,000 for this purpose in 1986-87. We do not provide military assistance nor assistance in cash. Nor do we provide any assistance to the Khmer Rouge.

Electoral Register

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many overseas electors' declarations have been attested at British consulates under the terms of the Representation of the People Act 1985, with a view to inclusion in the Electoral Register coming into force on 16 February 1987.

Mr. Eggar: The provisional total for the number of declarations attested between 11 July when the regulations governing the Act came into force and 10 October, is 12,207.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

State Security

Mr. Winnick asked the Attorney-General what contacts he has had with the Australian authorities regarding the Wright case; if he will set out the dates of the relevant letters and telephone conservations; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Discussions on these matters between the Australian authorities and Her Majesty's Government are confidential.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General what consideration he has given to proceeding against *(a)* Mr. Arthur Franks, formerly head of MI6, and *(b)* Lord Rothschild for breach of confidence in relation to information on matters of state security given to authors.

The Attorney-General: I am considering with the Director of Public Prosecutions the allegations made in respect of the two named individuals.

DEFENCE

European Community (Service Personnel)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has for each European Economic Community country, as to the total number of *(a)* regular service personnel, *(b)* reservists and *(c)* national service personnel.

Mr. Freeman: Details for the United Kingdom are as follows:

	Number
Regular service personnel	[1]322,614
Reservists	[2]306,812
National service personnel	Nil

[1] At 30 September 1986.
[2] At 31 March 1986.

For detailed information on the armed forces of the other countries of the European Economic Community I would refer my hon. Friend to the International Institute for Strategic Studies publication "The Military Balance 1986-87", a copy of which is in the Library.

Edinburgh Festival

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the extent of the contribution of

the British armed services, in the context of Edinburgh castle, to benefit the Edinburgh Festival and the public perception of the armed forces in Edinburgh and Scotland, through the Edinburgh military tattoo and in other ways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: For centuries the public has been familiar with the sight of the daily mounting of the Edinburgh Castle guard and other public ceremonial duties. More recently, the Armed Forces have organised the Edinburgh military tattoo, which involves over 350 military personnel in August each year at the time of the Edinburgh Festival. The military presence at Edinburgh castle is an integral part of the Edinburgh garrison. It includes a number of military units, and houses the operational headquarters of 52 Lowland Brigade, for which we foresee a continuing role in the future.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Newry-Dundalk Road

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals there are for the improvement of the Newry to Dundalk road; what proportion of the total cost will be borne by Northern Ireland; if he will make available a map delineating this proposed route of this road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: This major cross-border route has been the subject of discussion between the relevant authorities in Northern Ireland and the Republic. There is agreement that the existing road should be maintained as the main link between Newry and Dundalk, and that there should be further discussions.

Traffic Densities

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the most up-to-date census figures for traffic density at *(a)* the boder on the Newry-Dundalk road and *(b)* on the Antrim-Ballymena road.

Mr. Needham: Traffic density, measured during 1986, was 8,000 and 15,000 vehicles per day respectively.

Violent Deaths and Injuries

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of deaths and injuries arising from violence in Northern Ireland in each of the two periods of 12 months ended 15 November 1985 and 15 November 1986.

Mr. Scott *[pursuant to his reply,* 17 November 1986, c. *57-58]*: Between 16 November 1984 and 15 November 1985 56 people died and 933 were injured as a result of the security situation in the Province. The corresponding figures for the succeeding 12 months are 64 and 1,429.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many plastic bullets were fired by the Royal Ulster Constabulary; and how many members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary were injured in street disturbances in each of the two periods of 12 months, ended 15 November 1985 and 15 November 1986.

Mr. Scott *[pursuant to his reply,* 17 November 1986, c. *57-58]*: The information sought is as follows:

	12 months ended 15 November 1985	*12 months ended 15 November 1986*
Plastic baton rounds fired by the RUC	918	1,463
RUC (including RUC reserve) injured	319	632

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what will be the estimated spending by his Department on television, radio and newspaper advertising respectively, and other promotional literature in the current year; and what was the total in 1979-80 and each intervening year.

Dr. Mawhinney *[pursuant to his reply,* 19 November 1986, c. *257]*: The total figures for the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments are as follows:

	£
1979-80	1,341,237
1980-81	1,069,135
1981-82	1,593,435
1982-83	1,607,005
1983-84	2,912,239
1984-85	2,705,857
1985-86	3,721,919
1986-87	[1]3,428,850

[1] Estimated.

SCOTLAND

Teachers' Dispute

14. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet representatives of the teaching unions to discuss the issues involved in the current teachers' dispute; and if he will make a statement.

21. **Mr. Steel** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he has recently had with the Educational Institute of Scotland concerning a settlement to the teachers' dispute.

31. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement about the teachers' pay dispute.

33. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Scottish teachers' dispute.

Mr. John Mackay: I refer my hon. Friend, the right hon. Member and the hon. Members to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) earlier today.

Advanced Manufacturing Technology (Lanarkshire)

16. **Dr. Bray** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what initiatives he is taking to promote advanced manufacturing technology in the engineering industry in Lanarkshire.

Mr. Lang: The Government have a number of schemes to promote awareness of advanced manufacturing

technology throughout the United Kingdom, including assistance towards feasibility and implementation studies. In addition, there is available in the assisted areas a range of regional measures to help encourage companies to invest in advanced manufacturing technology.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions of Work)

17. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress being made on the question of teachers' salaries and conditions of work.

Mr. John Mackay: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) earlier today.

Glasgow Airport

18. **Mr. Allan Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the economic impact in Scotland of the proposed development of Glasgow airport.

Mr. Rifkind: The British Airports Authority considers the proposed expansion of facilities at the airport necessary in the context of the substantial increase expected in existing European traffic over the next 10 years. Such a development can only be of benefit to Strathclyde and to Scotland as a whole.

Glasgow (East End)

19. **Mr. Martin** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to build a new geriatric facility which would provide for the needs of the elderly in the east end of Glasgow.

Mr. John MacKay: There have been proposals for some time to build a new hospital facility for the elderly at Belvidere hospital, Glasgow. These proposals are, however, being reviewed by the Greater Glasgow health board as part of the board's consideration of geriatric services for its area as a whole.

Council of Fisheries Ministers

20. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he attended the Council of Fisheries Ministers on 5 November: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend, the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) attended this meeting.

Council House Sales

22. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied with the progress being made with the sale of council houses in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: Yes. Since 1979 over 88,000 public sector tenants have bought their houses; binding contracts of sale have been concluded in a further 3,300 cases; and there are approximately another 6,600 applications at an earlier point in the pipeline. Local authorities are also increasingly appreciating the need to process sales quickly. The average time taken to complete transactions has fallen to approximately 7.5 months. Increased discount provisions for tenants of local authority flats which will come into effect on 7 January should further encourage sales.

AIDS

23. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the incidence of acquired immune deficiency syndrome in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on 4 November at columns *397-8*.

30. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the numbers of *(a)* males and *(b)* females, who are carriers of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome virus in (i) Scotland, (ii) Strathclyde and (iii) Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: It is not possible to estimate the total number of carriers of the AIDS virus in Scotland. However, by 30 September 1986, reports were received from Scottish laboratories of 619 males and 235 females who were found, on having their blood tested, to have antibodies to the virus. Of these, 140 males and 40 females were the subject of tests carried out by laboratories in Glasgow; but since patients are not identified in reports on these tests their place of residence is unknown.

Road Construction and Improvement

24. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many miles of motorway or trunk road have been constructed or improved during the past seven years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Since May 1979 about £600 million has been invested in new construction and improvements of motorways and trunk roads in Scotland. During this period 77 major schemes, each costing over £1 million, have been opened to traffic. These have provided 22 miles of new motorway and 195 miles of new or improved trunk road. The reconstruction of the A9 from Perth to Easter Ross had been completed and substantial progress has been made on other routes, including the Perth to Aberdeen route (which has been largely upgraded to dual carriageway standard) and the A75 Gretna to Stranraer route. Altogether 24 bypasses have been opened, relieving communities of through traffic. A further 21 miles of motorway and major trunk road improvements, including three bypasses, are under construction. Over 100 major schemes, including 40 bypasses, with a total value of £580 million are at various stages of preparation. When completed they will provide a further 279 miles of new or improved road. These figures underline the Government's commitment to improving Scotland's network of main roads.

Steel Industry

25. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the chairman of the British Steel Corporation to discuss the Scottish steel industry.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend and I met the chairman of the British Steel Corporation on 4 November. There are no immediate plans for another meeting although, as indicated previously, we hope to continue to meet on a regular basis.

Health Boards (Financing)

27. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairmen of the health boards in Scotland to discuss their future financing.

Mr. John MacKay: My noble Friend the Minister of State met health board chairmen on 10 November when the funding of boards was one of the topics discussed. My noble Friend's next meeting with chairmen as a group will take place on 10 March 1987. He expects to meet many chairmen individually before then during his programme of visits to boards.

National Tree Week

28. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what initiatives his Department has taken to promote national tree week from 29 November to 7 December.

Mr. John Mackay: The work of the Tree Council, which is sponsoring national tree week, does not extend to Scotland. Amenity tree planting in Scotland is actively supported by the Countryside Commission for Scotland on a continuous basis.

Peterhead Prison

29. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to visit Peterhead prison.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to visit Peterhead prison. I visited the prison on 14 October 1986.

Autumn Statement

32. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the likely impact upon unemployment in Scotland of the Government's autumn statement.

Mr. Lang: The outlook for the United Kingdom economy as given in the autumn statement is for faster economic growth during the course of 1987 with inflation remaining at low levels. Scotland stands to benefit from faster United Kingdom and world growth because of the importance of the rest of the United Kingdom and overseas as markets for Scottish goods and services.

Private Health Care

34. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has had any discussions on private health care with the area health board executives.

Mr. John MacKay: The Scottish Home and Health Department issued to general managers of health boards a consultative paper on the management of private practice in Health Service hospitals in July 1986. The paper introduced a handbook which revised and drew together in one document all previous guidance relating to control of private practice in National Health Service hospitals in Scotland. The comments received are presently being considered. I expect the handbook to be issued early next year.

Health boards are also to be consulted very shortly about new draft regulations relating to the registration of private hospitals and nursing homes.

Torness Power Station

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what further training exercises for emergencies at Torness nuclear power station are required by Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate before commissioning is due to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: One further full demonstration exercise at Torness power station is required by Her Majesty's Nuclear Installation's Inspectorate during commissioning. The South of Scotland Electricity Board will also carry out any other demonstrations of emergency arrangements deemed necessary by Her Majesty's Nuclear Installation's Inspectorate before commissioning is complete.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what training exercises for emergencies have been held at Torness nuclear power station in the presence of one or more inspectors of Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate; what was the date and the nature of each exercise; and what reports have been made by inspectors.

Mr. Lang: A team of inspectors from Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate observed a demonstration of the Torness nuclear power station emergency arrangments on 18 September 1986. Formal comments on the exercise were made by the inspectorate and these are being acted upon.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the simulators being used for training of management and staff at Torness nuclear power station *(a)* accurately reflect the behaviour of reactors, boilers and turbines of Torness power station and *(b)* are used to provide training for management and staff on fault condition specific to the period of commissioning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by the South of Scotland Electricity Board that Torness staff have received training on the AGR simulator at the CEGB nuclear power training centre at Oldbury. This simulator is generically characteristic of all AGRs and can demonstrate the fundamental principles of performance during fault conditions including those which may occur during commissioning.

Chernobyl Accident

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether at any time following the Chernobyl accident on 26 April 1986, any form of advice was given by any Government office or agency in Scotland to the Milk Marketing Board or to any other body involved in milk distribution, that any non-routine arrangements should be adopted for the pooling of milk supplies from different areas.

Mr. John MacKay: No.

North Sea Oil (Highlands and Islands)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will assess the impact on the economy of the Highlands and Islands of the rundown associated with the North sea oil and oil-related industry; if he will announce any Government initiatives in the light of such developments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Within the Highlands and Islands, employment wholly associated with North sea oil was 5,573 in December 1985 and 5,783 in June 1986. Since then 550 redundancies have been reported at McDermotts and the Howard Doris yard, employing around 700, has gone into receivership.

The Government are of course concerned about the effects of low oil prices, particularly on jobs, but it should be borne in mind that the oil industry still presents major opportunities for Scottish industry and will continue to do so for many years to come.

Forestry Grant Applications

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what new initiatives the Forestry Commission has implemented to achieve a reasonable balance between the development of afforestation and nature conservation when approving forestry grant applications *(a)* generally and *(b)* in the flow country of Sutherland and Caithness;

(2) if he will take steps to ensure that, in relation to the flow country of Sutherland and Caithness, the Forestry Commission undertakes full consultations with the Nature Conservancy Council on all forestry applications both within sites of special scientific interest and the wider countryside within those districts.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission's consultation arrangements for forestry grant applications are kept under review to ensure that they continue to meet their long-standing objective to achieve a reasonable balance between forestry and other land use interests, including nature conservation. Since the passage of the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985, which placed a new duty on the forestry commissioners regarding the balance between forestry and the environment, the commission has given added emphasis to the need to satisfy itself as far as possible that proposals contained in grant applications are sensibly drawn on silvicultural, land use, nature conservation and landscape grounds before the consultation process is started. This is done against the background of the commission's own knowledge, which, in the case of nature conservation, is being assisted through the setting up of local consultative panels to provide a forum for discussion of environmental issues affecting forestry in their areas, and by advice as appropriate from the Nature Conservancy Council. The commission is also in the course of reviewing the composition and procedures of its regional advisory committees.

As regards the flow country of Sutherland and Caithness, the commission has extended its normal arrangements for consulting the Nature Conservancy Council to include not only planting proposals in SSSIs but also those in areas identified by the council as possible candidates for future notification. These arrangements are being kept under review in the light of discussions at present taking place between the Forestry Commission, the Scottish Office and the Nature Conservancy Council.

School Clothing Grants

26. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to change the current provisions for school clothing grants to be made by education authorities in Scotland.

Mr. John Mackay: No.

TRANSPORT

Trading Vessels

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest forecast of the proportion of the United Kingdom-owned merchant trading fleet registered in the United Kingdom mainland ports.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In August about 55 per cent. of the shipping directly owned by United Kingdom companies —as measured by total deadweight—was registered in the United Kingdom. The figures used include ships owned by United Kingdom subsidiaries of foreign companies and exclude ships beneficially but not directly owned by United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the tax reliefs, grants and preferential loans available to an investor in a coastal or short sea trading vessel in the United Kingdom; and what information he has as to comparable incentives in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Investors in merchant vessels—coastal, short sea or other—in the United Kingdom are normally eligible for annual writing-down allowances of 25 per cent. of the capital cost on a reducing balance basis. The allowances can be carried over into future years and taken at will. United Kingdom owners investing in United Kingdom newbuilt ships are eligible for loans under the home shipbuilding credit scheme for 80 per cent. of the capital cost at a fixed rate of interest of 7·50 per cent. over 8½ years. Early repayment of such loans attracts a discount. The business expansion scheme covers companies engaged in shipping including ship chartering, subject to certain conditions. Under the scheme individual investors may get income tax relief for amounts up to £40,000 per year subscribed to new full risk equity.

In the Federal Republic of Germany investors in merchant ships receive grants of up to 12·50 per cent. of the cost of new vessels (20 per cent. of conversions) provided they operate under the national flag for a minimum of eight years. Interest-free loans are also available under certain circumstances. More generally, credit arrangements for domestic orders are available; they are understood to be equivalent to those permitted under OECD rules. Both the straight line and declining balance methods of depreciation are permitted. If the straight line method is chosen, a shipowner may claim in addition an accelerated depreciation allowance of up to 40 per cent. of the purchase price of the vessel during the year of delivery or the following four years.

Untraced Drivers

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that, in the case of payments made under the untraced drivers agreement he entered into with the Motor Insurers' Bureau interest is paid to applicants on any sum paid to them.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. The agreement means that people injured by unidentified drivers are able to claim compensation from the Motor Insurers' Bureau, when otherwise they would have no redress. But the bureau is not the guilty party. Its need to investigate before offering to settle does not parallel a driver's decision to contest a claim in court, from which the payment of interest stems.

I am satisfied that the bureau's practice strikes a reasonable balance between claimants and the insured motorists who finance the bureau through their premiums.

A30

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport when work will start on the preferred route of the A30 Sourton-Launceston road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This scheme is in the national programme for a start of construction in the period from April 1989 onwards. It is not yet possible to give a more precise indication of the likely timetable.

South Yorkshire PTA

Mr. Cabom asked the Secretary of State for Transport why the expenditure level for 1987-88 for the South Yorkshire passenger transport authority has been set 23 per cent. lower than the expenditure level for 1986-87.

Mr. David Mitchell: The expenditure level of £45·7 million determined in July for South Yorkshire passenger transport authority was determined in accordance with the provisions of the Rates Act 1984. It requires a reduction in expenditure on public transport, as has been proposed in advice given to the PTA and the former South Yorkshire county council many times over the last decade. The PTA has applied for the expenditure level to be redetermined at £55 million, and we are now giving careful consideration to that application.

British Rail

Mr. Leadbitter asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in convenient categories of employment the total work force in British Rail from 1976 and the latest available date.

Mr. David Mitchell: Details of staff numbers in British Rail can be found in the Department of Transport's publication "Transport Statistics in Great Britain 1975-85" (Table 3.8) a copy of which is deposited in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Leadbitter asked the Secretary of State for Transport what improvements he expects to see in the efficiency and comfort of British Rail services arising from the proposed increase in fares.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have set the board objectives which call for improved services and efficiency. We are underpinning this with massive investment. We have also asked the board to reflect increasingly, in its fares structure, improvements in the quality of service.

Settle-Carlisle Line

Mr. Leadbitter asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of representations made to him objecting to the proposal to close the Settle to Carlisle line and the dates of those representations; what meetings he has had with organisations and persons and with British Rail; if he will indicate what further consideration is planned; and when a decision is likely to be made.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since the British Railways board announced its proposal to close the Settle to Carlisle line in December 1983 the Department of Transport has received around 1,800 individual representations about the proposal, most of which oppose closure. We have also received a petition of over 40,000 signatures against the proposal. It would be an unjustifiable expense to list the date of each objection.

I have had a number of discussions about the proposal with various organisations, including the board. I have attended meetings of local representatives in Carlisle, Appleby and Settle, and inspected stations and structures on the line.

In reaching our decision we shall consider all the relevant factors including the representations made to us, the board's case for closure, the report of the transport users consultative committees on hardship, and the wider social and economic considerations. I cannot say how long this will take.

Travel Concessions

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has offered any advice to county and district councils and transport authorities, as regards consultation with the appropriate national voluntary organisations when selecting travel concessions for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Local councils and transport authorities involved in establishing travel concession schemes have general duties to have regard to the needs of members of the public who are elderly or disabled in formulating their transport policies. To fulfil these duties they may well wish to establish local consultation arrangements with voluntary organisations and others. My Department has issued no central advice on how such consultation might take place.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements he has made to arrange monitoring of the implementation of the provisions of the Transport Act 1985 regarding the provision of travel concessions to disabled people; and if he will publish a report.

Mr. David Mitchell: Earlier this year my Department, together with the Scottish Development Department and the Welsh Office, undertook a survey of local authorities to establish what schemes for concessionary fares to the elderly and disabled they had established or intended to establish under the 1985 Transport Act, and what schemes had been in operation before. Almost all authorities indicated that they planned to maintain concessions for handicapped people provided under earlier legislation, and a significant proportion planned to extend them.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek to involve voluntary organisations in publicising travel concessions for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The authority or authorities which establish a travel concession scheme are responsible under the Transport Act 1985 for publishing full particulars. It is for them to involve local voluntary organisations where they see fit. I am aware that a number of authorities do so and I welcome this.

Airport Consultative Committees

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the future of airport consultative committees under the Airports Act 1986.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) on 21 November at col. *362*. The provision for statutory consultation at designated airports is contained in section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982, and is unaffected by the Airports Act 1986 except for the removal of the exemption of airports managed by BAA. My right hon. Friend designated the airports belonging to BAA plc under the amended section 35 of the 1982 Act on 31 July 1986.

Roads

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all those trunk schemes for which a public inquiry ended before 1 January but upon which his decision is still outstanding.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Decisions remain outstanding on the following trunk road schemes for which public inquiries ended before 1 January 1986:

M3 Bar End—Bassett;
A3 Liphook and Petersfield Bypasses;
A11 Thetford Bypass;
A23 Warninglid—Brighton;
A43 Kettering Northern Bypass (Note 1)
A406 Popes Lane—Western Avenue;
A423 Maidenhead Thicket—Burchetts Green;
A604 M1-A1 Link
(Note 1—This scheme was taken to public inquiry with A604 M1-A1 link).

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the schemes included in "National Roads England 1985" for starts in the programme to March 1987 which have not yet started; and if he will give his latest estimate of their starting dates.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Of the 91 schemes listed in "National Roads England" for starts up to March 1987, 47 have been started and 13 are expected to start in or before that month. The information requested for schemes not yet started is as follows:

i. Schemes expected to start before March 1987

M5 Warndon—Rashwood.
A17 New Washway road.
A27 Fontwell bypass.
A30 Blackwater improvement.
A35 Bridport link road.
A35 Dorchester bypass.
A36 Warminster bypass.
A47 Wardley hill improvement.
A303 South Petherton—broadway.
A361 North Devon link stage 2A Tiverton-Newtown.
A419 Blunsdon—Cricklade dualling.
A483 Chester southern bypass—Welsh border.
A650 Airedale route (Victoria park—Crossflatts).

ii. Schemes expected to start after March 1987

a. 1987-88

M3 Compton—Bassett widening.
M63 Stretford—Eccles improvement stage 4.
A3 Compton—Shackleford improvement.
A10 Melbourn bypass.
A17 Fosdyke bridge improvement.
A34 Hanford grade separated junction.
A34 Whitway diversion.
A39 Barnstaple bypass.
A42 Measham—Ashby bypass.
A43 Peartree hill—Wendlebury improvement.
A46 Coventry eastern bypass.
A46 Newark relief road.
A47 Eye bypass.
A47 Guyhirn diversion.
A49 Leominster bypass.
A69 Newcastle western bypass.
A69 Horsley—Corbridge improvement.
A361 North Devon link stage 2B Newtown-Barnstaple.
A406 Great Cambridge road grade separated junction.
A417 Birdlip bypass.
A435 Alcester bypasses.
A696 Woolsington and Kenton bank foot bypass.

b. 1988-89

M3 Bar end—Compton.
A5 Telford—Shrewsbury.
A36 Steeple Langford bypass.
A43 Kettering northern bypass.
A46 Bath (Upper Swainswick—A420).
A66 Bowes bypass—County boundary improvement.

c. 1989-90

A11 Thetford bypass.
A523 Macclesfield inner relief road.

d. 1990-91

A423 Southam bypass.

Delays to those schemes held up have been caused by problems with procedures, dealings with affected parties, technical factors or a combination of these.

Marine Pollution

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those ports in the United Kingdom at which reception facilities for residues and mixtures of oily and noxious liquid wastes from vessels have been established.

Mr. Michael Spicer: United Kingdom ports are required to provide reception facilities to receive residues and oily mixtures from vessels using the port. An assessment undertaken on the availability and use of oil reception facilities shows that United Kingdom ports in general are adequately provided for in this regard.

There is at present no legal requirement for United Kingdom ports to provide reception facilities for noxious liquid wastes arising from ships, therefore, no information is available as to established facilities. Such facilities will, however, be required in certain ports for wastes from a limited number of noxious liquid substances carried in bulk by ships after implementation of MARPOL. (Annex II, on 6 April 1987).

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the steps Her Majesty's Government have taken in the last three years towards prevention of marine pollution due to operation of vessels (i) in the North sea and (ii) in British coastal waters bordering the North sea.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Regulations for prevention of pollution of the marine environment are contained in the international convention for the prevention of pollution from ships, 1973, as modified by the 1978 Protocol (known as MARPOL 73/78).

Domestic legislation to implement the various annexes of the convention was made as each annex comes into force.

At the moment only annex I of MARPOL 73/78 which relates to prevention of pollution by oil is in force. It

imposes strict discharge requirements generally, but particularly limits the quantity and concentration of oil that may be discharged into the sea.

With respect to prevention of marine pollution due to operation of vessels carrying noxious liquid substances in bulk, Her Majesty's Government have been involved in developing practical international regulations at IMO. Such regulations will be implemented internationally and by the United Kingdom on 6 April 1987.

Regulations covering oil and noxious liquid substances will apply to ships operating in the North sea and British coastal waters.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if Her Majesty's Government intend to take any steps to declare the North sea a special area under the MARPOL convention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Her Majesty's Government have not taken any steps to support a declaration for the North sea to become a special area under the MARPOL 73/78 convention. The matter is under review as a result of the first international conference on the protection of the North sea held in 1984 and will now be for consideration by a second conference scheduled for November 1987.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport what reporting system exists for ships, whose cargo, including radioactive substances, poses a potentially grave threat of marine pollution in the North sea.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Two mandatory reporting-in systems exist in the North sea:

1. EEC and national regulations specify compulsory reporting for tankers of 1,600 gross tonnage and over carrying cargoes of chemicals, gas or oil in bulk when entering or leaving ports.
2. Under the law of the Federal Republic of Germany it is understood that vessels loaded with dangerous goods in bulk, entering the extended territorial waters of the German bight, must report in to the authorities.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the new steps Her Majesty's Government have taken in the last three years to ensure that marine transportation of radioactive substances and wastes is carried out in a safe way.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government are taking a leading role within the International Maritime Organisation in reviewing the section of the international maritime dangerous goods code which deals with radioactive materials, taking account of new international regulations. We have also sponsored research work to ensure that the revised regulations continue to provide adequate safety.

In October 1985 the Secretary of State for Transport set up the advisory committee for the safe transport of radioactive materials (ACTRAM) to provide him with advice on safety arrangements for all modes of transport. Following a recommendation of the Environment Select Committee on Radioactive Waste, ACTRAM is currently considering whether any changes in practice are needed to ensure the greater control and safety of the transport of radioactive materials through the English channel.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport what evaluation Her Majesty's Government have made within the last three years of the effects of the Marpol convention 73-78 on the quality of the North sea.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department of Transport is currently evaluating the quantity of oil that is being discharged into the North sea following the entry into force of annex I of MARPOL 73-78. First indications are that the quantity of oil entering the North sea from ships has been drastically reduced.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport what penalties are imposed on parties found to be discharging residues and mixtures of oily and noxious wastes into (i) British coastal waters and (ii) the North sea.

Mr. Spicer: The illegal discharge of oil or oily mixture by any vessel within the United Kingdom territorial waters and by United Kingdom registered vessels wherever they may be is prescribed by the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Oil Pollution) Regulations 1983. The discharge of certain oil from oil exploration operations and underseas pipelines in designated areas is prescribed by the Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971. Any person found guilty of any such offences shall be liable to a fine not exceeding £50,000 or on conviction on indictment to a fine of no declared limit.

For a foreign-registered vessel discharging oil outside United Kingdom territorial waters, the penalties will be as established by the flag state of the vessel concerned. For other noxious wastes, there are at present no prescribed penalties for discharging.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport, what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the prosecution of parties found to be discharging residues and mixtures of oily and noxious wastes from vessels *(a)* in the North sea; and *(b)* in other British coastal waters.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The policy of Her Majesty's Government is to identify and prosecute, when sufficient evidence is available to enable proceedings to be taken, all vessels suspected of illegally discharging oil in United Kingdom territorial waters. If a United Kingdom-registered vessel is reported as having discharged oil in the North sea she will be prosecuted similarly. Foreign registered vessels identified by United Kingdom sources as discharging oil in the North sea are reported to their flag state with a request for the report to be investigated and dealt with.

For other noxious wastes there are currently no specific powers for prosecution.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all incidents detected in the last three years where vessels have been found to be discharging residues and mixtures of oily and noxious wastes (i) in British coastal waters; and (ii) in the North sea.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Since 1 January 1984, the Department of Transport's marine pollution control unit has received sighting reports of 44 incidents where a vessel has been suspected of illegally discharging into the sea. Of these 32 were inside United Kingdom territorial waters and 18 were in the North sea.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport what measures Her Majesty's Government use

to detect ships discharging residues and mixtures of oily and noxious liquid wastes (i) into the North sea; and (ii) in British coastal waters.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Oil Pollution) Regulations 1983 requires the master of any ship within 200 miles of the United Kingdom to report whenever an incident involves any discharge or probable discharge of oil or oily mixtures.

The Bonn agreement for co-operation in dealing with pollution of the North sea by oil and other harmful substances has as members all the countries bordering the North sea and English channel sea areas. The contracting parties, including the United Kingdom, have undertaken to instruct its ships and aircraft to report any casualty incidents or sightings of oil. Furthermore the agreement requires each country to notify any other member country if it becomes aware of any pollution which is likely to pose a threat to that country's coast or related interest.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken within the International Maritime Organisation to ensure that appropriate international regulations on harmful substances in packages from ships, annexes III and V of the MARPOL convention 73/78, enter into force as soon as possible.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Notification of acceptance of annexes III and V of the international convention for the prevention of pollution from ships, 1973, as modified by its 1978 protocol (MARPOL 73/78) was made by Her Majesty's Government in May 1986.

The provisions of the annexes do not come into force until they have been ratified by a certain proportion of maritime nations. With these acceptances by the United Kingdom that proportion should soon be reached.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what research Her Majesty's Government have conducted in the last three years to develop new or improved airborne surveillance equipment which can function during daylight hours for the detection of marine pollution;

(2) what research Her Majesty's Government have conducted in the last three years to develop new or improved airborne surveillance equipment which can function at night for the detection of marine pollution.

Mr. Michael Spicer: An operational airborne remote sensing research programme continues to be carried out by the marine pollution control unit to evaluate the capabilities of sideways looking radar, infra-red and ultraviolet remote detection equipments. All these equipments have a day/night capability except ultraviolet which does not operate at night. These systems are already proven in respect of large oil spills arising from shipping casualties, but further trials are programmed to evaluate their application to small spills arising from illegal operational discharges and from chemical spillages.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if Her Majesty's Government in the last three years have considered the development of a mandatory reporting system for ships whose cargo, including radioactive substances, poses a potentially grave threat of marine pollution, which would require North sea coastal states to be informed when such vessels are entering areas where special attention is required; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The question of mandatory reporting systems is under continuous review. A high percentage of ships carry dangerous goods—a term that includes radioactive materials — many of which are potential pollutants. Reporting would, therefore, involve many vessels and the benefits of develping such a complex system internationally are not apparent.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Oil and Shipping Industries

Sir William Clark asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the gross and net contributions to the invisible balance of payments of the United Kingdom oil and shipping industries, respectively, in 1980, in the most recently available 12 month period, together with his estimate of the likely outturn in 1986.

Mr. MacGregor: The available information on the main invisible balance of payments transactions relating to oil and shipping companies in 1980 and 1985 is given in the "United Kingdom Balance of Payments," 1986 edition (the CSO Pink Book), a copy of which is in the Library. Table 3.3 identifies overseas credits and debits relating to ships owned or chartered-in by United Kingdom residents. Table 5.2 identifies the earnings (both remitted abroad and retained in the United Kingdom) of direct investments by overseas residents in oil companies in the United Kingdom, and table 3.6 identifies payments overseas in respect of services provided for North sea oil and gas operations.

Comparable figures for 1986 are not yet available.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish draft clauses following Her Majesty's Customs and Excise consultative document on value added tax input tax dated 7 August.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Employers and Education

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans for promoting co-operation between employers and educational bodies through the tax system.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend intends to introduce legislation in next year's Finance Bill to provide tax relief for expenses incurred by employers in seconding employees on a temporary basis to certain educational bodies. The relief will apply to expenses incurred on or after today, and will remain in operation until 1 April 1997. The relief will apply to secondments to local education authorities; to educational institutions maintained by such authorities, and comparable institutions in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; and to any other educational bodies which may be approved for the purpose by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, or, where appropriate, by my right

hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales or Scotland, or by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland.

This new relief will complement the existing relief, introduced in 1983, for secondments to charities (including universities and many other educational institutions, and, prospectively, the new City Technology Colleges). It will also complement the further initiatives my right hon. Friend is announcing today to tackle the problem of teacher shortages in mathematics, physics and technology.

Taxpayers (Customs and Excise)

Mr. John Townend asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about circumstances in which Her Majesty's Customs and Excise would pass information about the affairs of a taxpayer to him; and what reply he has sent.

Mr. Peter Brooke: I have received a letter on the subject from Mr. Patrick Noakes.

I have replied that information relating to the affairs of taxpayers is regarded as held by Customs and Excise in confidence. It is generally released to third parties only with the consent of the person concerned. There are exceptions where there is statutory authority for disclosure and in a limited range of circumstances where disclosure would be in the public interest, for example in connection with the investigation of offences or with criminal prosecutions.

Treasury Ministers are however liable to account to Parliament for the actions of officers of Customs and Excise. Customs and Excise may therefore consider it necessary to forewarn Ministers of particular cases which are likely to attract attention in Parliament or in the press. Such information would be passed only in exceptional circumstances. There would be no question of details of the investigation or the affairs of individual taxpayers being discussed, or of Ministers intervening in the course of the investigation.

Given that this means Ministers do not influence the outcome but are simply informed of a contemporaneous or immediately past event at the same time as the news reaches the public domain, it protects Ministers from expressing ignorance on (by then) public developments about which a reasonable man would expect a Minister to know.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Waiting Lists

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the waiting list for orthopaedics at Exeter health authority hospitals; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the waiting list for eye surgery and consultancy at the Plymouth health authority hospitals.

Mr. Newton: At 31 December 1985, the waiting list for eye surgery and consultancy in the Plymouth health authority was 415; and for orthopaedics in Exeter it was 1,589.

As my hon. Friend knows, the Government are taking positive steps to achieve a substantial fall in waiting lists and times. My right hon. Friend has written to regional chairmen asking them to lead their districts in a review and to report back on the scale and nature of the problem, the action already taken to tackle it and proposals for reducing waiting lists and times substantially in the future. At the same time the Government have set aside £50 million over the next two years for this purpose. The reports from the regional health authorities are now being studied.

I look forward to substantial improvements nationally, which I am sure will be reflected in Exeter and Plymouth.

Paybeds

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he publish for the last five available years *(a)* the actual cost account figures and *(b)* figures used for determining paybed charges for the weighted average hospital revenue cost per day used for the differing classes of National Health Service paybed calculations.

Mr. Newton: Paybed charges are derived from the annual cost accounts submitted by the 700 or so National Health Service hospitals which are authorised to treat private in-patients. It would be disproportionately costly to list the information sought.

Private Patients

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he is giving to hospitals for a standardised approach to the apportionment of costs in accordance with paragraph 15 of the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General on the level of charges for private resident patients in the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to issue guidance to health authorities on a standardised approach to the apportionment of hospital costs. Authorities and hospitals differ widely in size and organisation and we expect treasurers to use their professional expertise, local knowledge and information systems to decide in each case upon appropriate apportionments. The improved management information which will be available in all health authorities from 1 April 1987 will greatly assist this process.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current estimate of the level of take-up under the housing benefit scheme in Great Britain for those estimated to be entitled to *(a)* assistance with rates, *(b)* assistance with public sector rent, and *(c)* assistance with private sector rent.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have the information as soon as it becomes available.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of pensioners in Scotland who will lose housing benefit supplement as a result of recent changes to supplementary benefit.

Mr. Lyell: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) on 5 November at column *472*.

Electorate

Mr. Haywood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the electorates of each parliamentary

constituency in England by county, and identifying *(a)* the electorate for 1976 and 1986 for each constituency, *(b)* the percentage change over that period and *(c)* the electoral quota for each county in 1976 and 1986 using the formula adopted by the Boundary Commission.

Mrs. Currie: In 1976 the English electoral quota was 65,753 electors. In 1986 it was 69,137 electors. A table giving the rest of the information requested has been placed in the Library.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current daily level of earnings disregard which is allowed for those on unemployment benefit; and when it was last reviewed.

Mr. Lyell: The current daily earnings limit for unemployment benefit is £2. It was last revised in March 1982.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the current weekly level of earnings disregard which is allowed for those in receipt of supplementary benefits for reasons other than unemployment; when it was last reviewed; and if he will estimate the real value of this figure compared with its value when it was last reviewed;

(2) what is the current weekly level of earnings disregard which is allowed for those who receive supplementary benefit because of unemployment; when the level was last reviewed; and if he will estimate the current real value of this figure compared with its value when it was last reviewed.

Mr. Lyell: The level of the basic earnings disregard for those in receipt of supplementary benefit, whether or not because of unemployment, is £4 a week. The disregard is higher for lone parents; up to £12 a week of their part-time earnings can be disregarded—the first £4, and half of any balance up to £20. The basic disregard was revised in November 1975 and that for lone parents in November 1980. It is estimated that, revalued at current prices, the disregards would be worth £10·65 and up to £16·85, respectively.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether the leaflet about retirement pension issued to people about to retire has yet been reprinted to include information about invalidity mobility allowance and the age limits;

(2) whether he has any plans to review the publicity given at present to people approaching retirement age about their entitlement to mobility allowance.

Mr. Major: The publicity given to people approaching pension age about the qualifying age conditions for mobility allowance has already been extended. Information will be included from April 1987 in leaflet NP32, "Your Retirement Pension". This leaflet is freely available in the Department's local offices and elsewhere, and is sent automatically to anyone within four months of pension age for whom the Department has some record of pension entitlement.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will carry out a review of the publicity given to those potentially able to qualify for mobility allowance.

Mr. Major: The publicity arrangements for mobility allowance are kept under review. A new, revised edition of our explanatory leaflet is in the course of preparation.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the Government propose to take steps to make mobility allowance available to all persons who cannot walk in a predetermined manner because of visual, sensory or mental disablement.

Mr. Major: We do not propose to make any significant change in the scope of mobility allowance in advance of the current major survey of disability and our subsequent comprehensive review of benefits for long-term sick and disabled people.

NHS (Lenses)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of patients obtaining complex lenses under National Health Service pay more than the cost of the supply of the lenses.

Mr. Newton: The supply of optical appliances under the general opthalmic service ceased from 1 July 1986. Spectacles are now purchased privately but the users of complex lenses receive financial help through the new spectacle voucher scheme. It is estimated that in the period 1 July to 30 September approximately 2·5 per cent. of vouchers were for complex lenses.

Information is not available centrally on the number of patients for whom complex lenses are dispensed under the hospital eye service.

Aspartame

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information his Department has about the outcome of the evaluation by the United States food and drugs administration of the data provided by Dr. Wurtman about the sweetener Aspartame; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I am advised that Dr. Wurtman has provided the United States food and drugs administration with various data to support his contention that Aspartame is not safe for use as an artificial sweetner. These data have been reviewed, but it has not altered its view that Aspartame is safe, and I understand that it is still permitted in the United States of America.

Officials of the Department of Health and Social Security liaise closely with the food and drugs administration and similar bodies in other countries. This ensures a full exchange of scientific information on food additives and artificial sweeteners such as Aspartame. Any new information is reviewed by the Department who can obtain the advice of the independent expert committees to which my hon. Friend, the Member for Medway (Dame Peggy Fenner), referred in her reply to the hon. Member on 13 June at column *336*. No information has been received since Aspartame was cleared for use in this country to cause the independent expert committees to alter their advice to Government that Aspartame is safe in use.

Glaucoma

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the successful treatment rate for glaucoma in the United Kingdom; what information he has about the equivalent figure in other western European countries; and to what factors he attributes any difference between the United Kingdom figures and those of the other countries listed.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not available, but the Department is not aware of any differences in success of treatment for glaucoma between the United Kingdom and other western European countries.

Disabled People

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to issue regulations under section 1 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; if he will make a statement on the implementation of the Disabled Persons Act 1986; which groups and organisations he has consulted about the implementation of the Disabled Persons Act 1986 since it received the Royal Assent; if he will estimate the full cost to local authorities of implementing the Disabled Persons Act 1986; and what representations he has received concerning the Disabled Persons Act 1986 since it received the Royal Assent.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are his intentions concerning tabling commencement orders for each of the sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The Department has been in consultation with the Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of Directors of Social Services and the National Association of Health Authorities about the implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. These consultations, which are continuing, are intended amongst other things to estimate as accurately as possible the cost to local authorities of the various provisions of the Act in the form in which it received Royal Assent, and the rate at which these costs would be likely to build up.

The Government have consistently made it clear that it will only be possible to implement those provisions of the Act with significant resource implications (which include section 1) when the necessary resources can be made available. We want to press on with implementing other parts of the Act as quickly as possible, and I have told the local authority associations that I hope it will be possible to implement sections 4, 8, 9, 10 and 11 by April 1987. Since the Act received Royal Assent, we have received written representations from 10 organisations or individuals seeking its implementation.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to which parties the five hon. and right hon. Members who have responded to his invitation to commend individuals for membership of regional health authorities belong.

Mr. Newton: The Conservative and Labour parties.

Heart Transplant Operations

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate, for the most recent year for which figures are available, what percentage of those patients considered suitable for a heart transplant in fact received one.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not readily available in the form requested. Returns from the heart transplant centres at Papworth, Harefield and Newcastle show that between 1 April 1985 and 31 March 1986, 145 National Health Service patients received heart transplants, and that during the same period 284 National Health Service patients were assessed for transplantation, though a number of these will have been considered unsuitable and some others may have had a transplant after 31 March 1986.

Heating

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when calculating the level of retirement pension, what specific consideration is given to heating costs; and how this is calculated.

Mr. Major: No separate consideration is given to heating costs in determining the annual level of retirement pension. Retirement pension and other linked benefits are statutorily uprated at least by changes in the general level of prices. The retail price index is used to measure price changes and the index takes account of changes in heating costs.

Health Promotion

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many officers of his department and how many hours of staff time are devoted to work on health promotion, including education and preventative medicine.

Mrs. Currie: Aspects of health promotion and disease prevention form part of the work of many departmental officers, and it would not be practicable to attempt an assessment of total staff time devoted to these matters.

Renal Health

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give figures in the *Official Report* for spending on renal health within the National Health Service in the United Kingdom as a proportion of total Health Service expenditure; and if he will compare this to similar expenditure in other EEC countries.

Mrs. Currie: It is estimated that expenditure on treatment of end-stage renal failure in the United Kingdom in 1985 was about £100 million, a little under a half per cent. of hospital and community health service expenditure. It is not possible to give an estimate for expenditure on renal health generally, nor are expenditure data on other European Community countries readily available.

Contract Cleaning

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards contracting out in the National Health Service in the light of the report by

the Secretary General of the Contract Cleaning and Maintenance Association entitled "A Statement on the Difficulties Experienced by Contractors Working with Government Departments," a copy of which has been forwarded to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have yet to consider fully the report by the secretary-general of the Contract Cleaning and Maintenance Association. However, the policy of competitive tendering in the National Health Service will continue as part of the Government's drive towards improving the cost effectiveness of hospital support services. Private contractors and in-house staff have each played their part in generating considerable savings, currently estimated to be £73 million a year. These savings are retained by health authorities and are available for further development of direct patient care services. Officials meet regularly with representatives of the Contract Cleaning and Maintenance Association. Any modifications to the policy that may be required in the light of this report will be considered with all interested parties.

Urgent Needs Payments

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many urgent needs payments have been requested; how many have been granted; and how many were refused at the Walthamstow office of his Department in the past 12 months.

Mr. Lyell: During the year up to 8 April (the latest information available), the department's Walthamstow office determined claims for urgent needs payments as follows:

	Number
Successful claims for living expenses	1,307
Unsuccessful claims for living expenses	21
Claims for single payments for one-off needs[1]	115
Total Claims	1,443

[1] This figure includes awards and refusals.

Abortions

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the number of abortions performed within the Mersey regional health authority in each of the years since the implementation of the Abortion Act 1967 upon women who are normally resident in Northern Ireland; and if he will state for each of those years the numbers of those abortions which were performed in emergency to save the life of the mother.

Mr. Newton: The information is given in the table. None of these abortions was notified as having been performed in emergency to save the life of the pregnant woman. The Liverpool hospital region is not conterminous with the Mersey regional health authority.

Number of notifications of legal abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 to women usually resident in Northern Ireland, performed within the Mersey/Liverpool Health area 1968-85

Area of Termination / *Year*	*Number of Notifications*
Liverpool Hospital Region	
1968	—
1969	—
1970	2
1971	22
1972	168
1973	487
Mersey Regional Health Authority	
1974	656
1975	606
1976	529
1977	496
1978	485
1979	538
1980	595
1981	383
1982	317
1983	463
1984	374
1985	390

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the number of abortions which have been performed in each regional health authority in the last year for which figures are available upon women who are normally resident in Northern Ireland; and how many of these abortions in each case were performed in emergency to save the life of the mother.

Mr. Newton: The information is given in the table. None of these abortions was notified as having been performed in emergency to save the life of the pregnant woman.

Number of notifications of legal abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 to women usually resident in Northern Ireland, by Regional Health Authority (RHA) of termination, 1985 England & Wales

Area of termination	*Number of notifications*
Wales	—
Northern RHA	—
Yorkshire and Humberside RHA	20
Trent RHA	—
East Anglian RHA	—
North West Thames RHA	675
North East Thames RHA	197
South East Thames RHA	87
South West Thames RHA	39
Wessex RHA	5
Oxford RHA	—
South Western RHA	—
West Midlands RHA	144
Mersey RHA	390
North Western RHA	81

Dentists (Malpractice)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will name the dentist who was fined £9,000 on appealing against the recommendations of the Northamptonshire family practitioner committee to fine him a lesser amount for malpractice.

Mrs. Currie: No. The dentist in this case had been found to be in breach of his terms of service relating to the provision of general dental services. The case was considered under the National Health Service (Service Committees and Tribunal) Regulations 1974 which require that service committee proceedings and appeals

should take place in private. It is not the practice to publicise the names of patients or practitioners in these cases.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the numbers of illegitimate births in each region in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and what percentage of total births this figure represents in each of those years.

Mrs. Currie: Information in respect of countries and regions of the United Kingdom is shown in the following table:

Area	*Year*									
	1976	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Numbers of illegitimate live births										
Scotland	6,025	5,968	6,304	6,960	7,678	8,447	9,395	9,581	10,640	12,362
Northern Ireland	1,330	1,383	1,523	1,668	1,751	1,902	2,112	2,383	2,802	3,195
Wales	2,868	2,821	2,992	3,344	3,896	4,022	4,614	5,145	6,026	6,964
ENGLISH REGIONS										
North	3,584	3,662	4,045	4,627	5,074	5,266	5,913	6,513	7,372	8,612
Yorkshire and Humberside	5,731	5,699	6,290	7,087	8,067	8,434	9,396	10,491	11,694	13,350
East Midlands	4,035	4,081	4,572	5,347	5,949	6,176	6,787	7,526	8,334	9,825
East Anglia	1,423	1,536	1,714	1,845	2,246	2,245	2,448	2,726	3,039	3,555
South East	18,471	19,503	21,338	24,287	26,794	[illegible]	30,214	33,042	36,263	40,828
South West	3,658	3,711	3,989	4,550	4,953	5,211	5,780	6,369	7,314	8,511
West Midlands	5,600	5,674	6,376	7,424	8,348	8,642	9,780	10,898	11,970	13,528
North West	8,324	8,612	9,259	10,889	11,982	13,162	14,870	16,457	18,418	21,026
Percentage of total live births—illegitimate										
Scotland	9·3	9·6	9·8	10·2	11·1	12·2	14·2	14·7	16·3	18·5
Northern Ireland	5·0	5·4	5·8	5·9	6·1	7·0	7·8	8·7	10·1	11·6
Wales	8·6	8·9	9·0	9·3	10·5	11·2	12·9	14·5	16·8	19·0
ENGLISH REGIONS										
North	9·8	10·2	10·6	11·2	12·3	13·2	15·1	16·7	18·8	21·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	10·0	10·3	10·7	11·4	12·5	13·5	15·2	16·7	18·6	20·7
East Midlands	8·8	9·2	9·9	10·9	11·6	12·6	14·1	15·6	17·1	19·6
East Anglia	6·5	7·2	7·8	7·8	9·1	9·5	10·7	11·8	12·8	14·5
South East	9·3	9·9	10·3	11·0	11·9	12·6	14·0	15·3	16·5	18·0
South West	7·9	8·2	8·4	9·0	9·5	10·3	11·5	12·7	14·2	15·9
West Midlands	8·9	9·4	10·0	10·9	11·7	12·8	14·4	16·0	17·5	19·3
North West	10·6	11·4	11·7	12·8	13·8	15·5	17·6	19·4	21·6	23·9

Child Abuse

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has concerning the percentage of all child abuse cases in which the abused child was *(a)* born illegitimate or *(b)* currently living in a home in which one or other parent was not the natural parent, in the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) what information he has concerning the numbers of cases of suspected child abuse dealt with in each region in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: Information about numbers of cases of suspected child abuse in each region and, of the percentage of all child abuse cases where the abused child was born illegitimately or was currently living in a home with a step parent is not held centrally.

Health Education Council

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money has been allocated to the Health Education Council in each of the past three years.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1984-85	9·6
1985-86	10·1
1986-87	9·6

It is anticipated that from 1987 onwards the Health Education Council will be reconstituted as a special health authority with much increased funding.

Suicides

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the number of suicides by children aged under 16 years in each region in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: The information is given in the table:

Number of deaths from suicide[1] in children aged under 16 years by area of usual residence 1976-85, England and Wales.

Area of usual residence	Year									
	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Wales	3	—	1	3	—	1	—	1	—	—
Standard Region										
North	1	—	—	3	—	—	—	2	1	—
Yorkshire and Humberside	1	1	1	1	1	4	2	—	—	2
North West	—	—	2	3	1	1	2	4	2	2
East Midlands	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	—	2	—
West Midlands	2	5	2	2	3	2	—	1	2	—
East Anglia	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
South East	4	4	4	4	1	3	7	7	2	2
South West	2	—	1	2	—	1	—	1	—	—

[1] International Classification of Diseases 8th and 9th revisions E950-E959 Suicide and Self-inflicted injury

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any information concerning the number and percentage of all suicide cases involving children aged under 16 years in the last year for which figures are available in which the children were of illegitimate birth.

Mrs. Currie: The question cannot be answered because legitimacy at birth is not collected at the registration of deaths.

Injuries (Animal Attacks)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish a table, listing for each of the last five years *(a)* the number of injuries inflicted by animals on humans, *(b)* the number of injuries classified as serious, which were inflicted by animals on humans and *(c)* the number of injuries inflicted by animals on humans, which were fatal, which were reported to the National Health Service or other official agencies, giving in each case the figures for Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Currie: Statistics for Scotland and Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for those countries. Exact figures on injuries are not available.

However, table 1 shows an estimation of the approximate number of hospital discharges following injury caused by animals, where available. Table 2 gives the number of registrations of accidental deaths caused by animals for Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland for 1981 to 1985.

Table 1
Estimate of number of hospital discharges following injury caused by animals, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland ICD(9) E905 excluding E905.7, E906[1] 1980 to 1984

Area	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Scotland	190	260	300	320	340
England	3,120	2,710	3,070	2,380	2,220
Northern Ireland	60	70	90	80	60

[1] Estimates derived from Hospital In-Patient Statistics. These data are not available for Wales.

Table 2
Number of deaths with underlying cause of death as accident caused by animals, Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland ICD(9) E905 excluding E905.7, E906 1981 to 1985

Area	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Scotland	2	2	1	—	—
England	11	9	13	14	20
Wales	—	2	2	3	1
Northern Ireland	—	—	3	1	2

AIDS

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many acquired immune deficiency syndrome sufferers died in England and Wales in 1983, 1984, 1985 and in the first eight months of 1986.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1986, c. *392*]: The numbers of deaths in England and Wales of patients with AIDS by year of report to the communicable disease surveillance centre are as follows:

	Number
1983	16
1984	29
1985	91
1986[1]	102

[1] By end August.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were treated for acquired immune deficiency syndrome in hospitals and clinics in England and Wales in 1984, 1985 and up to the latest date available in 1986.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1986, c *392*]: The number of people treated in hospitals and clinics in England and Wales who fulfilled the criteria for AIDS cases and were reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre is as follows: 74 in 1984, 161 in 1985 and 267 by the end of October 1986.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received concerning the preventive treatment of acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1986, c *392*]: We have received a large number of representations about many issues concerning AIDS, including preventive treatment. The Government's position on the major issues relating to the disease was set out by my right hon. Friend in the debate on Friday 21 November.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Veal Crates

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide a summary of the effects of his Department's 1983 welfare code for cattle on the use of the veal crate; how many crates are in use in each year since 1982, and currently; whether he has any proposals to prohibit the use of this crate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The veal crate system does not comply with important provisions on space allowances and diet in the welfare code for cattle. We believe that the existence of the code has discouraged the use of veal crates, but we do not have detailed statistics on the number of individual crates. At present we understand that there are eight holdings operating this system. However there appears to be no sign that the code will eliminate the use of crates altogether and the Government has therefore decided to bring forward legislation to phase them out. My Department will ensure that interested organisations are fully consulted about this before the end of the year.

Mr. Hunter asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to phase out the use of the veal crate system.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Yes. The use of veal crates is incompatible with the welfare code for cattle and, although the existence of the code has discouraged their use, there appears to be no sign that the code alone will bring it to an end. The Government have therefore decided to bring forward legislation to phase out veal crates, and my Department will consult interested organisations fully before the end of the year.

Alcohol (Chemical Additives)

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all chemical additives which are permitted in the making of wine and the brewing of beer for sale in the United Kingdom; and if he will set up a departmental expert study on injurious toxicity normally contained in alcoholic drinks currently on sale in Britain.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The composition of wine in the United Kingdom, including the additives used, is controlled by the Common Agriculture Policy (Wine) Regulations 1982 (SI 1982 No. 578) which implements an EC regulation. Beer may contain any additive permitted for general food use. There are already expert bodies, including the Food Advisory Committee, The Committee on Toxicity and the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy, to advise Ministers on the safety of food.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Hunter asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, whether he has any plans to seek to update the legislation on the welfare of animals in transit.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Yes. The Government are aware that a large number of interested parties have suggested that the many orders on the welfare of animals in transit should be modernised and simplified. The Farm Animal Welfare council has asked whether the Government are willing to take on this task and we have told it that we shall indeed be doing so.

It is envisaged that the legislation would be rationalised in stages beginning with new orders on the carriage of live poultry by all methods of transport and the carriage by water of all farm livestock and horses. We would then amend and/or consolidate the Transport of Animals (Road and Rail) Order 1975. Finally we would consider what scope there was for rationalising the legislation on the protection of farm animals and horses on export. Interested organisations would of course be consulted in the normal way on each stage of the excercise.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 27 November 1986

PRIME MINISTER

Westland plc

Q115. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she had formed any view as to whether the Solicitor-General's opinion about the material inaccuracy of the then Secretary of State for Defence's letter to the European consortium should be brought into the public domain, before a copy of the Solicitor-General's letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence was received in her office; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 17 November at columns 49-50.

Dartmouth

Q144. **Mr. Steen** asked the Prime Minister what plans she has to visit Dartmouth.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Skinner asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 November.

Mr. Canavan asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 November.

Mr. Dormand asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 November.

Mr. Madden asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 November.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 November.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Mordechai Vanunu

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister whether information was passed from Her Majesty's Government sources to Israeli sources concerning the presence of Mr. Mordechai Vanunu within the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: No.

State Security

Mr. McNamara asked the Prime Minister if she will refer to the Security Commission the matters published in the magazine *Lobster* by Robin Ramsey and Stephen Dorrell in April in respect of action taken by the security services against Her Majesty's Government in 1974 to 1976.

The Prime Minister: No.

ENERGY

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how much has been expended by Her Majesty's Government on research into the improvement of insulation during the past five years for which records are available;

(2) what are his proposals for the provision of resources for research into the improvement of insulation during the years 1987 and 1988, respectively.

Mr. David Hunt: The Department of Energy and the Department of the Environment have expended approximately £0·76 million per annum on average over the past five years for research, development and demonstration of the performance of thermal insulation for buildings in their complementary programmes. They expect to expend about £0·62 million in each of the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88. Records which are available do not separate research from development and demonstration, nor in some cases is the performance of thermal insulation separately identified from other energy efficiency measures.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how much has been expended by Her Majesty's Government on research into the improvement of double glazing methods during the past five years for which records are available;

(2) what are his proposals for the provisions of resources for research into the improvement of double glazing methods during the years 1987 and 1988, respectively.

Mr. David Hunt: The Department of Energy and the Department of the Environment have expended approximately £0·12 million per annum on average over the past five years for research, development and demonstration of the performance of double glazing in their complementary programmes. They expect to expend about £0·27 million per annum in each of the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88. Records which are available do not separate research from development and demonstration, nor in some cases is the performance of double glazing separately identified from other energy efficiency measures.

Severn Barrage

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy towards the recommendation of the Severn Tidal Power Group in connection with the proposed Severn barrage to the effect that a decision should be made by private Bill rather than by public inquiry.

Mr. David Hunt: The further work on the Severn barrage announced in July this year is aimed to reduce uncertainty to the point where it will be possible to make decisions on whether or not to plan for construction. No decision has therefore been made to follow any specific procedural path and a main objective of the work will be to consider further the legal, administrative, organisational and procedural options of a Severn barrage project, and discuss with all interested parties their implications.

Electricity Boards (Profitability)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Energy to what factors he attributes the difference in profitability between the South of Scotland Electricity Board and the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Goodlad: Profitability for the electricity industry in Scotland is most appropriately measured on a joint basis because the two Scottish electricity boards collaborate closely in operating the generation and transmission system in a single merit order, sharing the costs through a joint generation agreement. Comparisons with the electricity industry in England and Wales are best made with that industry as a whole since, unlike the Scottish boards, the CEGB is responsible for generation and transmission but not distribution. In 1985-86 the Scottish boards made a return on average net assets employed measured on a current cost basis of 2·93 per cent. compared with 2·65 per cent. for the electricity industry in England and Wales. Among the factors leading to the higher profitability in Scottish boards were the higher proportion of nuclear power and the availability of hydro-electric power on the Scottish system.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Energy what will be the total spending of his Department on press and public relations in the current year; and what it was in 1979-80 and each intervening year.

Mr. Peter Walker [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 November 1986, c. *232*]: Expenditure by my Department on press and public relations in each of the years beginning 1979-80 was:

	£ thousand
1979-80	595
1980-81	796
1981-82	736
1982-83	674
1983-84	913
1984-85	7,450
1985-86	12,257
1986-87[1]	14,200

[1] Anticipated.

Notes:

1. Before 1983-84, certain costs incurred through Her Majesty's Stationery Office were not separately identified as press and public relations. Detailed information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

2. COI adopted a repayment service from 1984-85 onwards. The figures quoted above for 1979-80 to 1983-84 do not include the allied service costs incurred by the COI on behalf of my Department.

3. The figures (in cash prices) include:
   (i) programme expenditure on information and publicity material including advertising, displays, exhibitions, films, promotions, publications, research, seminars, theatre groups and the press office;
   (ii) staff costs (salaries, accommodation and common services) for all permanent information service and support staff in post on 1 April each year based upon ready reckoner figures.

4. The figures exclude costs involved in gas privatisation on which I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 5 November, at column 471.

5. The bulk of the programme costs incurred in the financial years 1985-86 to 1986-87 were in respect of the energy efficiency campaign and Energy Efficiency Year.

Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Energy what volume of low-level nuclear waste has arisen from the reprocessing of imported Magnox spent nuclear fuel from Italy and Japan since such imports began.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1986, c. 352]: It is estimated that the following quantities of solid low-level radioactive waste are attributable to the reprocessing of spent Magnox nuclear fuel from Italy and Japan since that business commenced until September 1986:

	Cubic metres
Italy	8,200
Japan	4,000

Power Stations (Senior Staff)

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list for each year since 1979 the number of persons notified to Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate by *(a)* the Central Electricity Generating Board and *(b)* the South of Scotland Electricity Board as power station operators, supervisors and managers, and the number of individual appointments prevented by the inspectorate in each year;

(2) if he will describe the duties of persons notified to Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate as power station operators, supervisors and managers, specifying which duties of operators and supervisors are not located within the main control room of a power station; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will describe the responsibilities of Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate in relation to the training and standards of competence of power station management and staff, specifying which persons at a power station are subject to such responsibilities; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will list for each nuclear power station in England and Wales the current number of persons notified to Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate as power station operators, supervisors and managers showing each rank or grade separately.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 November 1986, c. *19-20*]: The booklet "The Work of HM Nuclear Installations Inspectorate" published by the Health and Safety Executive, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, outlines the inspectorate's responsibilities. Under the conditions of a nuclear licence, a licensee must appoint suitably qualified persons, known as duly authorised persons, to perform certain functions at a nuclear power station. These functions include station manager, departmental heads, shift charge engineers, assistant charge engineers, assistant engineers (operations), health physicists, assistant health physicists and instrument engineers. Typically at a nuclear power station there would be about 40 persons so appointed. Some, for instance station managers, departmental heads, and health physicists, would normally work outside the control room. The minimum qualification for a duly authorised person is at least a higher national certificate or equivalent in a subject relevant to the duties. I am advised that many have degrees or equivalent engineering qualifications such as membership of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, or

are chartered engineers. No person is permitted to act as an appointed person if Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate considers that person unfit; but there has been no recent case where Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate has had to use this power of objection. It is not possible except at disproportionate cost to list the number of duly authorised persons notified since 1979 to Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate by operators.

Alternative Energy Sources

15. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to have discussions with the European Community Council of Ministers about alternative sources of energy.

Mr. Peter Walker [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986, c. *11*]: I should like to report the outcome of the meeting of the European Communities Council of Energy Ministers on 26 November.

I took the chair on behalf of the United Kingdom Presidency and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy represented the United Kingdom.

Council adopted a major new commitment to the benefits of energy efficiency. To bring this home to consumers, Ministers agreed to publicise the need for greater energy efficiency within member states. They also agreed, on the basis of policies appriopate to each member state, to promote successful technologies, exchange information and to examine new sources of private finance for energy efficient investment.

A resolution was agreed establishing a Community approach to the development of new and renewable sources of energy. At the request of the Presidency, the Commission agreed to call a major meeting of chief scientists in the new year to exchange information. This would establish a firm basis for further work on how best to encourage the economic exploitation of these sources of energy, which were likely to be of growing importance, despite current low oil prices.

Council reviewed progress with the programme of work outlined in the Commission's June framework communication on nuclear health and safety. It noted that the Commission will shortly bring forward detailed proposals for action under the Euratom treaty, drawing on the lessons learnt at Chernobyl. Ministers stressed that the continuing use and development of nuclear power required the highest standards of safety and environmental protection. It was agreed that the Commission would report progress regularly to the Energy Council. Council also noted the important measures agreed and under consideration by the International Atomic Energy Agency, and that the agency remained the appropriate forum for carrying forward international action.

Ministers held a first exchange on a wide-ranging Commission discussion paper on possible ways of improving energy efficiency in transport. Council noted that the transport sector remained almost totally dependent on oil products and that increases in oil consumption in the sector were a matter of concern. The Commission agreed to examine the options for savings and reduced oil dependence identified in discussion.

Council discussed the effects of low oil prices on other fuels and possible implications for the Community's recently adopted energy objectives for 1995. It noted that there were clearly a number of far-reaching implications for all sources of energy from prolonged low oil prices. The Commission is to consider these further.

Ministers considered recent developments in the oil market. They noted that the market remained volatile and that the Commission would continue to monitor developments in oil trade and consumption as well as in the refining industry.

Lastly, Council considered extending the Communtiy system of labels showing the energy consumption of electrical appliances. It was not possible to resolve a technical disagreement and this is to be considered further.

Chernobyl Disaster

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will state, following the meetings in Vienna on 25 August, relating to the Chernobyl disaster, how many additional deaths due to cancer it is estimated will occur in Europe over the next 70 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I have been asked to reply.

Estimates of radiation doses and consequences are not yet available for the whole of Europe.

Estimates for the European Community have been made by the National Radiological Protection Board. Based on the dose-risk relationship currently accepted internationally, the number of cancer deaths in the Community over the next 70 years that might be attributable to Chernobyl is in the region of 1,000. On the same basis, some 50,000 cancer deaths would be attributable to natural sources of radiation out of the total of about 50 million cancer deaths from all causes.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Heavy Goods Vehicles and Coaches

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions there have been in each of the last five years for defects under road traffic regulations covering heavy goods vehicles and coaches; and what was the average penalty imposed.

Mr. Mellor: No reliable information is available for specific types of vehicles. The available information on findings of guilt for offences involving a vehicle or part in dangerous or defective condition is published annually in "Offences relating to motor vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary tables" (tables 5, 6, 8 and 12 of the issue of 1985), copies of which are in the Library.

Criminal Injuries (Compensation)

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases were being considered but were unresolved by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board on 1 January in each of the last five years or on such other day as may be expedient having regard to the records kept.

Mr. Mellor: The numbers of unresolved cases before the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at the end of each financial year for the last five years were:

	Cases unresolved
31 March 1982	28,700
31 March 1983	32,100
31 March 1984	34,300
31 March 1985	41,800
31 March 1986	51,500

Probation Officers

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the county chief probation officers in Wales are Welsh speaking.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the linguistic abilities of chief probation officers is not held centrally.

Prisons (Costs)

Sir Anthony Kershaw asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average annual cost of keeping an adult male in prison.

Mr. Mellor: The estimated average annual cost of keeping an adult male in prison in England and Wales in the financial year 1985-86, the latest year for which figures are available, was £13,520.

Immigration

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if different treatment is accorded to men and women under the Immigration Act 1971 and the British Nationality Act 1981.

Mr. Waddington: There are a limited number of provisions of the Immigration Act 1971 and the British Nationality Act 1981 which treat the sexes differently.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long on average the sponsor of an applicant for entry clearance as a fiancée or spouse has to wait for an interview, where appropriate, from the time of interview of the applicant; and if there are any differences dependent upon the location of the sponsor.

Mr. Waddington: Waiting times depend upon the number of staff available to conduct interviews, which varies between different parts of the country and times of the year. Records are not kept in a way that would enable an average figure to be obtained.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what is the effect of the new visa regulations on the rate of immigration from the Indian sub-continent.

Mr. Waddington: The new visa requirements are an administrative arrangement which moves the decision on the claim to admission by visitors and students from ports of entry to our missions abroad. The criteria for admission are not changed.

Mr. Stephen Boggs

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what items were removed from the studio of the artist Stephen Boggs by officers of the counterfeit currency squad on 31 October.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that a summons was served on Mr. Boggs on 24 November; the matter is, therefore, sub judice.

Holiday Voters

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will issue guidelines to local authorities about procedures for dealing with holiday voters; and how the general public will be informed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Guidance was issued to electoral registration officers on 18 November. A copy of the circular (numbered RPA 303) is in the Library. Publicity campaigns will be mounted before the next local government elections on 7 May, and when the date of the next general election is known, publicity will include advertisements in the press, announcements on the radio and an information leaflet.

European Convention on Human Rights

Mr. George Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) why he has not sought to extend protocol 1 of the European convention on human rights to the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man;

(2) if he will now consider seeking to extend protocol 1 of the European convention on human rights to the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A declaration extending protocol 1 to the Channel Islands and Isle of Man was not made in 1971. The islands are now being consulted about its extension to them.

Leeds and Hull Prisons

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether all those remand prisoners in Leeds prison wishing to receive a daily visit are provided the facilities for such a visit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor Unconvicted prisoners are normally allowed a visit of at least 15 minutes every day except Sunday. However, because of a large increase in the size of the unconvicted population at Leeds and the consequent pressure on available visiting facilities, visits at Leeds were restricted to alternate weekdays, with all inmates entitled to a visit on Saturdays. The position is being kept under review. The conversion of Hull prison to a local prison has provided some relief, but continuing growth in the unconvicted population has not made it possible to permit resumption of the normal visiting entitlement.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the latest available figures, how many *(a)* young prisoners and *(b)* juveniles are held in (i) Leeds and (ii) Hull prisons.

Mr. Mellor: The information is given in the table.

Population aged under 21 of Hull prison and remand centre and Leeds prison on 30 September 1986 by type of prison and age: number[1]

Establishment	Age			
	Under 17		17-20	
	Remand	Sentenced[2]	Remand	Sentenced[2]
Hull Remand Centre	20	10	115	25
Hull Prison	—	—	—	—
Leeds Prison	—	—	230	60

[1] Rounded estimate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.
[2] Including persons committed in default of payment of a fine.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on the latest available figures, how many prisoners at Leeds prison are serving sentences of more than five years.

Mr. Mellor: It is estimated that about 75 prisoners in Leeds prison on 30 September 1986 were serving sentences of over five year.

"Fresh Start"

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he intends to take to inform members of the Prison Service about the contents of the Home Office publication "Fresh Start".

Mr. Mellor: Copies of the "Fresh Start" publication, together with copies of a letter which has been sent to the Prison Officers Association about the proposed new working arrangements, the management structure and pay and conditions of service, were sent to governors of Prison Service establishments on 21 November with instructions that every member of staff should receive a copy of each.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council on 24 November.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs chaired the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 24 November. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council agreed that the Community should sign the new protocol of the multi-fibre arrangement, which was negotiated in July and which extends the arrangement until 31 July 1991. The Commission also reported to the Council on the renegotiation of bilateral agreements under the arrangement with 26 countries, which will be put to the Council for decision at a later date. Details of the restraint levels negotiated have been placed in the Library of the House.

Ministers reviewed the negotiations between the Community and the United States on the trade effects of enlargement and discussed recent trade measures taken by Canada against imports from the EC.

The Council adopted the generalised scheme of preferences for 1987 which provides preferential access for developing country imports into the Community and approved a negotiating mandate for an EC-Czechoslovakia trade agreement.

The Council discussed progress in the negotiations on the Community's framework programme for research and development for the period 1987-91.

Ministers also discussed preparations for the European Council on 5-6 December.

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the decisions taken by the Foreign Affairs Council since he assumed its presidency.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to my hon. Friends the Members for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) on 23 July, at column 256, for Rochford (Dr. Clark) on 22 October, at column 167, for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) today; and to the statement by my right hon. and learned Friend, on 28 October, at column 913.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Tripartite Agreement 1925

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the tripartite agreement of 1925 between His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, the Irish Free State and the Government of Northern Ireland, formerly deposited with the League of Nations, is now deposited with the United Nations Organisation.

Mr. Eggar: Yes.

Governments (Recognition)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria are used by Her Majesty's Government in deciding whether to recognise Governments.

Mr. Eggar: It is our policy to recognise states rather than Governments.

Nicaragua

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy not to give recognition to any provisional Government set up by the Contras in Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: The question of recognition does not arise since, as explained in my earlier answer to the hon. Member, it is our policy to recognise states rather than Governments.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the United States Government urging them not to pursue the setting up of a provincial Government based on the Nicaraguan Contras.

Mr. Eggar: As already explained in my earlier answers to the hon. Member, it is our policy to recognise states rather than Governments. We continue to advocate a political solution to the problems of central America on the basis of the Contadora objectives. We ensure that the United States is fully aware of our views.

Iran

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about

the extent of involvement of British companies in Iran; and what advice he gives to British companies about trading in or with Iran.

Mr. Howard: I have been asked to reply.

My Department does not keep lists of exporters to any market. Iran remains a important market for British firms and advice on commercial practices and economic conditions in Iran is available from BOTB to assist exporters interested in that market.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

State Security

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General (1) if he will ask the Director of Public Prosecutions to investigate allegations published in the magazine *Lobster* in April concerning covert operations by the security services against Her Majesty's Government in 1974 to 1976 with a view to prosecuting those responsible;

(2) if he will prosecute Mr. Colin Wallace, former senior information officer, Psychops, Army Headquarters, Northern Ireland for revealing details of secret service operations against Her Majesty's Government in the period 1974 to 1979 in the magazine, *Lobster*, in April.

The Attorney-General: No.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Data Processing Staff

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many data processing staff are in post within his Department; and how many of those are trainees.

Mr. Butcher: My Department had the following numbers of staff in the data processing grades in post on 17 November 1986:

	Numbers
Senior Data Processors	43
Data Processors	110
Trainee Data Processors	8

Radio Caroline

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the actions taken in the last 12 months against the illegal Radio Caroline station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Between 8 August and 13 December 1985 my Department chartered a vessel to keep observation on the ships from which the unlicensed marine broadcasting stations Radio Laser and Radio Caroline operated. The radio investigation service officers on board reported to the police any vessels seen supplying the ships for further investigation. Prosecutions under the Marine, etc. Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1967 are brought by the Director of Public Prosecutions, to whom my Department continues to report evidence of possible offences under the Act. I understand that as a result two people have been prosecuted and convicted and a number of prosecutions are pending.

My Department has also pursued with other European countries efforts to fulfil our international obligation to prevent broadcasting from ships outside national territories. The Government remain seriously concerned about unlicensed marine broadcasters who use radio frequencies allocated for other, legitimate purposes, and whose powerful transmissions can and do cause interference to other radio users.

Cambria and General Investment Trust

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assistance he is offering the Securities and Exchange Commission with its investigations into Cambria and General Investment Trust; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I am ready to offer the commission such assistance, within the terms of the memorandum of understanding with my Department, as it may request and as I can reasonably provide. However, as the hon. Member may have seen, the company has stated that it intends to co-operate with the commission in its investigation.

Financial Services Act

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which sections of the Financial Services Act he next intends to bring into effect.

Mr. Howard: On 26 November the Financial Services Act 1986 (Commencement No. 2) Order was made, which brings further provisions into force today. Apart from the citation of the Act, those provisions are exclusively concerned with the disclosure of information obtained under certain provisions of the Companies Act 1985 and the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, together with consequential repeals.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

17. **Mr. Mallon** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with the leaders of political parties in Northern Ireland during the past two months in relation to the progress of the Anglo-Irish Agreement; and what have been the effects of those discussions.

Mr. Tom King: I have met the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) as the leader of the SDLP, and the leader of the alliance party in this connection in the last two months. In addition, I have met a considerable number of supporters of all the major parties, I regret, however, that the leaders of the two Unionist parties have so far felt unable to talk to me.

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will promote a campaign within the Province in support of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I am most anxious that the benefits for everybody in Northern Ireland that can flow from the Anglo-Irish Agreement are better understood and to remove misunderstandings and misrepresentations about it and we seek to take every opportunity to do this.

ENVIRONMENT

Use Classes Order

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will announce the date when he proposes to publish his conclusions on the use classes order.

Mr. Tracey: We are considering the responses to the consultation paper which we published in June setting out our proposals to modernise the order. We are not yet ready to make any announcement.

General Development Order

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to table amendments to the general development order.

Mr. Tracey We intend to lay a revised general development order, which will consolidate, simplify and further amend the current order, later this Session, following consultations with the local authority associations and others.

North Sea (Pollution)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the steps Her Majesty's Government have taken in the last three years to prevent, reduce or eliminate pollution of the North sea from atmospheric sources whose origins lie within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department is currently reassessing information on the input to the North sea of heavy metals and pesticides, although there is no clear evidence that current emission levels pose an environmental threat to the North sea. The Government's aim, set in 1984, to reduce by 30 per cent. United Kingdom emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides by the end of the 1990s would reduce the deposition of these pollutants. This aim is reinforced by the Government's recent authorisation to retro-fit three 2000 MW power stations and decision to equip all new coal-fired power stations with flue gas desulphurisation equipment.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the research Her Majesty's Government have commissioned or completed to examine the effects on the North sea of organic synthetic compounds discharged or dumped into that sea from the United Kingdom within the last three years.

Mr. Waldegrave: Within the past three years my Department has commissioned the following research relevant to the effects of synthetic substances in the North sea:

the masses of list I and list II substances discharged to tidal waters in the United Kingdom (October 1983). These included DDT, Lindane, HCH, PCB's and the Drins.

an update of the estimates in 1986 for the five major estuaries bordering the North sea.

a survey of pentacholorophenol and other pesticides in river and estuarial waters.

a survey of rivers and estuaries for eulans, mitins, synthetic pyrethroids, chlorinated benzenes, chlorinated ethanes and others and triozines.

the effects and distribution of organo-tin compounds in coastal waters.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list any new binding regulations on black and grey list substances adopted by the United Kingdom since the close of the international conference on the protection of the North sea in Bremen, 31 October to 1 November 1984 *(a)* within the framework of existing/new national legislation, *(b)* within the framework of the European Economic Community and *(c)* within the framework of the Paris commission.

Mr. Waldegrave: Since the close of the international conference on the protection of the North sea in Bremen, 31 October to 1 November 1984, the United Kingdom has adopted the following binding regulations on black and grey list substances:

Within the framework of existing national legislation, controls over discharges to coastal and estuarial waters —which previously covered only black list substances— have been extended to include all substances including those on the grey list.

Within the framework of the European Community, quality standards for discharges of three black list substances, DDT, pentachlorophenol and carbon tetrachloride have been agreed (86/280/EEC). In addition the EC directive (85/467/EEC) has been adopted concerning the reduction of specific uses of PCB's and PCT's and the prohibition of use in new equipment. The Government have also laid down national standards based on environmental quality objectives for six grey list substances—lead, chromium, zinc, arsenic, copper and nickel.

Within the framework of the Paris Commission, three decisions repeat and extend the provisions of the EC directives on discharges of cadmium and mercury (83/513/EEC and 84/156/EEC) to Paris convention waters, and on the marketing and use of PCB's.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what new preventive measures Her Majesty's Government have taken during the last three years to maintain the quality of the North sea.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the information given in response to other questions. In addition, as part of its continuing policy of co-operation with the other North sea littoral states to maintain a healthy North sea environment the Government are to host the international North sea conference in London in November 1987.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on establishing a joint international environmental data base with other North sea countries.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom contributes fully to the data bases being set up and developed within the context of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea and of the joint monitoring programme of the Oslo and Paris commissions. These data bases cover the area of the North sea.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all research during the past three years which Her Majesty's Government have conducted aimed at developing the joint monitoring programme of both the Oslo and Paris commissions.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom Government participated fully in the joint monitoring programme of

the Oslo and Paris commissions and has not had to sponsor research to enable it to do so. It has carried out research for the wider activities of the joint monitoring group such as the assessment of inputs to the sea, into trend monitoring and into sediment monitoring.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in what ways Her Majesty's Government have co-operated in the last three years with other coastal states around the North sea in long range surveillance of airborne pollutants entering the sea.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom is playing a full part in the atmospheric working group of the Paris commission which is charged among other things with encouraging co-operation in monitoring and the exchange of research information. Six monitoring sites in the United Kingdom currently contribute to the European measurement and evaluation programme under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe convention on long range transboundary air pollution.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what improvements Her Majesty's Government have made in pollution monitoring programmes around that part of the United Kingdom coastline bordering the North sea in the last three years.

Mr. Waldegrave: The monitoring of estuarial and coastal waters is the responsibility of water authorities and river pollution boards, and the quantity and quality of monitoring is steadily improving. A major survey of the quality of bathing waters is in progress. My Department has assisted by the development of better methods of analysis and research into the use of organisms as indicators of pollution. It has also sponsored surveys of list I and list II substances in estuarial waters for compounds not generally monitored by water authorities.

In addition, I am advised that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, has made a number of improvements to its own monitoring programmes. These include the further refinement of monitoring carried out at offshore sea disposal sites; the near completion of a baseline survey of metals in seawater; the establishment of extensive monitoring for tributyl tin compounds in coastal and estuarine waters; the extension of the scope of monitoring for hydrocarbons; and the initiation of research to facilitate fish disease monitoring.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what new measures Her Majesty's Government have introduced in the last three years to prevent, reduce or regulate waste from production and consumption facilities entering the North sea.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the information given in response to his other questions.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list any cases in the last three years where types of waste previously discharged into the North sea were, when found or thought to be harmful, disposed of in a different manner.

Mr. Waldegrave: Detailed information of the type requested is not held centrally, but information on discharges to rivers and estuaries are publicly available from the registers of discharges held by water authorities. However, some examples of where reductions in discharges to the North sea have been made during the past three years are listed below:

mercury from chloralkali plants, due to the use of mercury-free technology
oil from refineries, due to a combination of better effluent treatment and industrial restructuring
pesticides from manufacturing plants by greater recycling of effluent.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail year by year the amount of money spent in 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 on research improving knowledge of the fate of pollutants in the North sea.

Mr. Waldegrave: Most of the research undertaken by the Government on the fate of pollutants entering the sea is directed at the maritime environment in general rather than the North sea in particular. However, it is estimated that the following sums have been spent in each of the last five years on research specifically directed at the North sea:

Estimated Research Expenditure of fate of pollutants in the North Sea

	£000
1981-82	390
1982-83	570
1983-84	680
1984-85	680
1985-86	800

These estimates include research sponsored by my Department and by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. In addition, the Secretary of State for Scotland has spent over £100,000 a year in each of the years specified, primarily in connection with the effects of the offshore oil industry on the North sea.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list any new emission and environmental quality standards laid down by Her Majesty's Government within the last three years to preserve and restore rivers and estuaries discharging into the North sea.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom Government do not set emission standards. They are set by water authorities on a case by case basis and on the basis of quality objectives. Details of the quality standards issued in the past three years are given in answer to a previous question.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all new objectives, of which he is aware, established within the last three years set to control discharges to coastal areas of the North sea of (i) list I materials and (ii) list II materials.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have laid down national quality standards for a range of environmental quality objectives for all surface waters in the United Kingdom affected by discharges of lead, chromium, zinc, arsenic, copper and nickel. In accordance with the environmental quality objective approach, it is for the regional water authorities to set emission standards to ensure that the national quality standards are met. Within the European Community limit values and quality standards have recently been agreed for discharges of DDT, pentachlorophenol and carbon tetrachloride.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what objectives Her Majesty's Government have set within the last three years to control the coastal

discharge into the North sea of (i) list I materials and (ii) list II materials; and what specific time limits have been set in each case.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information on environmental quality objectives has been given in answer to a previous question. All discharges to coastal and estuarial waters will require at least deemed consent as from November 1987 and it is planned that all deemed consents shall be reviewed within the next five-year period — with priority being given to discharges of list I and II substances. For list I substances, quality standards must be met within a time scale laid down in the relevant directive. For list II substances water authorities must draw up plans for the reduction of pollution, which incorporate time scales, for those areas where quality standards are not met.

Chemical Compounds

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the chemical compounds which, within the last three years, have been banned from marketing, production or use in the United Kingdom as a consequence of their possible harmful effects on marine, freshwater or marine eco-systems.

Mr. Waldegrave: The objective of United Kingdom policy in protecting the aquatic environment is to ensure that concentrations of chemical substances do not reach unacceptable levels. Bans or restrictions on the manufacture, marketing or use are among the tools which are used in meeting this objective. Where restrictions on the marketing and use of chemical compounds are considered necessary to protect the aquatic environment, the United Kingdom prefers to work through international agencies.

In the last three years measures have been taken under an EC directive and a Paris commission decision further to restrict the marketing and use of PCBs and PCTs. Restrictions have also been introduced nationally on the supply of organotin-based antifouling paints and the Government are pressing for similar action in the European Economic Community.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all private, corporate or Governmental sources of PCBs presently being discharged into fresh water, estuaries or marine eco-systems feeding the North sea.

Mr. Waldegrave: I know of no point sources of discharge of PCBs to the aquatic environment in the United Kingdom. Under an EC directive (85/474/EEC) controlling the marketing and use of PCBs, these substances are now banned from new use throughout the EC member states and those countries within the Paris Commission. The appropriate United Kingdom regulation came into force on June 30 1986.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the extent to which, within the framework of existing UK legislation, when uniform emission standards or environmental quality objectives are adopted, the best available technical means have to be, nationally or through international agreement, taken into account.

Mr. Waldegrave: The policy in the United Kingdom is to use the environmental quality objective approach. This approach does not always require the use of the best available technical means to reduce pollution. Under the daughter directives stemming from the directive on the control of discharges of certain substances into the aquatic environment, the use of best technical means available has to be taken into account for all new discharges. Water authorities are required to consult with my Department in such cases.

Hazardous Substances

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what incentives Her Majesty's Government provide to industry aimed at preventing or reducing the discharge of hazardous substances into the aqueous environment.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom observes the "polluter pays" principle and therefore does not give specific incentives to industry to reduce discharges of dangerous substances to the aquatic environment. However, where expenditure on pollution control is part of a wider scheme, already attracting some form of industrial grant, it is of course included.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail the amount of money spent in 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 on research and development projects designed to produce low or non-waste and low emission or emission-free technologies.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Department spent £5·7 million £5·5 million and £5·8 million in the respective years on reseach and development on waste and emission treatment technologies to reduce wastes and emissions released to the environment.

Environmental Quality Objectives

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken within the last three years to bring closer together the uniform standards adopted by a number of European nations and the United Kingdom's environmental quality objectives.

Mr. Waldegrave: It was agreed at the Bremen North sea conference that both the environmental quality objective and the uniform standards approaches to the control of discharges can be effective and sufficient measures to protect the marine environment. Since that time, the efficacy of the two approaches has been considered within the Paris Commission and will be considered again at next year's London conference on the North sea. The topic is also likely to be reconsidered with the European Commission's fourth environmental action programme. The Government are currently considering their response to the suggestions made by the House of Lords Select Committee on European Committees concerning the unification of the two approaches.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the studies commissioned or completed for Her Majesty's Government in the last three years which compare the environmental quality objective approach to water quality management with the uniform emmission standard approach.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Department has sponsored one such study. It is mainly concerned with the implementation of the cadmium directive (1983/513/EEC) in England and Wales. The findings of the report are currently being considered.

Waste (Export)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much waste has been exported from the United Kingdom to Belgium in the last three years to be incinerated at sea.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is no requirement for the Department of the Environment to be informed about exports of waste, but it is believed that there have been no exports of waste in the last three years from the United Kingdom to Belgium for incineration at sea.

Local Government Contracts

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to introduce legislation preventing the inclusion of political conditions in local government contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: Appropriate provisions will be included in the Local Government Bill to be introduced this Session.

Tillingham Hall, Essex

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to issue a decision on the application for development permission at Tillingham hall, Essex.

Mr. Waldegrave: The inspector's report of the inquiry into these proposals was received recently and is being carefully studied. The decision letter will be issued as soon as this consideration has been completed.

"Paying for Local Government"

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the outcome of consultations in England and Wales on the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government".

Mr. Ridley: There have been 1,217 responses received in England and 120 in Wales during the consultation period which closed on 31 October. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are considering these urgently, but I can confirm that the Government remain determined to undertake a thorough reform of local government finance in England and Wales as a matter of priority, and to propose legislation as soon as practicable. I shall make a further statement in due course.

Radioactivity (Misletoe)

Dr. Mark Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department is taking to monitor levels of radioactive caesium in imported misletoe over the Christmas period.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have taken expert advice about this matter. My advisors conclude that even a prolonged period of standing under such mistletoe would not be harmful. It would not, however, be wise to eat imported —or home grown— mistletoe.

Native Species (Protection)

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be receiving the advice of the Nature Conservancy Council under section 24 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, about the protection of United Kingdom native species.

Mr. Ridley: I have now received recommendations from the NCC following a detailed review that it has undertaken of whether any animal or plant should be added to or removed from the list of those animals fully protected by schedule 5, or those plants fully protected by schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. I have placed a copy of the NCC's report in the Library. Details of the recommendations have been circulated to local authorities and other interested bodies. Representations and other comments should be lodged by 31 January 1987 at the latest.

Council of Environment Ministers

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Council of Environment Ministers meeting on 24 November.

Mr. Waldegrave: I chaired the Council of Environment Ministers on 24 November. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State led the United Kingdom delegation. This was a successful meeting at which agreement was reached on a number of important issues. In particular three directives which have been before the Council for a considerable time were agreed.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) was able to report to a Committee of the House yesterday, useful improvements on the Commission's proposals for revised standards for noise from new motorcycles were negotiated. We can now give our formal agreement to an amendment strengthening the provisions of directive 78/1015/EEC. The detailed elements are as follows. European standards for replacement silencers will form a further provision of this new directive.

The Council was able to agree a common position on the proposal for a directive on the prevention of environmental pollution by asbestos. The directive aims to prevent asbestos emissions from various sources endangering public health in the Community and contaminating the environment. Member states will be required to ensure that asbestos emissions into the air, asbestos discharges into water and asbestos waste are as far as possible reduced at source or prevented.

The Council also agreed a directive strengthening the provisions of the existing directive 75/439/EEC on the disposal of waste oils. The principal new features are Community emissions limits for combustion installations above 3MW, national controls for combustion in installations below this threshold and a maximum permissible limit for PCBs of 50ppm in regenerated waste oils or in waste oils used as fuel. It was, however, agreed that PCB levels should, wherever possible, be kept below this figure.

The Council formally adopted directives on animal experimentation and the Community water quality information system.

Following discussion of the implications of recent Rhine pollution incidents, the Council adopted a

resolution inviting the Commission to review present Community preventive and remedial measures, including the extent of their implementation, and if necessary to present appropriate proposals; and also inviting the Commission to examine the possibility of negotiating bilateral or multilateral agreements with European third countries on the extension of directive 82/501/EEC on major industrial accident hazards and of decision 81/971/EEC on the Community's information system for the control and reduction of pollution caused by hydrocarbons discharged at sea.

An interim resolution welcoming the Commission's proposals for a fourth environmental action programme and commending it for further study was also agreed.

There was a wide ranging discussion on the primordial importance of protecting the public and the environment from harm from nuclear radiation. The Council agreed to consider proposals which the Commission expects to put forward soon.

The Presidency presented a compromise for the large combustion plant directive that promised new acid-free standards for future large combustion plans, and staged reductions in SO2 emissions. The United Kingdom was able to support this. The Council then discussed draft conclusions on the basis for further action, prepared by the Presidency with the assistance of the Commission; unfortunately, a number of member states were unable to agree, and no formal decisions could therefore be reached.

Useful progress was made in discussion on diesel particulates from cars and gaseous emissions from large vehicles. It was also agreed that the Commission would shortly bring forward proposals on harmonisation of speed limits in the Community, and on powers for member states to control the scale of leaded regular petrol.

On the control of chlorofluorocarbons, the Council agreed that the framework of the Community's policy was basically sound, but would keep it under review, recognising that modifications, such as a limit on production, might be required in the light of advancing scientific and technical knowledge.

The Council made some further progress on the draft directive on the sulphur content of gas oil, but was unable to reach final agreement.

The United Kingdom called for Community action on lead in paint, and on antifouling paints containing organotin, and the Commission agreed to consider bringing forward proposals early next year. The United Kingdom also tabled a paper urging upon member states the principals of openness concerning environmental pollution recommended by the tenth report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution and accepted by the Government in its response to that report.

Category of motorcycle	*Maximum Permissible Sound Level in dB (to be a revised test procedure)*	
	Stage I	*Stage II*
Under 80 cc	77	75
80-175 cc	79	77
Over 175 cc	82	80

Dates of entry into force of stages I and II

1. *Motorcycles under 80 cc or over 175 cc*

	Stage I	*Stage II*
New type approvals	1 October 1988	1 October 1993
All new vehicles	1 October 1990	1 October 1995

Category of motorcycle	*Maximum Permissible Sound Level in dB (to be a revised test procedure)*	
	Stage I	*Stage II*
2. *Motorcycles from 89 cc to 175 cc*		
New type approvals	1 October 1989 end of 1994[1]	
All new vehicles	1 October 1990 end of 1996[1]	

[1] Before the end of 1994 the Council, acting on possible proposals from the Commission, may agree other dates.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

University College of Wales

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to announce further additional funding in respect of pay restructuring for the University College of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend announced on 6 November at column *490* that he would be willing to provide some further additional funding for academic pay restructuring in the universities if structural improvements could be agreed at a cost that could be afforded, and that he would be initiating discussions to that end. These discussions have only recently begun: it is not yet possible to say how long they will take or what the outcome will be.

United Kingdom Nationals (Overseas Study)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice his Department issues to institutions of higher education about the classification of United Kingdom nationals who study abroad for more than three years as home students for fees purposes.

Mr. Dunn: A student who is a national of a member state of the European Community (including the United Kingdom) is eligible to have his fees for a course designated for mandatory awards purposes in the United Kingdom paid for him by the United Kingdom Government if he has been ordinarily resident in the area of the Community—other than wholly or mainly for the purposes of receiving full-time education — for the relevant three-year period before his course begins, provided he has not previously followed a course equivalent to a designated course, whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere. A student who has pursued such a course but who meets the residence qualification is eligible to pay the home rate of fee for himself, as is a student who meets the residence qualification who wishes to attend a non-designated course.

The position of the student who has spent all or part of the relevant qualifying period outside the area of the Community, whether for study or for any other purpose, will depend either on whether he remained ordinarily resident in the area of the Community, for example as he might do if his absence abroad was purely temporary, or on whether he can be treated as being ordinarily resident in the Community because he was absent only because he, his spouse or his parent was temporarily employed outside the Community.

Guidance on the interpretation of the ordinary residence requirement has been given to institutions with the various regulations made under the Education (Fees & Awards) Act 1983, copies of which are in the Library.

School Closures

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state his policy with the regard to the closure of surplus schools, together with the criteria he applies in deciding when a school is and is likely to remain surplus to requirements.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend expects proposals made under the 1980 Education Act to cease to maintain schools to be based on a careful evaluation of their educational and financial merits. In deciding whether to approve such proposals he would take into account the expected demand for places, and he would wish to be satisfied that the new arrangements offered an education better suited to the needs of pupils of all abilities than would be offered by those they replace. These criteria will be elaborated and further explained in the forthcoming Circular "Providing for Quality" which has been issued for comment in draft form.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consideration is given to likely changes in demand for secondary education over the next decade when reaching decisions on closure applications.

Mr. Dunn: The forecast demand for places at a school is one of the factors which my right hon. Friend weighs carefully in considering proposals made under the 1980 Education Act to cease to maintain the school.

Essex Institute of Education

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will reconsider his decision to withhold polytechnic status from the Essex Institute of Education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has made no decisions about further polytechnic designations, on which he awaits advice from the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Eduction.

Pilot Teacher Appraisal Scheme

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a detailed statement on the Government's pilot teacher appraisal scheme.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend yesterday invited six local education authorities to form a consortium to pilot teacher appraisal in their schools. The six are:

Croydon
Cumbria
Newcastle
Salford
Somerset
Suffolk

The project is to be funded through the education support grant arrangements and a steering group is being established which will involve representatives of the Secretary of State, local education authorities and the teachers' unions.

It is hoped that the pilot work can begin in January.

O-Level Examinations

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the percentage of children in each local education authority who achieve five or more O-levels within the grades A-C.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986, c. *36*]: Data on leavers from maintained schools is as follows.

Percentage of leavers from maintained schools with five or more higher grade passes at GCE O-level or CSE.

Average of academic years 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85

	Percentage
Barking	10·5
Barnet	39·6
Bexley	27·3
Brent	19·4
Bromley	30·3
Croydon	25·3
Ealing	21·2
Enfield	22·7
Haringey	15·5
Harrow	36·2
Havering	26·2
Hillingdon	23·5
Hounslow	20·2
Kingston-upon-Thames	33·4
Merton	27·5
Newham	10·4
Redbridge	24·2
Richmond-upon-Thames	26·0
Sutton	34·1
Waltham Forest	14·9
Birmingham	18·6
Coventry	20·2
Dudley	22·7
Berkshire	27·0
Buckinghamshire	32·0
Cambridgeshire	25·9
Cheshire	25·6
Cleveland	24·6
Cornwall	24·4
Cumbria	22·9
Derbyshire	22·5
Devon	23·6
Dorset	28·9
Durham	19·5
East Sussex	27·9
Essex	25·2
Gloucestershire	27·0
Hampshire	25·5
Hereford and Worcester	24·6
Hertfordshire	29·9
Humberside	22·1
Isle of Wight	21·5
Kent	27·1
Lancashire	24·1
Leicestershire	23·0
Lincolnshire	23·5
Norfolk	21·6
North Yorkshire	32·0
Northamptonshire	21·0
Northumberland	26·8
Nottinghamshire	19·5
Oxfordshire	28·8
Shropshire	26·9
Somerset	21·8
Staffordshire	22·4
Suffolk	22·5
Surrey	32·6
Warwickshire	27·4
West Sussex	32·3
Wiltshire	24·4
Sandwell	13·1
Solihull	27·7
Walsall	19·9
Wolverhampton	16·9
Knowsley	13·1
Liverpool	18·5
St. Helens	25·1
Sefton	39·2
Wirral	25·1

	Percentage
Bolton	24·6
Bury	26·3
Manchester	17·8
Oldham	18·2
Rochdale	21·1
Salford	18·0
Stockport	28·0
Tameside	22·4
Trafford	28·8
Wigan	24·0
Barnsley	15·6
Doncaster	18·9
Rotherham	18·9
Sheffield	21·1
Bradford	18·0
Calderdale	20·0
Kirklees	23·3
Leeds	21·8
Wakefield	13·0
Gateshead	19·0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	18·9
North Tyneside	24·0
South Tyneside	19·7
Sunderland	19·3
ILEA	15·2
Avon	24·7
Bedfordshire	24·0

A-Level Examinations

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the percentage of children in each local education authority who achieve five or more A-levels within grades A-C.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986, c. *36*]: Because of the very small numbers of children achieving five or more A-levels, reliable estimates cannot be produced from the school leavers sample survey.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment and Training Programmes

Mr. Rooker asked the Paymaster General if he will list those employment and training programmes operated by his Department in which right hon. and hon. Members as employers can participate.

Mr. Lee: Right hon. and hon. Members as employers can participate in the following employment and training measures:

YTS
Community Programme
Voluntary Projects Programme
Job Release Scheme
New Workers Scheme
National Priority Skills Scheme
Local Consultancy Grants
Local Training Grants
Wider Opportunities Training Programme
Training for special groups
Management Development Projects
Local Collaborative Projects
Open Tech
Training for Enterprise
Job Introduction Scheme
Adaptation to Premises and Equipment Scheme
Employment Rehabilitation
Sheltered Placement Scheme
Special Aids to Employment
Personal Reader Service.

However, the rules of some of these measures (particularly YTS and the community programme) specifically debar schemes which would involve participants in political activity or any action in support of a political party.

Benefits (Availability for Work Test)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Paymaster General (1) what cost savings are predicted as a result of the introduction of form UB671A, the availability for work test;

(2) what percentage of the people on the unemployment register he estimates will be adversely affected by the use of form UB671A, the availability for work test.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is not possible to forecast what savings will accrue from the national introduction of the new form which I announced on 28 October. We have not introduced any new rules for entitlement to benefit but have merely changed our procedures to ensure the application of the long-standing legal rules following the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee. No one entitled to benefit will be adversely affected by the use of the new form at all.

Manchester

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will make a statement on the progress made by his Department in the inner city area of Manchester;

(2) if he will give details of actions taken by the inner city task force in Manchester;

(3) if he will give details of the budget of the Manchester inner city task force; and how much has been spent.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Paymaster General if he will list the changes in compiling unemployment figures since 1979 and the date of each change; and what has been the estimated number of people affected.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. and learned Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) on 6 November 1986, at columns *525-26*. A full description of all the changes which have affected the published unemployment count was given on page 422 of the October 1986 edition of the *Employment Gazette*.

Community Transport Schemes

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Paymaster General (1) whether he has plans to increase the numbers of Manpower Services Commission placements on community transport schemes;

(2) whether he has plans to increase the services offered by community transport schemes by greater use of Manpower Services Commission placements.

Mr. Lee: As part of the development of national initiatives within the community programme Manpower Services Commission officials have had discussion with officials in the Department of Transport about the possibility of an initiative to promote mobility schemes. These might include community transport. No firm proposals have yet been made.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Paymaster General what problems his Department has found with using Manpower Services Commission placements in community transport schemes.

Mr. Lee: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Homes Insulation

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Paymaster General what recent representations he has received from Help the Aged, Age Concern, citizens advice bureaux and the Leith insulation project supporting the week of action on cold homes, a national campaign from 21 November to 1 December; and if he will make a statement about the funding of such local projects by the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Trippier: No recent representations have been made to my right hon. and learned Friend by the organisations mentioned, although I have been approached by Neighbourhood Energy Action. My Department and the Manpower Services Commission, working with the Department of Energy, have established a national initiative within the community programme to fund energy efficiency work. Under the initiative, over 300 projects are currently employing some 5,300 people.

Disabled People

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Paymaster General what is the number of registered disabled people who are unemployed in Dundee and Tayside; and what percentage of the disabled population this represents.

Mr. Lee: There were 159 unemployed registered disabled people registered for employment at jobcentres and careers offices in Dundee and Tayside on 3 October 1986. Information about the total number of unemployed registered disabled people or the size of the disabled population in the area is not available.

Manpower Services Commission

Mr. Dobson asked the Paymaster General what will be the estimated spending by the Manpower Services Commission on television, radio and newspaper advertising, respectively, and other promotional literature in the current year; and what was the total in 1979-80 and each intervening year.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 November 1986, c. *215*]: I regret that the estimates given for the spending of the Manpower Services Commission on advertising and promotional literature in 1986-87 were inaccurate. Planned and committed expenditure is: TV, £15,700,000; press (including radio) £5,350,000; other promotional, £9,758,000. In addition, the MSC's latest and best estimate is that £4,472,000 has yet to be allocated to specific forms of advertising and promotion. The programmes to benefit include the YTS, adult training, restart, the community programme, the enterprise allowance scheme, the jobcentre service, the technical, vocational and education initiative, professional executive recruitment and the skillcentre training agency.

WALES

Unemployed Persons (Education)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to increase educational opportunities for the unemployed in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The replan initiative for the adult unemployed was introduced by the Department of Education and Science in 1984 and the Welsh Office extended the programme to Wales in 1985. The programme, which is delivered through a network of field officers in England and Wales, aims to identify the educational needs of the unemployed and to develop educational provision to meet those needs. Expenditure on the replan initiative in Wales is expected to be £87,000 in the current financial year and the provision for 1987-88 is £89,000. In addition, local education authorities in Wales are expected to spend £129,000 under the education support grant arrangements in 1986-87 and £113,600 in 1987-88 to increase educational opportunities for the unemployed.

Children (Heart Surgery)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales if a paediatrician cardiologist is permanently available for children needing heart surgery in South Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A paediatric cardiologist is not yet permanently available. Referrals may be made to Bristol and a locum consultant attends the University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff. South Glamorgan health authority is seeking to make a permanent appointment for which funds were made available by the Department in April 1986.

Sheep

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the present state of the sheep industry in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The June 1986 provisional census results record a further 2·4 per cent. increase in the sheep breeding flock in Wales, and the industry continues to benefit under the EC sheepmeat regime. In the last marketing year producers in Wales received payments under the sheep variable premium scheme for finished lambs amounting to £21 million and from the sheep annual premium scheme for breeding ewes amounting to £32·1 million. In addition, payments to producers in Wales under the hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme so far this year amounts to £19·9 million.

Abortions

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many abortions have been performed in Wales under the Abortion Act in each year since 1967; how many of these abortions were performed in an emergency to save the life of a mother; and what percentage this latter figure represents of the former.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The number of notifications of legally induced abortions performed in Wales each year since the enactment of the Abortion Act 1967, in April 1968, are given in the following table:

Year	*All abortions* *Number*	*Notifications of Abortions performed in emergency cases to save the life of the pregnant woman* *Number*	*Percentage of all*
1968	873 (from 27 April)	—	—
1969	2,187	—	—
1970	3,176	2	0·063
1971	3,693	—	—
1972	3,784	1	0·026
1973	3,485	—	—
1974	3,344	—	—
1975	2,962	1	0·034
1976	2,948	—	—
1977	3,091	—	—
1978	3,427	—	—
1979	3,711	—	—
1980	3,542	—	—
1981	3,684	—	—
1982	3,648	1	0·027
1983	3,498	1	0·029
1984	3,648	—	—
1985	3,855	—	—

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Parrott Corporation

Mr. Allan Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to publish the Baker report on the Parrott Corporation.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no plans to publish Mr. Baker's report on the Welsh Development Agency's handling of its investment in the Parrott Corporation. Copies have been made available to the Committee of Public Accounts and to the Crown Prosecution Service.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many pupils entered the assisted places scheme for each of the financial years 1981-82 up to 1986-87 and including the estimate for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The number of new pupils who entered the assisted places scheme in the school year 1981-82 to 1986-87 totals 114, 128, 120, 118, 115 and 123 respectively. The number of places available for new pupils to enter the scheme in the school year 1987-88 is 136.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the reasons for the drop in school uniform and travel grants between the years 1984-85 and 1985-86 regarding the assisted places scheme in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: For the school year 1985-86, there are still seven claims for grant for travel and uniforms outstanding.

SCOTLAND

Forestry

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to encourage the planting and management of forests and woodlands for the production of timber and for shelter.

Mr. Rifkind: It is already the Government's policy to encourage the planting and management of forests and woodlands for the production of timber. Many of our forests and woodlands provide shelter for stock on adjoining land, and grants are available for the planting of trees as shelter belts.

Heating Allowances

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received from the retired section of the National Asssociation of Local Government Officers' Lothian regional council branch about heating allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend received a letter from the retired section of the National Association of Local Government Officers' Lothian regional council branch on 22 September making representations about heating costs. An official reply was sent on 3 October.

Munn and Dunning Reports

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Scottish Education Department has any plans to publish material for use in schools as part of the Munn and Dunning report on curriculum proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The consultative committee on the curriculum, working through central support groups in each standard grade subject and assisted by national development officers, is co-ordinating the preparation and dissemination of appropriate teaching materials. The Government are providing funds of £0·75 million for this in the current financial year in addition to the £4·14 million spent previously on central support for standard grade, including the preparation of materials.

Salmon Act 1986

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the composition of the advisory committee to be set up under the Salmon Act 1986.

Mr. John MacKay: As announced on 23 October, Professor George Dunnet, regius professor of natural history at the University of Aberdeen has agreed to serve as the Salmon Advisory Committee's first chairman. Fisheries Ministers in Great Britain are currently receiving nominations for committee membership from representative bodies concerned with all aspects of salmon. Full details of the composition of the committee will be given as soon as we have completed our consideration of the nominations received. The Salmon Advisory Committee is a non-statutory body and is not established under the Salmon Act 1986.

Drug Addicts

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will direct the Greater Glasgow health board to issue drug addicts in the area with new needles on a replacement basis free of charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The Government are considering this matter urgently and will be making their intentions clear as soon as possible.

Jordanhill School

Mr. Roy Jenkins asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to inform the governors of Jordanhill college how much grant they will get to run the college school in the 1987 to 1988 session; what assessment he has made of the levels of funding necessary to ensure that the new admissions to the primary one and secondary one classes will be possible; and if he will make such funds available.

Mr. Rifkind: Final decisions on the allocation of public expenditure for 1987-88 have not yet been taken. The governors have, however, been informed that I do not intend that the school's expenditure in 1987-88 should differ significantly from the budget which they might have been expected to approve had no changes been in prospect in the arrangements for managing the school. The question of intake is for the governors to decide.

Pupil Teacher Ratios

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the average pupil-teacher ratio in each of the last 10 years for primary and secondary schools, respectively.

Mr. Rifkind: The information for Scottish education authority schools at September each year is set out in the table below:

Pupil teacher ratios

	Primary	*Secondary*
1976	22·4	14·7
1977	22·4	14·7
1978	21·4	14·6
1979	20·3	14·4
1980	20·3	14·4
1981	20·3	14·4
1982	20·4	14·3
1983	20·3	14·0
1984	20·4	13·7
1985[1]	20·4	13·5

[1] Provisional.

Health Education Group

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* expenditure for the current year by the Scottish health education group on *(a)* smoking, *(b)* alcohol, *(c)* diet and *(d)* acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is as follows:

Estimated expenditure by Scottish Health Education Group 1986-87

Subject	*£*
Smoking	269,400
Alcohol	246,000
Diet	85,500
Acquired immune deficiency syndrome	250,000

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, in view of Ministers recent re-assessment of health education priorities, what proposals he has to redefine the role of the Scottish health education group.

Mr. John MacKay: None.

Labour Force Survey

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Manpower Services Commission last compiled a labour force survey covering the Dundee and Tayside area; and if he will publish figures in the *Official Report* showing those in work and out of work by occupation.

Mr. Lang: In Scotland, the labour force survey is conducted by the General Register Office for Scotland on behalf of the Department of Employment and the European Community. The sample size is too small for reliable estimates to be published either for Dundee or for the Tayside area.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Manpower Services Commission last compiled a labour force survey in Scotland; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* data *(a)* for occupations in the building industry showing the estimated numbers in work and out of work and *(b)* for occupations in the National Health Service showing the numbers in work and out of work.

Mr. Lang: In Scotland, the labour force survey is conducted by the General Register Office for Scotland on behalf of the Department of Employment and the European Community. The latest available estimates, from the spring 1985 survey, are given in the following tables.

(a) Employment and unemployment in the construction industry Scotland, Spring 1985

Order(s)	*Types of occupation*	*Number of people*
In employment: by occupation		
4	Professional and related in science, engineering technology and similar fields (eg civil engineers, quantity surveyors)	11,000
6	Clerical and related	11,000
11	Materials processing; making and repairing (excluding metal and electrical) (eg carpenters and joiners)	20,000
12	Processing, making, repairing and related (metal and electrical) (eg plumbers, gas fitters, scaffolders	33,000
13	Painting, repetitive assembling, product inspecting, packaging and related	16,000
14	Construction, mining and related not identified elsewhere (eg bricklayers, plasterers, builders' labourers)	56,000
15	Transport operating, materials moving and storing and related	10,000
Other	Other occupations	18,000
TOTAL IN EMPLOYMENT		175,000
Not in employment		
	Looking for work in Scotland during the week prior to the survey, whose last job was in the construction industry, and who had been unemployed for less than three years	36,000

(b) Employment and unemployment in medical and other health services and veterinary services (Class 95 of SIC 1980) Scotland, Spring 1985

Order(s)	Types of occupation	Number of people
In employment: by occupation		
2	Professional and related in education, welfare and health (eg medical practitioners, nurses)	85,000
6	Clerical and related	13,000
9	Catering, cleaning, hairdressing and other personal services (including porters, ambulancemen etc)	33,000
Other	Other occupations	13,000
TOTAL IN EMPLOYMENT		144,000

Notes:

(1) All figures are subject to sampling errors. The survey covered under half a per cent. of those resident in private households, but not those who reside in institutions.

(2) The sample size is too small to provide a reliable breakdown of the number not in employment by previous occupation in the construction industry, or to give a reliable estimate for unemployed health workers.

(3) The occupation "orders" relate to the 1980 classification of occupations.

Housing (Dundee)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the number of starts and completions of houses in both public and private sector housing in Dundee in each of the past five years.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is set out in the table below:

House starts and completions, Dundee district

Year	Starts		Completions	
	Public sector	Private sector	Public sector	Private sector
1981	118	224	351	160
1982	240	364	162	162
1983	88	484	148	469
1984	219	434	155	470
1985	133	113	222	250

Services for the Elderly

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average weekly cost of providing the following services for the elderly *(a)* meals-on-wheels, *(b)* a home help and *(c)* a hospital bed.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is as follows:

Average cost per week 1984-85

	£
(a) Meals on Wheels per client	3·26
(b) Home help per client	13·75
(c) Hospital bed per geriatric patient	259·00

Those figures do not take account of interest charges on capital or income accruing by way of payment from those in receipt of meals on wheels or home help services. The level of home help and meals on wheels services varies in accordance with the local authorities' general policy and perception of individual needs.

Building Apprenticeships

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has on the number of apprenticeships started in Scotland in the building trade in each of the past five years; and what comparable figures it holds for Dundee and Tayside.

Mr. Lang: The numbers of new entrants to the construction industry in Scotland receiving off the job training, and the numbers of newly registered apprenticeships are shown in the table below. The Construction Industry Training board, which compiles these statistics, reports that not all new entrants become registered apprentices, and they cannot do so until they are in full employment: for many, this does not occur until they have completed YTS training.

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
New entrants	3,203	2,914	3,666	4,229	4,215
New registrations of apprenticeships	2,793	2,536	2,232	2,552	n/a

n/a Not available.

No information is available for Dundee and Tayside.

AIDS

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what extra money he will allocate to Tayside health board to enable it to combat acquired immune deficiency syndrome *(a)* by granting additional resources for treatment of acquired immune deficiency syndrome patients at King's Cross hospital, Dundee and *(b)* through various forms of public education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My noble Friend the Minister of State announced on 23 November the membership of a national working party to advise on the most appropriate and cost-effective method of organising services for patients infected with the AIDS virus and to quantify the resource costs for the hospital and community health services and family practitioner services. One of the members of the working party is Dr. Ramsay Small, chief administrative medical officer of Tayside health board. The question whether additional resources should be allocated to health boards in respect of this disease will be considered in the light of the working party's recommendations. So far the Government have committed £1·4 million centrally to fund measures, including a public education campaign, to control the spread of AIDS in Scotland.

Disabled People

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of registered disabled people in Dundee and Tayside.

Mr. John MacKay: Local authorities are required to inform themselves of the numbers of chronically sick and disabled persons within their areas. They are not, however, required to keep registers for the purpose, and information on the number of persons in particular categories of disability is not collected centrally.

Diabetes

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the incidence of diabetes in Dundee and Tayside.

Mr. John MacKay: Information on the incidence of diabetes in Dundee and Tayside is not available centrally.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the incidence of death from cervical cancer in each health board in Scotland in each of the past five years; and if he will express such figures as a rate per 100,000 of the female population.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested relating to the number of deaths classified as being due to cervical cancer (ICD[1] 180) as the underlying cause of death in each health board is shown in the following table:

Deaths from cervical cancer in each Health Board in Scotland, 1981-85

	Numbers of deaths					*Rate per 100,000 estimated female population*				
Health Board Area	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Scotland	201	208	213	227	214	7·5	7·8	8·0	8·5	8·1
Borders	2		3	4	8	3·8	—	5·7	7·6	15·1
Forth Valley	8	6	8	14	17	5·7	4·3	5·7	10·0	12·1
Dumfries and Galloway	2	6	8	6	5	2·7	8·0	10·6	8·0	6·6
Fife	15	19	23	22	18	8·5	10·8	13·0	12·4	10·2
Grampian	19	12	14	21	16	7·6	4·8	5·5	8·3	6·3
Highland	8	6	10	10	3	8·0	6·0	10·0	9·9	3·0
Lothian	37	29	30	31	28	9·5	7·4	7·7	8·0	7·2
Tayside	16	13	10	13	19	7·7	6·3	4·8	6·3	9·2
Orkney	3	1	2	—	1	30·9	10·3	20·5	—	10·2
Shetland	1	2	—	—	1	8·4	17·0	—	—	8·6
Western Isles	—	2	—	2	—	—	12·6	—	12·7	—
Argyll and Clyde	15	19	19	19	19	6·4	8·1	8·2	8·2	8·2
Ayrshire and Arran	13	25	10	20	13	6·6	12·7	5·1	10·2	6·7
Greater Glasgow	45	43	43	49	34	8·5	8·2	8·4	9·6	6·7
Lanarkshire	17	25	33	16	32	5·8	8·5	11·3	5·5	11·0

[1] International Classification of Diseases.

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the names and locations of areas of 10 hectares or more in Caithness and Sutherland which have received approval for planting grants under the forestry grants scheme since February 1985, giving the hectarage in each case.

Mr. John Mackay *[pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1986, c.*389*]: The information covering the period February 1985 to mid-November 1986 is as follows:

Name of Property	*Location*	*Area approved for planting (hectares)*
Sallachy	South East of Loch Shin	2,489
Kirkton Farm	Strath Halladale	88
Skibo	North Side of Dornoch Firth	18
Chracairnie	South of Loch Shurrery	265
Achaveilan North	Broubster	109
Achaveilan South	Broubster	105
Achvarasdal	Broubster	252
Claise Brice	Broubster	130
Lon Breac	Broubster	259
Luachair (1)	Broubster	47
Luachair (2 & 3)	Broubster	95
Luachair(4)	Broubster	36
Griffin Wood	Broubster	36
Saorach	Broubster	198
Thormaid	Broubster	251
Torrigil	Broubster	206
Bardnaheigh	East of Shebster	14
Hastigrow	East of Hastigrow Village	67
Rhianacoil	North of Loch Stemster	103
Stemster	North of Loch Stemster	103
Coille Ruadh West	Strathoykel	87
Coille Ruadh East	Strathoykel	41
Coille Beithe West	Strathoykel	39
Coille Beithe East	Strathoykel	50
Coille Badan West	Strathoykel	72
Coille Badan East	Strathoykel	85
Coille Caorann	Strathoykel	107
Cnoc Nancon	Strathoykel	148
Creagan Breca	Strathoykel	102
Easain Dubh	Strathoykel	23
Innis Tioram	Strathoykel	217
Langwell	Strathoykel	26
Cambuskeith	Sydney Estate, Upper Strathfleet	111
Saval Beg	Sydney Estate, Upper Strathfleet	95
Dola West	Sydney Estate, Upper Strathfleet	32
Dola East	Sydney Estate, Upper Strathfleet	32
Baddhu	Sydney Estate, Upper Strathfleet	256
Craggie	Sydney Estate, Upper Strathfleet	138
TOTAL AREA APPROVED FOR PLANTING		6,532

TRANSPORT

M1 (Lighting)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on those lighting units on the M1 motorway between London and Wakefield which were unlit at 6 am on Friday 14 November;

(2) if he will make a statement on what dates and times of the day the monthly inspection for September, October and November of each section of carriageway lighting was carried out on the M1 between London and Wakefield;

(3) how many unlit units of lighting there were on the M1 motorway between Staples Corner and Toddington service station at 6 am on Friday 14 November; on what date they were reported defective; and when they will be re-set or repaired;

(4) how many units of lighting were lit on the M1 motorway between Staples Corner and Newport Pagnell service station between 12 noon and 1 pm on Monday 17 November; on what date they were reported defective; and when they will be re-set or repaired.

Mr. Moore: The details are not available for the precise times and dates referred to but the general position over the last three months period is as follows:

M1 Motorway Section of Lighting	*Date if an Inspection in 1986*			*Most recent reports*	
	September	*October*	*November*	*Number Unlit at night*	*Total in service*
Staples Corner to London boundary	8	6	3	83	[1]1,200
London boundary to Newport Pagnell Service Area	8	6	3	287	[1]2,800
Section North of Newport Pagnell Service Area	New lighting not commissioned		5	0	198
Northants boundary to junction 16	New lighting not yet fully commissioned			—	—
Junction 16 to 17	during week ending				
	20	18	22	120	886
Junction 21	during week ending				
	6	8	22	2	102
Junction 24 to 26	9	7	11	74	1,550
		Totals	66	[1]566	6,736

[1] Approximately.

The numbers lit by day are not regularly reported. Lamps are primarily activated by photo-electric cells and can therefore be lit during daylight hours for a number of reasons, such as poor visibility. I am, however, looking further into the points raised by the right hon. Gentleman and will write to him shortly.

Travel Concessions

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether Her Majesty's Government are providing any funds to county and district councils and transport authorities to assist with the implementations of travel concessions to handicapped people under the provisions of the Transport Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Expenditure on concessionary travel is in general a matter for local authorities, which make decisions in the light of available resources and their overall priorities. In support of their total expenditure, authorities receive block grant through annual rate support grant settlements, and the calculation of their entitlement to grant includes an assessment of their need to spend on services in the light of the public expenditure provision for those services. For 1986-87, the provision for spending on concessionary fare schemes in England was £223 million, while for 1987-88 an increase in provision of £21 million has been announced.

Brentwood and Ingatestone Bypass

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the most recent assessment of the volume of traffic on the A12 Brentwood bypass; and how this compares with the volume of traffic before the opening of the adjacent section of the M25.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The average 18-hour flow in August this year was about 50,000 vehicles per day. The comparable figure for 1982, before the first Essex section of the M25 was opened, was 25,000 vehicles per day.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is now in a position to say when noise barriers will be erected close to the Brentwood and Ingatestone bypass of the A12.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are authorising the provision of some 1,200m of noise barriers in the Ongar road area of Brentwood. Similar measures are not justified at Ingatestone. I am writing to my hon. Friend with the details.

MV Derbyshire (Inquiry)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in view of the accident to the vessel Kowloon Bridge, he will now reconsider his decision not to establish an inquiry into the disappearance of her sister ship Derbyshire in 1980.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the statement that I made to the House on 25 November.

Lorry Tyres

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied that the structure and rubber compound used to build truck tyres are meeting laid-down

performance specifications; and what steps his Department takes to monitor compliance with these specifications.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are at present no legal requirements regarding the structure or rubber compounds used in the design and construction of truck tyres. In practice, most of them comply with the requirements of ECE regulation 54 – currently being considered for inclusion in construction and use regulations. All retreaded tyres have to comply with British Standard BS AU 144b: 1977. The tyres fitted to trucks are checked for load capability and condition as part of their annual test.

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Transport what tests have been undertaken by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory into whether tyres currently used by lorries on motorways are suitable for the long periods of high speed use to which they are subjected.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Transport and Road Research Laboratory has not conducted tests on the suitability of lorry tyres for long periods of motorway use. We have no reason to doubt the reliability of modern tyres provided that they are properly maintained, inflated to the correct pressure and not overloaded.

Lorries (Weights)

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Transport in what proportion of cases tested by his Department in the past year the weight of truck loads using motorways complied with legislation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Separate figures are not available for motorways, but in 1985 about 75 per cent. of all goods vehicles check-weighed were within the statutory limits. The checks are not random, so the figures overstate the proportion of overloading.

Chapter 2 Aircraft

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to permit chapter 2 aircraft in British ownership to continue flying in and out of British airports until such time as foreign airlines have to comply with the same noise regulations.

Mr. Michael Spicer [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 November 1986, c. *22*]: I can assure my hon. Friend that the Government's policy, and their position in current international negotiations, is that United Kingdom airlines should not be discriminated against in any new noise regulations that are developed.

Dangerous Substances (Carriage)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on the latest position regarding the Dangerous Substances (Carriage by Road in Packages Etc.) Regulations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 November 1986, c. *320*]: These regulations were laid before Parliament today. They will come into force on 6 April next year. Operators will have a further year to formalise training arrangements for all drivers not already covered.

The regulations control the transport by road of dangerous substances in drums, bottles, carboys or skips. They cover both manufacturers and suppliers of specified dangerous substances as well as vehicle operators and drivers. Important new requirements, in addition to that for training, include proper design, construction and maintenance of vehicles carrying dangerous goods, provision by the consignor of information about loads carried to the operator, possession of information in writing about the load by the driver, supervision and safe parking of vehicles carrying certain substances and fitting of orange warning plates on vehicles when required.

A new enforcement regime involving the factory inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive as the enforcement authority with assistance from the police and this Department's traffic examiners will be effective in maintaining the high standard of safety in this country.

These regulations complete a package of controls over the carriage of dangerous goods by road. All piecemeal and often archaic legislation on this subject, some going back nearly 60 years, has now been either repealed or replaced by these new regulations.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

River Elbe (Dredgings)

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions Her Majesty's Government have had with West German authorities to dump dredgings from the Elbe in seas around Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I understand from technical discussions at official level took place up to the middle of last year between the Scottish Office and German officials about the level of contamination of dredged spoil from the Elbe. However, no licence has been issued for the disposal of such material in British seas.

Organic Farming

Mr. Janner asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he will make provision for the payment of grants to farmers for experiments into the improvement of organic farming methods;

(2) whether he will make resources available in Government-financed agricultural institutions for the expansion of research into the extension and improvement of methods of organic farming.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Grants are already available under the agriculture improvement scheme for investments in organic farming to farmers satisfying the general eligibility conditions of the scheme. Although the scheme does not make specific provision for grant-aid to experimental projects, my Department undertakes or sponsors a range of work of relevance to organic farming, including nitrogen fixation in white clover, the production of crop varieties which are resistant to pests and diseases, and the development of novel non-chemical methods of pest control. The Department has monitored soils, pests diseases and crops on a commercial organic farm and is funding a research project on the nitrogen balance and nitrogen cycle in organic farming systems. If the industry wished to see additional work undertaken, the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service would be pleased to consider proposals for further research commissioned and paid for by the industry.

Animal Feedingstuffs

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider making it compulsory for agricultural merchants to put the ingredients of animal feedingstuffs on the bags.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The EC directive which governs the labelling of feedingstuffs is currently under review in an EC expert committee. While this exercise is in progress we have no plans to alter United Kingdom legislative provisions in respect of ingredient listing.

Fast Food Industry

7. **Mr. Marland** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about the quantity of home-grown food consumed in the fast food industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is not possible to identify the amount of home grown food consumed in the fast food sector, but there is no doubt that this sector offers a growing market for United Kingdom farm produce.

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about the proportion of total food consumed in the United Kingdom that is consumed in fast food outlets; and what trend the figures show.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Ministry does not collect statistics specifically on the fast food sector. However, limited information from official and trade sources suggests that expenditure on "fast" food has been increasing in recent years and may now be approaching 10 per cent. of total expenditure on food in the United Kingdom.

Data Processing Staff

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many data processing staff are in post within his Department; and how many of those are trainees.

Mr. Jopling: There are 117 staff in the data processing grades, none of which are trainees. Above these grades there are 208 staff in posts requiring the knowledge and skills of the ADP functional specialism, where the main areas are systems analysis, programming and operations, and a further 16 under training.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what steps have been taken by his Department to monitor the welfare of livestock exported from Britain in transit in other European Economic Community member states; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he is taking to enforce animal welfare legislation in relation to the transport of livestock exported from the United Kingdom; and if he expects any prosecutions to be initiated.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Under the Export of Animals (Protection) Order 1981, all food animals exported from Great Britain must, immediately before the journey, be rested for at least 10 hours and offered food and water at an officially approved lairage premises. The animals may be exported only if they have been certified as fit to travel by one of my veterinary staff. Two-tier vehicles used for these exports are subject to approval by my Department, and the animals must be loaded in the presence of an official.

Once the livestock enter the territory of another member state their welfare becomes the responsibility of that country in accordance with the requirements of Council directive 77/489/EEC. If any welfare problem comes to my Department's attention we take it up with the authorities of the member state concerned. Monitoring exercises have from time to time been carried out in co-operation with importing countries, but under national and European Community law the United Kingdom Government have neither the responsibility nor the power to monitor transport in other member states.

As regards enforcement in the United Kingdom, my Department has been investigating recent allegations about exports of sheep to establish whether there is any evidence that breaches of United Kingdom law have occurred.

Mr. Hancock asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will take action against the exporters of three live elephants in a steel container to Hong Kong from Southampton; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will introduce regulations to ensure better standards for the export of non-farm animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Transit of Animals (General) Order 1973 already affords extensive protection to the welfare of all animals in transit, and I see no need to introduce further measures. This legislation covers that part of an international journey which takes place within British jurisdiction. Enforcement is the responsibility of individual local authorities.

As regards the export of the three elephants in question, one of my veterinary staff examined the steel container to be used and was satisfied that it was suitable and that the animals were fit to travel.

Intervention Stores

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* the current contents of each European Economic Community intervention foodstore in Britain; and if he will indicate the total annual cost to the taxpayer of the operation of such foodstores.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when regulation 765/86 was considered by the management committee of the EEC's common agricultural policy; which nations fail to benefit from the special arrangements provided by the regulation; which nations have so far benefited from sales under the regulation; and how the representative of Her Majesty's Government on that Committee voted on the regulation.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1986, c. *187*]: Regulation 765/86 was adopted by the

Commission on 15 March 1986 following an opinion from the Milk and Milk Products Management Committee on 28 February. The regulation applies only to butter at least 18 months old and the list of eligible destinations is restricted to the USSR, Mongolia, India and Pakistan in order to avoid competition with normal commercial sales. The regulation provides at least some return for food which might otherwise not find a market at all. The United Kingdom voted in favour of the regulation for the reasons given in reply to my hon. Friend on 16 April 1986, at column 331. Prices are set by competitive tender and to date all bids have been for sales to the USSR.

Monetary Compensatory Amounts

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 20 November, whether any monetary co-efficients fall to be applied to monetary compensation amounts in respect of sales of beef under regulation 2670/88 and sales of butter under regulation 765/86; and what amount is involved in pence per pound.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1986, c. *187*]: Monetary co-efficients are not applied to monetary compensatory amounts.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Pensions

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to publish detailed proposals for the tax treatment of personal pensions; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Inland Revenue has, with my authority, today published a consultative document setting out the proposed tax rules for the new pensions arrangements. A copy has been placed in the Library.

I believe that these proposals, which follow on from the changes already introduced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, offer a new pensions deal for the 10 million employees in this country who do not belong to an occupational pension scheme, and there will be a wider pensions choice for all employees.

Changes in the tax rules will make it easier and cheaper for any employer to set up a simplified pension scheme with the benefit of tax relief. And the same tax reliefs will be given to the new personal pension schemes which will be open to all employees.

We also envisage improvements in the rules for retirement annuities which will be particularly welcome by self-employed people nearing retirement. Finally, we propose much greater transferability between different pension arrangements. In the past barriers to mobility, including the existing provisions for pensions, have been a drag on the country's economic performance. Improving job mobility is an important Government objective. The new proposals will give much greater opportunity for people to have a pension arrangement which they can take with them when they change jobs.

Company Profits, Taxation and Investment

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1970 the change in percentage terms on the basis of 1980 prices of *(a)* company profits, *(b)* company taxation, *(c)* distributed profits, *(d)* undistributed profits and *(e)* investment in plant and machinery.

Mr. MacGregor: There are no price index numbers which are fully appropriate for revaluing the information requested at *(a)*, *(b)*, *(c)* and *(d)* at 1980 prices. Figures of investment in plant and machinery by broad sector at 1980 prices are given in table 10.2 of "United Kingdom National Accounts" which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Central Statistical Office

Mr. Higgins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the Central Statistical Office to publish an up-to-date national or public sector balance sheet.

Mr. Lawson: It is hoped to publish summary national and sector balance sheets for end-years 1975 to 1985 in *Economic Trends* in spring 1987. These will include estimates of the physical assets held by each sector and the nation as a whole. Full financial balance sheets for the public sector and other sectors for end-1977 to end-1984 were published in the June 1986 issue of *Financial Statistics*.

Exchange Rate (Yen)

Mr. Malins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing information available to him on the average annual exchange rate each year from 1970 to 1985 with estimates for 1986 for (i) yen per United States dollar, (ii) yen per deutschmark, (iii) yen per pound sterling and (iv) during relevant years, yen per ecu.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The annual average exchange rates for 1970 to 1985, and estimates for 1986, can be derived from various editions of CSO *Financial Statistics* (table 13.1). The annual average yen-ecu rate for 1980 to 1985, and an estimate for 1986 is:

	Yen-ecu
1980	313·99
1981	245·71
1982	243·75
1983	211·16
1984	187·18
1985	180·74
1986[1]	164·50

[1] Estimated.

Income Tax

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the tax yield for the higher rate incomes falling within each band of 40 per cent., 50 per cent., 55 per cent. and 60 per cent.; and if he will give the total yield figure for the current financial year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Value Added Tax

Mrs. Peacock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of the compositional criteria on which value added tax is levied on various types of cereal bar biscuits.

Mr. Brooke: There is no standard list of ingredients which determines the liability to VAT of cereal bars or confectionery generally. Cereal bars are liable to VAT at the standard rate if they fall within the legal provision which charges VAT on "chocolates, sweets and similar confectionery", or on "biscuits and other confectionery (not including cakes) wholly or partly covered with chocolate or some product similar in taste and appearance." It would be impracticable to lay down compositional criteria and individual cases have to be decided on their merits.

Football Pools

Mr. Alton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the expected revenue from the levy on income from football pools in 1986-87.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

CIVIL SERVICE

Mr. Jim Coe

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister for the Civil Service what is the Civil Service grade of Mr. Jim Coe.

Mr. Luce: The deputy chief press secretary at 10 Downing street, Mr. Jim Coe, has the Civil Service grade of grade 5 within the open structure.

THE ARTS

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts if he will list the arts functions, theatres, art galleries and museums he has visited during the past 12 months.

Mr. Luce: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

DEFENCE

Departmental Initiatives

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list initiatives by his Department which have been of benefit specifically to the north-east, north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside regions since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As I said in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) on 4 November 1986 at column 795, we are constantly searching for opportunities to secure a more even spread of defence employment across the regions. However, all proposals will need to stand on their economic and operational merits.

It is our policy to place equipment orders, wherever practicable, by competitive tendering and this policy has brought significant benefit to the defence budget and to the taxpayer. There are, however, occasions when we place work in response to wider and relevant factors.

By way of example, I refer my hon. Friend to our decision on 28 January 1985, at column 21, to order a type 22 frigate from Cammell Laird and a type 23 frigate from Swan Hunter on 15 July 1986 at column 853.

Both orders are of assistance to the areas concerned.

International Military Services

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose of the recent visit of an Iranian delegation to the United Kingdom under the auspices of International Military Services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: IMS, before the Iranian revolution, had a number of infrastructure contracts with the Iranian Government. These contracts have either been terminated or have fallen into abeyance. There are, however, a number of contractual matters relating to them which still require to be settled between IMS and the Iranians, and the recent discussions with IMS are part of a continuing dialogue on these outstanding contractual points. The question of the United Kingdom supply of any defence equipment was not addressed.

Service Bases (Contingency Hospitals)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what information he has about plans to convert all or part of RAF Bicester base in Oxfordshire into a United States wartime contingency hospital;

(2) what information he has about plans to convert all or part of RAF Feltwell base in Cambridgeshire into a United States wartime contingency hospital;

(3) what information he has about plans to convert all or part of the army base at Tidworth in Hampshire into a United States wartime contingency hospital;

(4) what information he has about plans to convert all or part of RAF Locking base in Somerset into a United States wartime contingency hospital;

(5) what information he has about plans to convert all or part of the Army base at Bulford in Dorset into a United States wartime contingency hospital;

(6) what information he has about plans to convert all or part of the Army base at Colerne in Wiltshire into a United States wartime contingency hospital;

(7) what information he has about plans to convert all or part of RAF Borden base in Hampshire into a United States wartime contingency hospital;

(8) what information he has about plans to convert all or part of RAF Waterbeach in Cambridgeshire into a United States wartime contingency hospital;

(9) what information he has about plans to convert all or part of RAF Newton base in Nottinghamshire into a United States wartime contingency hospital;

(10) what information he has about plans to convert all or part of the air force base at Lakenheath into a United States wartime contingency hospital;

(11) what information he has about plans to convert all or part of RAF Kemble base in Gloucestershire into a United States wartime contingency hospital.

Mr. Freeman: Contingency hospitals exist at the following RAF stations:

Little Rissington
Nocton Hall
Chessington
Bicester
Feltwell
Upwood

In addition, permission has been given for the establishment of contingency wartime hospitals at the following locations:

RAF Locking
RM Condor, Arbroath

Contingency wartime hospitals do not exist at Bordon, Newton, Waterbeach, Cosford, Colerne, Bulford, Tidworth, Lakenheath or Kemble.

Otterburn Training Area

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the areas covered by the proposals he is now considering for extension of the Otterburn training area.

Mr. Freeman: There are no proposals at present to extend Otterburn training area.

Equestrian Events

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish figures of the number of man days devoted by service personnel to assistance at equestrian events.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that I have nothing to add to the answer I gave my hon. Friend on 6 November, at column *577*.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Abortions

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the numbers of non-National Health Service abortions performed under Agency arrangements on National Health Service patients resident in each regional health authority, and in each district health authority, in England and Wales in 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Newton: The information is shown in the table:

Number of notifications of legal abortions, performed under the Abortion Act 1967, to NHS patients in non-NHS premises ("Agency") by area of usual residence, England and Wales, 1984 and 1985

Area of usual residence	*Numbers notified*	
	1984	*1985*
Wales	1	4
DHAs		
Clwyd	—	1
Gwent	—	1
Mid Glamorgan	—	1
South Glamorgan	1	1
Northern RHA	1	—
DHA		
East Cumbria	1	—
Yorkshire RHA	330	383
DHA		
Calderdale	2	—
Dewsbury	127	158
Huddersfield	199	220
Hull	—	1
Leeds Western	1	3
Wakefield	—	1
York	1	—
Trent RHA	47	75
DHA		
Barnsley	1	1
Doncaster	1	2
Leicestershire	45	67
Nottingham	—	1
Sheffield	—	2
Southern Derbyshire	—	2
East Anglian RHA	1	2
DHA		
Peterborough	—	1
West Suffolk	1	1
North West Thames RHA	811	904
DHA		
Barnet	5	6
Brent	770	848
Ealing	5	15
East Hertfordshire	1	—
Harrow	12	15
Hammersmith & Fulham	2	1
Hillingdon	—	1
Hounslow and Spelthorne	3	1
North Hertfordshire	1	1
North West Hertfordshire	—	3
Paddington and North Kensington	4	3
South Bedfordshire	3	5
South West Hertfordshire	1	—
Victoria	4	5
North East Thames RHA	11	14
DHA		
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	—	1
Basildon and Thurrock	1	—
Bloomsbury	1	—
City and Hackney	6	—
Enfield	—	1
Hampstead	—	3
Haringey	—	3
Islington	2	—
North East Essex	1	1
Redbridge	—	2
Southend	—	1
Tower Hamlets	—	1
Waltham Forest	—	1
South East Thames RHA	11	18
DHA		
Bexley	—	1
Bromley	1	1
Camberwell	—	3
Canterbury and Thanet	—	2
Dartford and Gravesham	—	1
Greenwich	1	—
Hastings	1	—
Lewisham and North Southwark	1	2
Maidstone	7	1
West Lambeth	—	7
South West Thames RHA	18	34
DHA		
Chichester	—	1
Croydon	1	2
Kingston and Esher	1	—
Merton and Sutton	3	1
Mid Surrey	1	—
North West Surrey	3	—
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	5	1
South West Surrey	1	—
Wandsworth	—	27
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	3	2
Wessex RHA	540	578
DHA		
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	51	58
Bath	107	96
East Dorset	159	163
Isle of Wight	12	17
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	55	68
Salisbury	33	28

Area of usual residence	Numbers notified 1984	1985
Southampton and South West Hampshire	11	20
Swindon	53	49
West Dorset	22	34
Winchester	37	45
Oxford RHA	10	11
DHA		
East Berkshire	3	3
Kettering	1	3
Milton Keynes	1	2
Northamptonshire	1	2
West Berkshire	4	—
Wycombe	—	1
South Western RHA	16	17
DHA		
Bristol and Weston	1	3
Cheltenham and District	1	—
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	—	1
Exeter	6	5
Gloucester	1	—
Plymouth	1	1
Somerset	6	6
Torbay	—	1
West Midlands RHA	3,103	3,882
DHA		
Bromsgrove and Redditch	9	10
Central Birmingham	267	284
Coventry	12	297
Dudley	319	359
East Birmingham	203	259
Herefordshire	—	1
Kidderminster and District	1	3
Mid Staffordshire	16	19
North Birmingham	119	174
North Warwickshire	271	297
Rugby	153	184
Sandwell	397	451
Solihull	4	14
South Birmingham	277	353
South East Staffordshire	4	1
South Warwickshire	387	454
Shropshire	1	2
Walsall	19	12
Wolverhampton	254	255
West Birmingham	387	451
Worcester and District	3	2
Mersey RHA	2	3
DHA		
Crewe	—	1
Liverpool	1	—
Macclesfield	—	1
St. Helens and Knowsley	1	—
South Sefton	—	1
North Western RHA	10	4
DHA		
Bury	1	—
Central Manchester	1	—
Oldham	3	—
Rochdale	5	3
South Manchester	—	1

RHA: Regional Health Authority.
DHA: District Health Authority.
Areas for which no such abortions were performed are omitted.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are numbers of deaths attributed to legal abortion in England and Wales in each of the years 1960 to 1985 inclusive.

Mr. Newton: The available statistics from the registration of deaths are shown in the tables. Because of changes in the international classification of diseases, figures from 1979 to date are not comparable with those of earlier years.

Before 1979 it is not possible to distinguish between spontaneous abortion and other forms of abortion, and statistics for this period include maternal deaths where the interval between the onset of the maternal condition and death is up to one year.

From 1979, a maternal death is defined as the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and the site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes.

Number of deaths registered with underlying cause as due to all forms of abortion excluding criminal abortion
England and Wales 1960-1978

Year	All forms of abortion excluding criminal abortion ICD (8) 640, 641, 643-645
1960	32
1961	31
1962	28
1963	28
1964	26
1965	31
1966	23
1967	17
1968	28
1969	20
1970	21
1971	21
1972	19
1973	8
1974	9
1975	7
1976	6
1977	5
1978	5

Number of deaths registered with underlying cause as due to Legally Induced Abortion
England and Wales 1979-1985

Year	Legally induced abortion ICD (9) 635
1979	2
1980	1
1981	1
1982	2
1983	—
1984	1
1985	3

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the numbers of National Health Service abortions, and of non-National Health Service abortions, performed in Great Britain on women resident in each health board in Scotland in 1984 and 1985 and the estimated numbers of women aged 15-44 years resident in each health board in 1984.

Mr. Newton: The exact information requested can be produced only at disproportionate cost. However, readily available figures are shown in the table.

Numbers of notifications of legal abortions carried out in Great Britain to women usually resident in Scotland by Health Board Area (HBA) of usual residence, total abortions to Scottish residents by category of premises, 1984, 1985
Estimated population of women aged 15-44 years by HBA, Scotland, 1984

Health board area of usual residence	*Number of notifications 1984*	*1985*	*Estimated population women aged 15-44*
Argyll and Clyde	667	589	96,694
Ayrshire and Arran	699	659	80,682
Borders	145	140	20,056
Dumfries and Galloway	294	263	29,777
Fife	723	734	74,312
Forth Valley	475	498	59,655
Grampian	1,176	1,087	109,857
Greater Glasgow	1,763	1,817	208,533
Highland	434	427	41,640
Lanarkshire	851	801	128,161
Lothian	1,684	1,766	168,551
Orkney Islands	26	26	3,877
Shetland Islands	36	30	4,950
Tayside	923	956	82,870
Western Isles	26	30	5,649
Total all Scottish residents	9,922	9,823	1,115,264
NHS premises	8,952	8,903	
non-NHS premises	970	920	

Pharmaceutical Companies

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of (i) British companies and (ii) international companies supplying drugs to the National Health Service which are able to increase their profit targets because they employ United Kingdom research staff; how many additional staff are involved; and what is the additional cost to the National Health Service in each category for the current financial year.

Mr. Newton: The number of United Kingdom research staff employed is not a factor which affects the profit targets of pharmaceutical companies supplying drugs to the National Health Service.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of (i) British companies and (ii) international companies which currently supply drugs to the National Health Service; how many staff in his Department scrutinise their accounts for excess profits from such trade with the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The total number of companies supplying drugs to the National Health Service exceeds 200. Over 60 companies supply drugs in sufficient quantities to require the submission of full financial returns under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme. Nine of these major companies are owned wholly or mainly in the United Kingdom, although several of these would generally be regarded as international companies. Seventeen administration group staff and accountants are employed whole time in the operation of the PPRS.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost in the last financial year, and the estimated cost in (i) the current financial year and (ii) the next financial year of the supply of drugs to the National Health Service, and if he will breakdown these figures by *(a)* British companies and *(b)* international companies providing these drugs.

Mr. Newton: The cost of drugs for the National Health Service in England in 1985-86 was £1,574 million. The provisional estimate for 1986-87 is £1,670 million. The other information requested by the hon. Member is not available. For the companies providing full financial returns under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme in 1984, the proportion of National Health Service sales which were by companies wholly or mainly owned in the United Kingdom was estimated to be about one third of the total.

Soviet Foodstuff (Radioactivity)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what guarantee as regards contamination has been given to the United Kingdom in respect of consumption of goods imported from the Soviet Union since the Chernobyl catastrophe in the Ukraine; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will consider making representations to the Soviet Union seeking on-site inspection of agricultural products, dairy products, fish and tinned food products in the Soviet Union before they enter the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: United Kingdom imports from the Soviet Union of food for human consumption are subject to monitoring for radiation contamination by port health authorities as part of the European Community measures introduced by European Community Council regulations following the Chernobyl nuclear accident. Foods imported into the United Kingdom from the Soviet Union must be accompanied by a certificate stating that they comply with the maximum levels for radiocaesium in food set out in European Community Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1707/86 as extended by Regulation No. 3020/86.

We are satisfied that current health regulations are satisfactory and we have no plans to seek any additional public health checks on food imported from the Soviet Union.

Blood Supplies (Cost)

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give *(a)* the revenue figure attributed to the supply of blood to in-patients in National Health Service paybeds and *(b)* the calculated costs of supplying the blood.

Mr. Newton: Information is not available on the costs of blood to in-patients occupying National Health Service paybeds. Paybed charges in acute hospitals incorporate a 1 per cent. addition for supplying blood, reflecting the fact that in 1984-85 the total revenue costs of the Blood Transfusion Service amounted to 1 per cent. of the total revenue costs of NHS acute hospitals. No charge is made for blood supply in long-stay or psychiatric hospitals as this service is rarely required.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what account has been taken in constructing the scales of supplementary benefit of the substantial increase in house insurance premiums.

Mr. Major: The supplementary benefit scale rates are intended to meet all normal day-to-day living expenses except housing costs, but including insurance of the contents of the home. Claimants who are owner-occupiers or who are otherwise liable for the maintenance and insurance of the structure of their homes receive a special addition of £1·85 a week, increasing to £1·95 a week from April 1987. Where the actual cost of insurance exceeds the standard allowance a higher allowance may be payable if, because of special circumstances (for example high fire risk) higher than average expenditure is justified.

Education Maintenance Allowances

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the disregards were last set for young persons over the age of 16 years attending school, or attending colleges of further education as far as the treatment of education maintenance allowances for dependants in obtaining social security is concerned; and if he will make it his policy to raise them in line with inflation.

Mr. Major: The disregards for these allowances under the supplementary benefit scheme were established in 1978. We have no plans to increase them.

AIDS

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on funding for the public health laboratory service and on its programme of work connected with the acquired immune deficiency syndrome virus.

Mrs. Currie: Funding of the public health laboratory service by this Department has increased from £22 million in 1982-83 to £29 million in 1986-87. In real terms, at 1986-87 prices, this represents an increase of £2 million between 1982-83 and 1986-87. The Department has provided the public health laboratory service with an additional £740,000 per annum since 1985-86 for work on AIDS, mainly diagnostic testing. In addition the service has funded other AIDS related work costing some £500,000 from its existing resources.

The future funding of the public health laboratory service is under consideration; no decisions have yet been taken.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the level of current expenditure and in each of the last four years on, respectively, research into an acquired immune deficiency syndrome cure or vaccine, screening of persons for acquired immune deficiency syndrome antibodies, advice on counselling for acquired immune deficiency syndrome victims, national publicity for a public health education programme, regional publicity, support for voluntary bodies combating acquired immune deficiency syndrome and clinical care, including hospices, for acquired immune deficiency syndrome victims; and how much is now planned for each of the next three years.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* each of the additional benefits that have been made available since 1983 for disabled people and *(b)* each benefit which has been withdrawn since 1983 that was available to disabled people together with an estimate of the annual cost of each of these items as far as the impact on disabled people is concerned.

Mr. Major: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Benefit	*Additional*	*Withdrawn*	*Financial impact on disabled*
(1) Industrial injury benefit	—	April 1983	Broadly neutral, because the money saved (£5 million in 1983-84) was used to pay industrial disablement benefit earlier and to waive the contribution conditions for sickness benefit and invalidity benefit payable to those incapacitated by industrial disablement.
(2) War pensioners vehicle scheme	—	November 1983	Replaced by war pensioners mobility supplement.
(3) War pensioners mobility supplement	November 1983	—	Replaced war pensioners vehicle scheme. Increased spending on mobility for war disabled (£0·2 million in 1983-84).
(4) Non-contributory invalidity pension	—	November 1984	Replaced by severe disablement allowance payable at the same rate.
(5) Severe disablement allowance	November 1984	—	Replaced non-contributory invalidity pension.
(6) Special hardship allowance	—	October 1986	Replaced by reduced earnings allowance payable at the same rate.
(7) Reduced earnings allowance	October 1986	—	Replaced special hardship allowance.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much of the additional public expenditure announced in the Chancellor's recent autumn statement will be for the direct and specific benefit of disabled people.

Mr. Major: The growth in spending on health and personal social services in England of over £1 billion in 1987-88 compared with 1986-87 will benefit services for disabled people as well as other services. Health and personal social services funding is not generally earmarked centrally for particular services.

The latest estimate of expenditure on those social security benefits designed to meet the needs of disabled people will be included in the 1987 public expenditure White Paper.

Maternal Deaths

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of maternal deaths registered in England and Wales in each of the three-year periods 1979 to 1981 and 1982 to 1984 which were of women born in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the Republic of Ireland, *(c)* the New Commonwealth and Pakistan, *(d)* India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, *(e)* the West Indies, *(f)* Africa, *(g)* Gibraltar, Malta and Cyprus, *(h)* New Commonwealth countries not included in *(d)* to *(g)*, *(i)* foreign and Commonwealth countries not included in *(a)* to *(h)*, and *(j)* country unstated; and if he will subdivide these into (i) direct maternal deaths, (ii) indirect maternal deaths, (iii) fortuitous maternal deaths and (iv) late maternal deaths.

Mrs. Currie: The table shows the number of deaths registered in England and Wales from 1979 to 1981 and 1982 to 1984 by selected country of birthplace for (i) direct and (ii) indirect maternal deaths. From the statistics of death registrations, it is not possible to identify separately either fortuitous or late maternal deaths.

Number of maternal deaths by selected country of birthplace of woman: underlying cause (i) direct, (ii) indirect maternal deaths England and Wales 1979-81 and 1982-84

		Years	
Country of birthplace[1]		*1979-81*	*1982-84*
(a) United Kingdom	(i)	140	107
	(ii)	16	19
(b) Republic of Ireland	(i)	—	—
	(ii)	—	—
(c) New Commonwealth and Pakistan	(i)	30	17
	(ii)	7	—
(d) India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka	(i)	15	7
	(ii)	3	—
(e) West Indies (Caribbean)	(i)	9	2
	(ii)	3	—
(f) Africa	(i)	5	10
	(ii)	1	—
(g) Gibraltar, Malta and Cyprus	(i)	1	—
	(ii)	—	—
(h) New Commonwealth not included in *(d)*-*(g)*	(i)	—	—
	(ii)	—	—
(i) Foreign and Commonwealth not included in *(a)*-*(h)*	(i)	4	2
	(ii)	3	—
(j) Country unstated	(i)	1	—
	(ii)	—	—
Total all countries	(i)	175	129
	(ii)	26	19

[1] As defined in 1981 Census Country of Birth volume.

Source: (i) International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th revision 630-676 excluding 647 and 648.
(ii) ICD(9) 647 and 648.

Hartlepool

Mr. Leadbitter asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many men and women are in receipt of supplementary allowance and supplementary benefit and board and lodging allowance in Hartlepool.

Mr. Lyell: Information is not available in the form requested. Statistics are not kept as to the sex of claimants nor as to whether they are in board and lodging. The statistics available show that on 13 August 1986, a total of 13,264 claimants were receiving supplementary benefit from the Department's office in Hartlepool, of whom 9,612 were receiving supplementary allowance.

Data Processing Staff

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many data processing staff are in post within his Department; and how many of those are trainees.

Mr. Lyell: The number of data processing staff within the Department is as follows:

Grade	*Number*	
Principals	57	includes 1 trainee
Senior Executive Officers	185	includes 1 trainee
Higher Executive Officers	459·5	includes 10 trainees
Executive Officers	758	includes 174·5 trainees
Senior Data Processors	302	includes 24 trainees
Data Processors	1,128·5	includes 141 trainees
Total	2,890	includes 351·5 trainees

Pertussis Vaccine

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the vaccine damage payments awards made for vaccinations that the claimant stated took place in 1979 were for vaccinations that were pertussis related.

Mr. Lyell: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to him on 6 November at column *591-593* and in particular to table 2. That indicated 10 awards in respect of vaccinations of any kind stated by the claimant to have taken place in 1979. An answer to the right hon. Member's inquiry about which of these 10 vaccinations were stated by the claimant to have included a pertussis element would nevertheless require a search of all cases that have received awards, because of the way that information is held. I regret that this could only be carried out at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children were given pertussis vaccinations or vaccinations that included a pertussis element in each of the years 1979 to 1984.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Number of children aged 16 and under vaccinated with pertussis vaccine or a vaccine with a pertussis element England

Year	*Completed primary courses*	*Re-inforcing doses*
1979	250,250	6,961
1980	285,561	7,194
1981	320,496	6,446
1982	384,827	9,001
1983	[1]406,813	6,866
1984	391,669	5,379

[1] Revised.

Vaccine Damage Payments

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of vaccine damage payments made in each year since the scheme began.

Mr. Lyell: The information is contained in the following table:

Vaccine damage payments

Year	Number of awards
1979	349
1980	255
1981	74
1982	43
1983	42
1984	29
1985	26
1986[1]	14

[1] To 14 November.

Single Payments

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any information on waiting times to an appeal hearing against refusal of single payments or other benefits in the Manchester area.

Mr. Lyell: National administrative statistics for social security appeals are not disaggregated for areas smaller than a social security region and the figures given relate to the north-western region, which includes the Manchester area. The boundaries of the region are shown in appendix 4 of "Social Security Statistics 1985". The most recent statitics available are for appeals heard and decided in the three-month period ended 31 December 1985. Details of the average number of weeks between the lodgement of an appeal and the tribunal hearing, in the north-western region, for supplementary benefit single payment appeals and appeals for other benefits are given in the table.

North-western social security region: three months ended 31 December 1985

Type of benefit	Average time between lodgement of appeal and tribunal hearing (weeks)
All social security benefit appeals	14·3
Supplementary benefit: single payments	12·9
Supplementary benefit: other payments	14·7

Baby Units

Mr. Tony Loyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any information about the effectiveness of special care baby units with respect to improved survival rates and reduction in the incidence of handicap; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The improved survival rates for low birthweight babies are demonstrated in the following table. The figures, which are for England, do not distinguish between special care baby units and other forms of care.

Number and proportion of low birthweight babies who survived beyond 28 days

	Less than 2500g	per cent.	Less than 1,000g	per cent.
1975	32,915	82·1	246	11·8
1980	39,602	87·0	457	21·2
1985	40,241	90·6	871	38·0

The Department has recently commissioned two research projects to study the long term effects of neonatal intensive care. Both will give some emphasis to studying the incidence of handicap.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase funding for the specific purpose of increasing the number of cots in special care baby units *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the north-west region.

Mrs. Currie: The responsibility for the provision of special care baby units in the north-western region lies with the North Western regional health authority. It is the best placed to provide the detailed information the hon. Member requires: the hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of that authority.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any information of the number of babies for whom access is sought to the special care baby units at St. Mary's hospital, Manchester and Hope hospital who are not given access; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may therefore wish to address his inquiry to the chairmen of the Central Manchester and Salford health authorities which have responsibility for the provision of patient services in the baby units at St. Mary's hospital and Hope hospital, respectively.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details by health region of the number of cots available in special care baby units *(a)* as a percentage of all cots and *(b)* as a percentage of live births for 1985.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have the information that is available as soon as possible.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number of private residential care homes for the elderly operating in the east midlands; if he will list them by district, giving the number of residents in such homes by district; if he will give comparative information for Leicestershire and in total the number of such homes and the total number of residents in England and Wales; if he will give the information in respect of each year since 1984 and of 1986 to date; if he will give the figures for each year of the number of homes closed; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Full information is not available centrally in the form requested. The analyses available relate to shire counties in England and the latest information is given in the table. The figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Registered private residential care homes for elderly and disabled people. Numbers of homes and residents as at 31 March.

East Midlands and England — *Number*

	1984		1985		[1]1986
	Homes	*Residents*	*Homes*	*Residents*	*Homes*
Total—England	4,090	55,168	5,200	69,000	6,303
Total—East Midlands	216	2,751	305	3,871	399
Derbyshire	58	807	80	1,103	107
Leicestershire	40	416	58	596	72
Lincolnshire	50	698	68	933	85
Northamptonshire	34	382	49	553	65
Nottinghamshire	34	448	50	686	70

[1] The 1986 data to hand on numbers of homes are incomplete and therefore provisional. 1986 data on residents are not yet available.

Dialysis Machines

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish *(a)* the number of dialysis machines and *(b)* the number of dialysis machines per 1,000 population (i) nationally and (ii) in each health authority for the latest available year.

Mrs. Currie: The information is as follows:

Patients on haemodialysis—year ending 1985

Region	*At home*	*At hospital*
Northern	66	188
Yorkshire	106	117
Trent	258	154
East Anglian	67	125
North West Thames	118	91
North East Thames	218	177
South East Thames	190	176
South West Thames	38	19
Wessex	55	46
Oxford	128	66
South Western	165	55
West Midlands	122	142
Mersey	59	115
North Western	167	95

We would expect an individual machine to be provided for each patient dialysing at home, but machines provided for hospital dialysis might be used by several patients.

Sickle Cell Anaemia

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the incidence of sickle cell anaemia by ethnic grouping.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let my hon. Friend have such information as may be available as soon as possible.

ASH (Departmental Grant)

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will ask the director of Action on Smoking and Health what proportion of his budget is made up of his departmental grant;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* details of his Department's grant to Action on Smoking and Health since its inception, and state the criteria which govern the annual change in grant;

(3) if he will ask the director of Action on Smoking and Health to submit proposals for increasing the proportion of his budget provided by voluntary and private sources;

(4) what steps he proposes to take to appraise the effectiveness of his Department's grant to Action on Smoking and Health.

Mrs. Currie: Action on Smoking and Health submits detailed financial estimates and audited accounts annually. In 1986 about 67 per cent. of total income was made up by this Department's grant. Before grants are finalised, discussions are held with the organisation which include its proposals for increasing its income from voluntary and private sources. At the Department's request the organisation is developing a system of performance indicators by which its effectiveness can be measured.

Since its inception in 1971, Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) has been allocated the following sums by this Department:—

Year	*Grant (£)*
1971-72	19,000
1972-73	6,000
1973-74	3,000
1974-75	6,400
1975-76	18,500
1976-77	31,000
1977-78	41,500
1978-79	59,500
1979-80	70,000
1980-81	80,000
1981-82	90,000
1982-83	115,000
1983-84	118,000
1984-85	136,000
1985-86	150,840
1986-87	177,000

The change in grant reflects the growing demand on Action on Smoking and Health's services and the Government's continuing commitment to support activities which help to reduce the incidence of smoking.

Health Education Council

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will ask the Director of the Health Education Council to submit proposals for the privatisation of activities currently under his control.

Mr. Currie: As my right hon. Friend announced to the House on 21 November, the Health Education Council is being reconstituted with effect from 1 April 1987 as a special health authority. There are therefore no plans for privatisation.

National No Smoking Day 1987

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, in view of his recent reassessment of

priorities for health education spending, whether the Health Education Council will continue to fund National No Smoking Day 1987.

Mrs. Currie: Yes.

Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a list in the *Official Report* of expenditure undertaken by each of the regional health authorities on *(a)* smoking, *(b)* alcohol, *(c)* diet and *(d)* acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Health Education Council

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many members of staff of the Health Education Council are employed on projects concerned with *(a)* smoking, *(b)* alcohol, *(c)* diet and *(d)* acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mrs. Currie: Different aspects of the council's various projects on smoking, alcoholism, diet and acquired immune deficiency syndrome form part of the work of many of the council's staff. It would not be practicable to attempt an allocation of total personnel devoted to each of these projects. The council employs 77 staff members in all.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of the expenditure by the Health Education Council on Project Smoke Free Manchester.

Mrs. Currie: £200,000 a year for the three years from 1985-86.

Glaucoma

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will take steps to provide that, in order to ensure early diagnosis of glaucoma, all eye tests carried out for the National Health Service either by eye specialists or opticians shall include two short tests of eye pressure and of the visual field in addition to the examination with an ophthalmoscope;

(2) if his programme of projects to advance preventive medicine includes the screening of blood relations of glaucoma sufferers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Facilities for the detection and treatment of glaucoma are provided in hospital eye departments. I understand that ophthalmologists would normally advise glaucoma sufferers that their first degree relatives over the age of 40 should be screened.

It is not considered necessary to require opticians to include tests of eye pressure and visul field as part of the routine National Health Service sight test, although it is open to ophthalmic opticians to carry out whatever tests they judge to be appropriate in individual cases. Diagnosis of glaucoma would, however, be a matter for the responsible ophthalmologist.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to make it mandatory for anyone testing the eyes of a person over the age of 40 years to ask whether there is a history of glaucoma in blood relations.

Mrs. Currie: This is a matter for clinical judgment and not one where legislation would be appropriate.

Expenditure

Mr. Jessel asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will publish the Government's response to the Fourth Report from the Social Services Committee of Session 1985-86 on "Public Expenditure on Social Services."

Mr. Newton: The Government's response was published today (Cm. 27). It comments on expenditure trends and service growth in the National Health Service and on the payment of supplementary benefit to people in residential care and responds in detail to the Committee's individual recommendations.

Mentally Ill People (Services)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on the provision of services for the mentally ill;

(2) if he will make a statement on the provision of accommodation in the community for patients discharged from hospitals and mental institutions.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 19 November, c. *219*]: Before long-stay patients in mental illness or mental handicap hospitals are considered for discharge a full assessment of their abilities and needs should be made, and those people found capable of living outside the hospital should have an appropriate course of rehabilitation. When it is decided that the time for discharge from hospital has been reached plans should be made, in consultation with the patient, the family and with any other people or bodies who may be involved, for a move to a suitable setting with an appropriate level of ongoing care and support.

The statutory authorities need to have access to a wide range of accommodation as individuals' needs vary and it is important that each should be helped to find the setting that best meets his needs. Many people will of course return to a family setting. Some may benefit from the freedom of ordinary housing, but may still need regular support, for example from social workers. Some people do well in board and lodging accommodation with a sympathetic landlady. Others may need sheltered housing, or an unstaffed group home. Others, particularly some mentally handicapped people, will need the day-to-day help with ordinary living which a residential home can provide. We are anxious to ensure that no hospital discharges a long-stay patient without a jointly agreed plan to settle the patient into the community, with statutory and voluntary services working together to plan and provide an appropriate range of services. The Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 when implemented will give statutory support to existing good practice.

I should also comment on the discharge of short-stay patients, mainly mental illness patients, many of whom have had a hospital stay of less than a month. Most such patients will of course return to their previous accommodation. Difficulties may arise when a patient for some reason cannot do this, and does not have friends or resources to provide new accommodation. Under the

Housing Act 1985 local housing authorities have a duty to ensure accommodation for vulnerable groups, including people recovering from mental illness.

Since the reply from my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) to my hon. Friend on 26 July 1985, at columns *957-58*, progress continues to be made in the development of community care. Provisional figures for 1985 show that places for mentally handicapped adults in local authority homes and hostels or sponsored voluntary or private provision number over 15,000 and adult training centre places increased to nearly 49,000. Places funded by local authorities in residential accommodation for mentally ill people increased to nearly 6,000. There were nearly 18,000 day hospital places for mentally ill people, and day centre places increased to nearly 9,000. The number of psychiatric nurses working in the community was over 2,500.

A study in 1981 showed that over 1,000 supported housing schemes for mentally ill and mentally handicapped people had been developed in the preceding 10 to 15 years, providing over 5,000 places. Many more people will have moved through these schemes into ordinary accommodation over the period. But some of the useful forms of sheltered accommodation I have mentioned will not show up in statistics at all.

Between 1978-79 and 1985-86, local authority expenditure on the personal social services grew in real terms by 20 per cent. We have continued to support the development of community care by the injection of over £700 million of National Health Service funds through the joint finance arrangements, including over £100 million this year.

In addition, my right hon. Friend on 5 November announced special grants to regional health authorities totalling £6 million for development projects providing community care for mental illness.

Industrial Death Benefit (Mesothelioma)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of deaths where the death certificate mentions mesothelioma result in awards of industrial death benefit.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November, c. *138*]: In 1984, the latest year for which figures are available, industrial death benefit was awarded in 39 per cent. of cases where mesothelioma was shown on the death certificate.

Industrial Disablement Benefit

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the 100 per cent. disablement benefit awards made by special medical boards in 1984 were first awards as opposed to re-assessments; and how many were for asbestos-related diseases.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November, c. *137-38*]: In 1984 special medical boards made 210 initial assessments at 100 per cent., of which 202 were for asbestos-related diseases. There were 199 re-assessments at 100 per cent., of which 47 were for asbestos-related diseases.

SCOTLAND

Broadleaf Woodland Grant

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the applications for broadleaved woodland grant which have been approved by the Forestry Commission in Scotland to the end of September, broken down to include totals of ancient semi-natural ancient woodland sites, other and bare land, and the number of hectares of each tree species planted with grant aid within these categories for all three Scottish conservancies.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 November 1986, c. *339*]: I have arranged for a copy of the following information to be placed in the Library.

Details of the broadleaved woodland grant scheme applications approved up to the end of September 1986 in each of the Forestry Commission's Scottish conservancies are as follows:

North Scotland Conservancy

Name of Property	*Region*	*Area (hectares)*
Ancient semi-natural woodlands		
Glenlivet	Grampian	5·5
Hillhead of Carse	Grampian	0·4
Ancient woodland sites		
Munerigie Oakwood	Highland	6·2
Other woodlands		
Ardverikie	Highland	8·25
Barracks Croft	Highland	0·1
Birchfield	Highland	3·0
Breda	Grampian	0·1
Calrossie	Highland	1·25
Cawdor	Highland	3·1
Clava	Highland	2·6
Coulmore	Highland	0·7
Easter Hardmuir	Highland	13·3
Fairburn	Highland	1·3
Fochabers Estate	Grampian	0·9
Foulis	Highland	7·1
Gaskbeg Farm	Highland	0·9
Gordon Castle	Grampian	2·5
Guisachan	Highland	1·1
Hillhead of Carse	Grampian	0·1
Hopewell	Grampian	0·8
Kinaldie Home Farm	Grampian	3·2
Lairshill	Grampian	0·9
Leadclune	Highland	3·9
Loaneckheim	Highland	0·8
Longfold	Grampian	0·9
Lynaberack	Highland	44·0
Manar (1)	Grampian	9·5
Manar (2)	Grampian	3·0
Midmar Castle	Grampian	0·8
Mill of Criggie	Grampian	0·3
Netherdale	Grampian	2·8
Reelig	Highland	0·8
Rickarton	Grampian	0·8
Ryefield	Highland	0·9
St. Martins	Highland	0·9
Stornoway Trust	Western Isles	1·9
Strathconon	Highland	5·4
Tomuaine	Highland	7·1
Wellhouse	Grampian	0·8
Wester Bogbain	Highland	1·2
Yokieshill Farm	Grampian	3·5
Bare land		
Achmore	Highland	1·5
Airlie, Gellan	Grampian	0·3
Aldie Farm	Highland	1·4
Altyre	Grampian	2·9
Arbuthnot	Grampian	0·5
Ardvourlie Castle	Highland	2·9
Badnaheen	Highland	0·6
Barracks Croft	Highland	0·5
Bochruben	Highland	1·0
Breda	Grampian	1·3
Broombank	Highland	0·7
Burgie Estate	Grampian	2·65
Burnside Farm	Grampian	0·3
Calrossie	Highland	0·5
Cawdor	Highland	21·5
Cluny	Grampian	0·8
Cluny (Vulcan)	Grampian	0·5
Crichie	Grampian	0·7
Croftindam	Highland	0·3
Crook Farm	Highland	0·7
Dunscroft	Grampian	2·0
Fairburn	Highland	0·7
Foulis	Highland	3·1
Glenlivet	Grampian	3·3
Glenmuick	Grampian	0·5
Guisachan	Highland	1·8
Hillhead of Carse	Grampian	0·4
Hopewell	Grampian	0·7
Husabost	Highland	0·6
Innes	Grampian	0·5
Invernorth Cottage	Grampian	0·4
Knockando (Tomdow)	Grampian	0·8
Knockando (Wool Mill)	Grampian	0·4
Loch Dhu	Highland	1·0
Lochgarthside	Highland	0·9
Lochside	Highland	5·9
Mains of Pitfour	Grampian	0·4
Midmar Castle	Grampian	0·1
Mill of Criggie	Grampian	1·0
Munerigie Oakwood	Highland	0·7
Newfield of Muirtack	Grampian	0·9
New Kelso	Highland	7·6
Park Farm	Highland	0·5
Rose Farm	Highland	0·8
Rowanbank	Grampian	1·4
Sandaig, Knoydart	Highland	4·1
South Craigston	Highland	0·4
Tilquhillie Castle	Grampian	0·5
Tomuaine	Highland	1·3
Yokieshill Farm	Grampian	2·8

Mid Scotland conservancy

Name of property	*Region*	*Area (hectares)*
Ancient semi-natural woodlands		
Auchingarrich and Glentarf	Tayside	4·1
Craigo	Tayside	8·0
Ancient woodland sites		
Falfield	Fife	1·45
Other woodlands		
Acharn	Central	5·0
Albar	Tayside	2·8
Ardargie	Tayside	0·8
Ardnadam	Strathclyde	7·9
Arnprior	Central	1·8
Atholl Estates	Tayside	9·0
Auchingarrich and Glentarf	Tayside	6·9
Balbirnie	Fife	0·6
Balcarres	Fife/Kirkcaldy	1·5

Name of property	Region	Area (hectares)
Balcarres	Fife North East Fife	0·7
Balcaskie	Fife	3·2
Baldernock Mill	Strathclyde	2·0
Ballhall Lodge	Tayside	0·86
Ballilesk	Central	0·4
Ballyoukan (1)	Tayside	9·0
Ballyoukan (2)	Tayside	0·9
Balnald	Tayside	1·8
Barbeck	Strathclyde	0·4
Bolfracks	Tayside	0·8
Braeside	Strathclyde	0·4
Brodick Country Park	Strathclyde	0·1
Brucefield	Central	4·7
Cambushinnie Wood	Tayside	0·8
Colbruch	Strathclyde	1·0
Craignish	Strathclyde	10·1
Cromwell Park	Tayside	0·9
Donnafuil Farm	Tayside	2·5
Dupplin	Tayside	1·0
Easter Rattray Farm	Tayside	0·1
East Seaton (2)	Tayside	0·3
Falfield	Fife	1·95
Falkland	Fife	1·0
Fernwoodlee	Fife	2·1
Glenample	Central	4·0
Glendoick	Tayside	1·56
Gleniffer Braes	Strathclyde	28·8
Glenshieling	Tayside	0·5
Grange of Barry	Tayside	2·8
Hill of Fortune	Tayside	9·5
Inchyra	Tayside	2·8
Innerardoch	Central	0·1
Kemback	Fife	0·5
Killean Farm	Strathclyde	0·3
Kintra Farm	Strathclyde	2·1
Letham	Tayside	1·8
Letters Farm	Tayside	1·5
Lindores	Fife	6·8
Locherlour (Lot 2)	Tayside	0·5
Machrie	Strathclyde	2·3
Maclachlan	Strathclyde	2·0
Monachyle Mhor	Central	1·6
Muirhall Farm	Tayside	1·2
Newtoft	Tayside	1·4
Nochnarry	Fife	1·6
Pitcarmick	Tayside	3·6
Pitlour	Fife	11·0
Pitnacree	Tayside	0·1
Polmood	Tayside	1·5
Pusk	Fife	3·5
Redhills	Tayside	14·5
Rhu	Strathclyde	0·1
Rossie Ochil	Tayside	3·3
Ruskich	Tayside	0·2
St. Fort	Fife	35·6
Tayfield	Fife	2·1
Tayvallich	Strathclyde	1·5
Thomanean	Tayside	2·3
Toward	Strathclyde	8·1
Wester Cardean	Tayside	1·1
Wester Kinloch	Tayside	1·0
Wilderness Plantation	Strathclyde	39·2
Bare Land		
Acharn	Central	0·7
Ardnadam	Strathclyde	0·8
Arthurstone	Tayside	0·3
Atholl Estate	Tayside	2·6
Auchreoch	Central	0·9
Balbirnie	Fife	0·8
Balleich	Central	1·85
Ballilesk House	Central	0·8
Ballyoukan	Tayside	1·2
Balmitchell	Central	0·25
Balnaboth Home Farm	Tayside	0·6
Barbeck	Strathclyde	0·8

Name of property	Region	Area (hectares)
Barons Haugh	Strathclyde	2·7
Blackcraigs	Tayside	0·4
Blackhill	Tayside	3·9
Blackshaw Farm	Strathclyde	0·7
Bolfracks	Tayside	1·2
Bourtree Bush	Tayside	0·6
Bows Farm	Central	0·7
Brodick Country Park	Strathclyde	1·0
Broomage Farm	Central	0·9
Brucefield	Central	3·6
Burnside and West Memus Farm	Tayside	1·7
Cambusmore	Central	1·6
Camusericht	Tayside	2·9
Carroglen	Tayside	0·3
Castleton House	Strathclyde	1·0
Chapleton Farm	Tayside	0·9
Colbruch	Strathclyde	2·5
Craignish House	Strathclyde	0·26
Craigo	Tayside	2·8
Cromwell Park	Tayside	0·9
Dalbeathie Copse	Tayside	2·7
Dupplin	Tayside	1·0
East Seaton (1)	Tayside	2·46
East Seaton (2)	Tayside	1·5
Easter Rattray Farm	Tayside	0·3
Edramucky	Tayside	0·25
Elie	Fife	1·2
Findowrie	Tayside	0·5
Forneth	Tayside	1·9
Glenample	Central	49·8
Glendoick	Tayside	3·22
Glenlean	Strathclyde	8·0
Innerardoch	Central	1·1
Killean Farm	Strathclyde	0·9
Kinneston	Tayside	3·0
Kintra Farm	Strathclyde	9·0
Letters Farm	Tayside	6·0
Lindores	Fife	18·6
Linross Farm	Tayside	1·8
Lintrathen Lodge	Tayside	0·4
Locherlour (lot 1)	Tayside	6·0
Locherlour (lot 2)	Tayside	7·0
Maclachlan	Strathclyde	2·0
Melfort	Strathclyde	0·3
Narachan Hill	Strathclyde	16·1
Newtoft	Tayside	0·5
North Mausdale	Strathclyde	2·5
Pitcarmick	Tayside	3·0
Pitlour	Fife	0·4
Pitnacree	Tayside	1·5
Pusk	Fife	1·7
Putyan	Strathclyde	0·3
Rhu	Strathclyde	0·5
Ruskich	Tayside	0·7
Scones Lethendy	Tayside	0·8
Tayvallich	Strathclyde	1·3
The Linns	Central	0·27
Thomanean	Tayside	0·55
Toward	Strathclyde	3·1
Tullich	Strathclyde	2·3
Westburn Farm	Tayside	1·5
Wester Kinloch	Tayside	1·6
Wilderness Plantation	Strathclyde	2·3

South Scotland conservancy

Name of property	Region	Area (hectares)
Other woodlands		
Airylick Farm	Dumfries and Galloway	1·9
Arniston Estate	Lothian	0·6
Arniston II	Lothian	6·9
Ayton Castle	Border	0·5

Name of property	Region	Area (hectares)
Barncailzie Estate	Dumfries and Galloway	0·6
Barncrosh	Dumfries and Galloway	0·9
Bellymack Farm	Dumfries and Galloway	1·2
Berscar	Dumfries and Galloway	2·6
Bizzyberry	Strathclyde	13·1
Blackwood Estate	Strathclyde	1·1
Boghall Wood	Lothian	0·3
Caerlaverock Estate	Dumfries and Galloway	1·6
Carfrae Farm	Lothian	2·6
Carfin Wood	Strathclyde	13·0
Charterhall	Lothian	2·6
Colzium	Lothian	0·3
Corsehope	Border	0·7
Corsock	Dumfries and Galloway	0·4
Cowrigg	Dumfries and Galloway	0·3
Craiglearan	Dumfries and Galloway	1·2
Crichton Mains Farm	Lothian	12·5
Crochmore Estate	Dumfries and Galloway	0·9
Doonhalm	Strathclyde	0·5
Douglas and Angus Estate	Strathclyde	0·8
Easter Whitecastle	Strathclyde	1·7
Eastertown of Quathquhan	Lothian	1·1
Elliston	Border	3·0
Ervie Estate	Dumfries and Galloway	12·4
Fairgirth	Dumfries and Galloway	0·7
Falls of Clyde Nature Reserve	Strathclyde	7·0
Firth Mains I	Lothian	0·6
Gavieside Farm II	Lothian	1·0
Gilmerton	Lothian	1·3
Glenburnie	Strathclyde	2·1
Glenormiston	Border	1·2
Gosford Woods	Lothian	5·3
Hendersyde	Border	3·8
Hermand	Lothian	0·6
Hutton Hall Barns	Border	1·8
Hutton Hall Barns II	Border	3·5
Kinnelhead	Dumfries and Galloway	1·3
Knockbreck	Dumfries and Galloway	0·8
Lady Home Hospital	Strathclyde	0·5
Laggan Farm	Dumfries and Galloway	0·5
Lanfine	Strathclyde	0·6
Lauriston	Border	2·0
Laurieston Hall	Dumfries and Galloway	2·3
Lawesknowe	Dumfries and Galloway	0·8
Legerwood	Border	34·5
Locharbriggs Quarry	Dumfries and Galloway	0·6
Lochill Farm	Dumfries and Galloway	0·3
Longformacus	Border	0·6
Mid Plantation	Dumfries and Galloway	0·9
Mill Lane Skeldon	Strathclyde	1·5
Minto Golf Club	Border	0·7
Monteviot	Border	1·6
Nether Kidston	Border	3·1
Newliston	Lothian	0·4
Newton Don	Border	0·7
Newton Don II	Border	1·7
Newtonairds	Dumfries and Galloway	3·5
North Wood	Border	1·0
Orchard House	Strathclyde	3·3
Oxenford Estate	Lothian	0·5
Pavilion Estate	Border	3·2
Peelrig	Border	0·4
Preston	Border	0·3
Pumpherston	Lothian	0·3
Simprim	Border	1·1
Southwood Head	Lothian	1·1
Southwick	Dumfries and Galloway	0·2
Spott Estate	Lothian	2·4
Standhill	Border	0·9
Stenhouse	Dumfries and Galloway	6·8
Sweethope Edge	Border	4·5
Synton Gardens	Border	1·3
Traquair	Border	1·0
Upper Keith	Lothian	2·9
Wells Estate	Border	8·1
Whitehaugh	Border	0·3
Whitehills	Dumfries and Galloway	0·5
Whitemire	Lothian	0·3
Whiteside and Whinny Braes	Dumfries and Galloway	0·5
Whitsomehill	Border	3·4
Woodlea	Dumfries and Galloway	1·9
Wollrig	Border	0·4
Bare Land		
Ayton Castle	Border	1·8
Barncailzie Estate	Border	0·3
Barwhillanty Estate	Dumfries and Galloway	1·4
Beech Knowe	Lothian	1·7
Belhemage Rabbit Warren	Strathclyde	1·1
Bizzyberry	Strathclyde	0·6
Blackhill	Lothian	0·9
Boghall Wood	Lothian	1·6
Bowden Springs Fishery	Lothian	0·3
Broadshaw Rig	Dumfries and Galloway	7·0
Brocklehurst Estate	Dumfries and Galloway	0·5
Caringill Cottage	Dumfries and Galloway	1·0
Cairnhouse Farm	Dumfries and Galloway	1·3
Corse law	Strathclyde	3·0
Cowdenknowes	Border	3·2
Cowrigg	Dumfries and Galloway	0·2
Craigern School	Border	0·4
Crichton Mains Farm	Lothian	9·9
Crystal Bank	Border	8·4
Culter Allers	Strathclyde	1·4
Docherneil	Strathclyde	0·8
Dornal	Strathclyde	2·2
Dornells	Dumfries and Galloway	1·2
Eskdale and Liddesdale	Dumfries and Galloway	2·1
Falls of Clyde Nature Reserve	Strathclyde	0·3
Ferney Castle	Border	0·5
Firth Mains II	Lothian	0·3
Gala Estate	Border	0·7
Gatehouse Station	Dumfries and Galloway	1·0
Gavieside Farm	Lothian	1·0
Gavieside Farm II	Lothian	2·3

Name of property	Region	Area (hectares)
Gilmerton	Lothian	1·9
Glenormiston	Border	0·3
Gordon East Mains	Border	5·2
Greenend Farm	Border	3·6
Greenhill	Border	1·8
Halleys Wood	Dumfries and Galloway	1·6
Haystoun	Border	0·8
Hopekist Rig	Border	4·9
Hoscote Estate	Border	0·9
Howden Farm	Lothian	1·5
Hutton Hall Barns	Border	1·8
Hyndfordwell Farm	Border	1·8
Laggan Farm	Dumfries and Galloway	0·5
Langhaugh	Border	11·0
Langlee Home Farm	Border	0·3
Legerwood	Border	1·5
Little Swinton	Border	0·7
Locharbriggs Quarry	Dumfries and Galloway	1·6
Lowood Lamancha	Border	1·0
Middlethird	Lothian	0·3
Minto Golf Club	Border	7·0
Newton Don	Border	0·2
Palace	Border	1·8
Pavilion	Border	0·5
Parkhouse II	Strathclyde	1·8
Pitcox	Lothian	3·8
Polskeoch	Dumfries and Galloway	0·8
Prieston Farm	Border	2·3
Ringour Farm	Dumfries and Galloway	0·6
Riverside Road	Strathclyde	2·0
Spott Estate	Lothian	1·3
Synton Gardens	Border	0·3
Tewsgill Hill	Strathclyde	14·9
Thornylee	Border	1·4
Tibbers	Dumfries and Galloway	0·5
Towford	Border	2·2
Troquhain	Dumfries and Galloway	1·5
Upper Stepford	Dumfries and Galloway	0·6
Wallyford Bing	Lothian	6·5
Wallyford Bing II	Lothian	0·7
Walton Park Farm	Dumfries and Galloway	0·5
Wellhouse Wood	Dumfries and Galloway	0·5
Wells Estate	Border	1·0
Wester Housebyres	Border	0·8
West Handaxwood Farm	Lothian	2·7
West Handaxwood Farm II	Lothian	2·6
Whitchester	Border	2·2
Whitecleuch	Border	6·4
Woodlea	Dumfries and Galloway	0·1

Some applications appear under more than one heading because the land falls within more than one category.

Records of the tree species planted are not maintained in sufficient detail to enable a precise answer to be given to the last part of the hon. Member's question, but the total hectarage grant aided by woodland type is as follows:

	North Scotland Conservancy	Mid Scotland Conservancy	South Scotland Conservancy
Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland	—	1·3	—
Ancient Woodland Site	—	—	—
Other Woodlands	16·9	18·5	32·9
Bare Land	29·0	45·0	52·4
Totals	45·9	64·8	85·3

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 28 November 1986

TRANSPORT

British Airways

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the number of safety reports and violations filed against British Airways during the current year;

(2) what provisions are being planned to enhance the safety of British Airways.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority is statutorily responsible for all aviation safety matters. British Airways, in common with other United Kingdom airlines, has to meet CAA requirements for public transport operations. The authority tells me that it is satisfied that British Airways does indeed meet these requirements, and that no safety reports or violations have been filed with it against British Airways this year.

Traffic Management Guidance

Sir Hugh Rossi asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to issue traffic management guidance to London boroughs as provided for in schedule 5 to the Local Government Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: My Department and the boroughs responsible for London's highways have a shared interest in fostering well-designed traffic management in London. Discussions with the local authority associations and the police have indicated where initial guidance is most likely to be useful. The associations and the police are therefore now being formally consulted on a document incorporating guidance I am minded to give. When I have their views, I shall consider them carefully with a view to issuing guidance shortly thereafter.

Copies of the consultation document have been placed in the Library and are also being make available to local authorities and representative organisations interested in these matters.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what additional action he proposes to take to encourage motorists to tax their cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A great deal has already been done to make vehicle licensing more straightforward for the motorist, including increasing the number of licensing post offices and transferring to them virtually all relicensing work. An additional 200 sub-post offices are to be added to the relicensing network over the next 18 months. In parallel with this the enforcement of VED has been strengthened substantially. The deployment of an additional 75 posts and the introduction of new technology into local offices should provide for further improvement.

Transport Companies

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the average costs involved to local authorities in setting up new transport companies; and how these costs arise.

Mr. David Mitchell: On the assumption that my hon. Friend is referring to the setting up of public transport companies, my right hon. Friend and I do not have an estimate of the average cost. Where the cost has been significant it has generally arisen from payments of compensation to employees of the local authority who took early retirement or redundancy. Some councils have also had to retain liabilities arising from previous borrowing in order to establish commercially viable companies. These steps have led to more efficient operations from which both ratepayers and passengers will now benefit.

Underground (Crime)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the findings of the recent study of crime on the Underground; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The report of the steering group on crime on the London Underground is being published today. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

The report is one of a number of initiatives put in hand following the Prime Minister's crime prevention seminar on 8 January. As my right hon. Friend has already announced, the Government will be making available £15 million to London Regional Transport, over the next three years, to implement the report's 50 recommendations.

Among the practical measures to be applied at Underground stations are:

—The installation of radio facilities for the police at 42 deep level stations;
—More and improved closed circuit TV monitoring;
—Passenger alarms on platforms;
—Making staff more accessible to assist the public;
—Improvements to station environments including better lighting.

Top priority is a crackdown on robberies along the southern section of the Northern line between Clapham North and Tooting Broadway, plus a drive against violence and theft at Oxford Circus.

These proposals reflect the Government's high priority to crime prevention and our commitment to do all we can to ensure that travellers on the Underground are given as much protection and assistance as possible. London Underground will now be preparing a fully costed programme of crime prevention measures within the £15 million allocated. The installation of police radios at 42 tube stations and the pilot station projects will be the first items.

In commissioning the study we wanted to look beyond the broad statistics to find out exactly what was happening and where, whether people's fears were justified and what might be done to reduce crime and allay these fears. The report shows that crime is relatively rare when seen in the context of the 725 million journeys made last year. Indeed,

last year there were no recorded robberies at almost half of the stations and the majority of stations were free from assaults on passengers. However crime in any form cannot be condoned wherever it occurs. The measures proposed today will, I am sure, prove a positive step both in improving security and re-assuring tube travellers.

WALES

Mortgages

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many Welsh households with mortgages from *(a)* building societies, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* other sources were known to be more than six months in arrears at the end of June.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not collected by the Welsh Office.

Nurses

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many qualified nurses have been employed in Welsh hospitals in each year from 1979-80 to 1986-87, or for the latest date at which such information was available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information for the years 1979 to 1984 is contained in "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for Wales", numbers 7 to 12, copies of which are in the Library.

At 30 September 1985, the latest date for which information is available, the equivalent of 12,032 whole-time qualified nurses were employed in Welsh hospitals. This figure excludes hospital tutorial staff and midwifery department staff.

A5 (Bypasses)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to publish the results of the consultants' investigation into bypasses around the five villages on the A5 on Anglesey and around Holyhead; what new money is available for such schemes following the Chancellor's autumn statement, what priority will be given to such schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The consultants' report has identified possible routes for bypasses of the villages on the A5 on Anglesey. Further investigations are in progress to determine the standards of provision, the costs and the economic and environmental implications. I shall inform my hon. Friend once decisions have been reached.

I expect to receive the consultants' report on Holyhead next summer. The priorities for trunk road improvement schemes remain as set out in "Roads in Wales 1985." Financial provision for schemes in the forward programme is made when the appropriate stage is reached.

West Môn Community Hospital

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects work to start on the building of West Môn community hospital; when a decision will be made on location; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This hospital development is the responsibility of Gwynedd health authority. A decision on location will be taken after the consultative period ends on 29 December 1986. It is too early to say when building will start.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Lip Reading

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many training courses now exist in England for training teachers of lip reading; what was the length of courses and the number who attained qualifications in 1985; if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This information is not centrally available. In the Government's view, the provision of lip-reading teaching is a matter for local determination by individual local education authorities as part of their adult education provision. In addition, certificates in lip-reading teaching are awarded by the City Literary Institute in London, in conjunction with the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, and by Manchester polytechnic, to students who successfully complete a course in teaching lip-reading at these institutions. The length of these courses range from three months (full-time) to one year (part-time), and the number of students who qualify annually are about 30 to 40.

Universities (Staff-Student Ratios)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the target staff to student ratio in the university sector in 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: There is no centrally determined staff: student ratio target for universities.

Ethnic Minority Languages

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to prevent a local authority from requiring children in its area to learn ethnic minority languages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: When the relevant provisions of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 comes into force it will not be possible for a local education authority to require a school to offer a minority language to all pupils in a particular year group against the joint wishes of the school's governing body and its headteacher. I intend in the near future to publish a consultative document on the place of ethnic minority languages in the secondary curriculum.

Teachers (Contracts)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation giving power over teachers' contracts to boards of governors as advised by head teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 recognises the importance of governing bodies by extending their role in vital areas such as the curriculum, discipline and the appointment of teachers in county schools. Teachers in aided schools are already employed by the governors. The Government have no plans to introduce fresh legislation on this subject.

ENVIRONMENT

Foundry Industry

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider financially assisting companies in the foundry industry to purchase equipment to reduce atmospheric pollution.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The Government adhere to the polluter pays principle and no specific subsidies are given to industry for expenditure on pollution control which it should undertake as a normal part of its activities.

Stocken Hall

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will explain the reasons whereby the Property Services Agency did not require as a condition of the contract of sale of Stocken Hall to Endersby Developments Ltd. the renovation of the building, in accordance with the original specification contained in the offer for sale document published by Messrs. Cluttons, on behalf of the Home Office; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) has received a copy of the document sent to him by Mr. John Nickols entitled Stocken Hall RIP regarding the condition of a grade 2 listed building recently sold by the Property Services Agency to Endersby Developments Ltd.; and whether he will order an immediate inquiry into the allegations contained in that document.

Mr. Chope: I shall answer this question shortly.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animal Welfare

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria were used in deciding that the crate containing three elephants belonging to Chipperfields, and now en route to Hong Kong, was satisfactory; whether his officials were informed in advance that the elephants were to be shipped to Hong Kong; and if he will take steps to ensure that elephants are not in future permitted to leave British ports under similar conditions.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Rhizomania

Mr. Freud asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the testing time for rhizomania in respect of the different crops on which tests are carried out;

(2) whether he intends to seek to ban imported vegetables unless they have been washed; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the tonnage of unwashed potatoes imported from Holland in each of the last seven months;

(4) if he is satisfied that sufficient controls exist to minimise the spread of rhizomania in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he will list the number and locations of reported cases of rhizomania brought to the United Kingdom from the continent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Greenway asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the number and distribution of local authority animal welfare inspectors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

The information is not available centrally.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Intellectual Property

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are his plans for legislation with regard to intellectual property; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The Government will introduce a Bill based on the proposals in the recent White Paper "Intellectual Property and Innovation" (Cmnd. 9712) when the parliamentary timetable permits. Drafting of those clauses of this highly complex Bill which relate to copyright, performers' protection and designs is to continue, and we plan to circulate these for consultation with experts and interested parties in due course.

Shipbuilding (Intervention Fund)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if any European Shipbuilding intervention fund payments have been made to private shipbuilding yards; and if he will list any such payments and the shipbuilding yards concerned;

(2) if any intervention fund payments have been, or are to be made for shiprepair work.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

British Telecom

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer of 24 November, *Official Report*, column 7, what was the name of the institution which returned British Telecom shares of its own volition; what was the number of shares involved; and what inquiries were made into the circumstances in which the applications for these shares were made.

Mr. Pattie: A total of 72,800 shares were returned by Société Générale Merchant Bank Ltd. The papers were passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who concluded that no further action was warranted.

DEFENCE

Chinook Helicopters

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether, following the loss of a Boeing Victor 234 LR

Chinook belonging to British International Helicopters on 6 November off the Shetland Islands, he will make a statement whether Chinook aircraft currently in Royal Air Force service have similar spiral bevel ring gear to the 234LR.

Mr. Freeman: The spiral bevel ring gear fitted in the Boeing Vertol 234 LR is of a different modification standard to that fitted in Chinook helicopters in service with the Royal Air Force.

Japanese Prisoners of War

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many letters he has received during the past 12 months concerning the position of former Japanese prisoners of war who suffered from possible experimentation on them during their captivity.

Mr. Freeman: During the past 12 months the Ministry of Defence has received 31 inquiries. Of these, three were addressed originally to the Prime Minister, 23 letters were received by Ministers, and the remaining five by officials.

Ship Refits

Mr. Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what are the first results of the complex exercise involving the comparison of refitting frigates in the royal dockyards, and in private shipyards; and if he will now publish *(a)* the results of the labour cost comparisons and *(b)* the results of the material cost comparisons;

(2) when the refit of HMS Arethusa was completed; and what was the expected time that the principal director of accountancy services would take to complete the cost comparison exercise involving HMS Arethusa and HMS Euryalus.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The refit of HMS Arethusa was completed on 17 February 1986. The result of the comparison between this refit and that of HMS Euryalus should be available early in the new year.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what recent representations he has received from the United States Government concerning chemical weapons;

(2) what recent representations he has received from NATO allies concerning chemical weapons.

Mr. Stanley: None. I also refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 3 June at columns *428-9*.

RAF Welford

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the role of RAF Welford.

Mr. Stanley: RAF Welford is made available for use by United States forces in the United Kingdom for the storage of ammunition.

Binary Weapons

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the role of binary weapons in the NATO strategy.

Mr. Stanley: The Soviet Union is capable of engaging in chemical warfare on a very large scale. NATO allies are committed to achieving a comprehensive and verifiable global ban on all aspects of chemical warfare. However, until such a ban is achieved NATO must continue to be able to deter an attack with chemical weapons on its own forces. For this purpose, there is a need for a range of capabilities including defensive equipment and a limited chemical weapons retaliatory capability within the Alliance.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the European Economic Community Council will next discuss South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The Twelve will continue to pay close attention to the issue of South Africa at the meetings arranged within the framework of European political co-operation.

The Government remain deeply concerned at the situation inside South Africa and regret the lack of progress towards the national dialogue that is so urgently needed there.

United Nations (Budget)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Kingdom's annual contribution to the United Nations budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom's contribution to the United Nations regular budget varies from year to year depending upon the size of the budget and the United Kingdom's assessed share. In 1986 the United Kingdom's share was £23,892,009.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the current United Nations member countries, together with their annual contribution to the United Nations budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The United Nations publishes a list of member states and their assessed annual contributions to its regular budget. The assessments vary from year to year depending upon the total of the budget and how it is apportioned. Those for 1986 have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to how many member countries are in arrears with their annual payment to the United Nations, and for how many years in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The United Nations Secretary-General publishes regular reports on the status of contributions to the United Nation's regular budget. The latest gives the position at 30 September 1986. Of the 98 member states that were still in arrears at that date the following 49 owed more than the amounts assessed for 1986:

Member country	1986 Assessment $	Amount Outstanding $
Antigua	70,043	106,457
Belize	70,043	135,857
Benin	70,043	200,826
Bolivia	70,043	132,643
Burkina Faso	70,043	86,781
Burundi	70,043	136,643
Cape Verde	70,043	100,826
Central African Republic	70,043	124,686
Comoros	70,043	201,043
Cuba	630,390	876,366
Democratic Kampuchea	70,043	188,439
Dominica	70,043	176,125
Dominican Republic	210,130	475,506
El Salvador	70,043	191,433
Equatorial Guinea	70,043	253,172
Gambia	70,043	210,775
Grenada	70,043	110,341
Guatemala	140,087	274,884
Guinea-Bissau	70,043	220,207
Guyana	70,043	152,866
Haiti	70,043	70,888
Iran	4,412,737	7,912,792
Israel	1,540,957	3,786,964
Jamaica	140,087	145,901
Lao People's Democratic Republic	70,043	193,846
Lebanon	70,043	191,672
Liberia	70,043	161,041
Libya	1,821,130	2,676,717
Nicaragua	70,043	219,809
Niger	70,043	215,864
Paraguay	140,087	213,483
Peru	490,304	1,157,707
Philippines	700,434	904,631
Poland	4,482,781	6,472,818
Qatar	280,174	477,617
Romania	1,330,326	3,867,682
St Christopher and Nevis	70,043	133,944
St Lucia	70,043	212,342
Sao Tome and Principe	70,043	135,867
Sierra Leone	70,043	157,682
Somalia	70,043	75,857
South Africa	3,081,912	27,566,416
Togo	70,043	156,265
Turkey	2,385,563	4,778,204
Uganda	70,043	200,826
USA	210,277,200	247,003,532
Vietnam	70,043	164,279
Zaire	70,043	128,280
Zimbabwe	140,087	203,222

The following 15 member countries owed an amount equal to their 1986 assessment:

Member country	1986 assessment ($)
Barbados	70,043
Bhutan	70,043
Chad	70,043
Democratic Yemen	70,043
Lesotho	70,043
Madagascar	70,043
Maldives	70,043
Mauritius	70,043
Saint Vincent	70,043
Samoa	70,043
Solomon Islands	70,043
Syrian Arab Republic	280,174
United Arab Emirates	1,260,781
Uruguay	280,174
Yemen	70,043

The following 33 Member countries owed less than their 1986 assessment:

Member country	1986 assessment $	Amount outstanding $
Angola	70,043	53,751
Argentina	4,342,694	3,363,498
Brazil	9,806,082	8,168,721
Bulgaria	1,120,695	772,708
Byelorussia	2,381,477	1,766,338
Colombia	910,565	663,017
Congo	70,043	60,242
Costa Rica	140,087	126,014
Cote D'Ivoire	140,087	50,087
Czechoslovakia	4,903,041	824,722
Ecuador	210,130	190,570
France	44,617,669	4,357,157
German Democratic Republic	9,315,778	4,161,201
Honduras	70,043	36,240
Hungary	1,540,957	1,219,574
India	2,451,521	51,467
Indonesia	980,608	135,013
Mali	70,043	63,346
Mauritania	70,043	64,813
Mexico	6,233,867	31,975
Mongolia	70,043	61,864
Nigeria	1,330,826	801,841
Panama	140,087	100,087
Senegal	70,043	38,951
Sudan	70,043	887
Trinidad and Tobago	280,174	145,097
Tunisia	210,130	185,395
Ukrainian SSR	8,965,560	5,590,282
USSR	71,444,305	38,643,032
Tanzania	71,909	49,040
Vanuatu	70,043	4,229
Yugoslavia	3,221,999	1,739,394
Zambia	70,043	1,485

Human Rights

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will invite representatives of the 15 Soviet republics as well as Foreign Ministers from the satellite states to London, to discuss Anglo-Soviet relations and human rights in the light of the Helsinki Agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. We are in regular touch with the Governments of the Soviet Union and the eastern Europe countries about human rights in those countries. The subject is also being addressed at the CSCE review meeting currently taking place in Vienna.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to Ukrainian representatives at the United Nations, regarding *(a)* human rights in the Ukraine *(b)* the monitoring of the Helsinki Agreement, *(c)* freedom to practise Roman Catholicism, *(d)* the use of Ukrainian as the official language in the Ukraine in schools, in the Ukraine higher institutes of education and government departments and *(e)* the availability of newspapers and periodicals in the Ukrainian language; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We are concerned by abuses of human rights and the denial of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, wherever they occur, including the Ukraine. We make representations to the Soviet authorities on these issues and raise them at the CSCE meeting in Vienna.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present 10 meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for December. In addition, heads of state and Government will meet in London on 5 and 6 December.

The Internal Market Council will meet on 1 December. The council will be seeking agreement on a number of measures in the rolling presidency action programme for completing the internal market.

The Fisheries Council is expected to meet on 3 December and 17 and 18 December and is likely to discuss structures policy relations with third countries and total allowable catches (TACS) and quotas for 1987 and related measures. It may also consider an amendment to the technical conservation measures, and research and development.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 8 December to adopt the Commission's annual report on the economic situation in the Community, and the Commission's proposal for additional lending for small and medium sized enterprises (including the new Community instrument (NCI IV)). The Council will also discuss the extension of the medium term financial assistance facility which assists member states which have balance of payments problems; the Greek economy and protective measures (in relation to the release of the second tranche of the Greek loan); and the directive on the accounts of banks and other financial institutions. The 7th and 8th travellers allowances directives and a proposal on tax free allowances for fuel in the tanks of commercial vehicles will also be discussed.

The Agriculture Council is expected to meet on 8 and 9 December. Among the subjects likely to be discussed are reform of the beef regime, the emergency measures in the milk sector, socio-structures and beef import quotas and balance sheets. It may also consider the flavourings directive, food law harmonisation directives; labelling and materials articles in contact with food, medicated feedingstuffs, extraction solvents, antioxidants and other items concerned with completion of the internal market, including a number of items in the veterinary field.

The Research Council will meet on 9 December. The provisional agenda anticipates discussion on the EC research and development framework programme for the period 1987-1991 and a first consideration of the report prepared by the industrial review panel on the joint research centre (JRC). The Council will debate the proposals for a revision in 1987 of the current JRC programme. The Council will also consider the Commission's proposals for a Community action plan for the evaluation of Community research and development activities; and the Commission's comunication on Community selections within EUREKA.

The Labour and Social Affairs Council will meet on 11 December. The main item for consideration will be the joint UK/Irish/Italian resolution on an action programme on employment growth. The Council will consider draft directives on setting limits to exposure of workers to benzene and on the proscription of four specified carcinogens. Ministers are also expected to consider the enlargement of the anti-poverty programme to cover Spain and Portugal, and may consider conclusions on youth training.

The Transport Council well meet on 15 and 16 December. The Council will discuss shipping and aviation measures. The Commission's recent proposals on both road haulage liberalisation and transport infrastructure support will also be discussed. The Council will also consider future Community policy on ports and railways.

The Foreign Affairs Council will meet on 15 and 16 December. The Council will review the negotiations between the Community and the United States on the trade implications of enlargement and discuss a new generation of Mediterranean financial protocols.

The Industry Council will meet on 22 December and will consider the adoption of a 6th directive on shipbuilding aid to take effect from 1 January 1987.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to ensure that the three elephants belonging to Chipperfields currently en route to Hong Kong are permitted to enter Hong Kong on arrival, and that appropriate arrangements are made for veterinary inspection and for their safe keeping.

Mr. Renton: The Hong Kong Government have informed me that the three elephants who belong to Chipperfields circus will be permitted to enter Hong Kong subject to the British Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries' confirmation that they will be re-imported into the United Kingdom after their visit to Hong Kong. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have now confirmed that they would have no objection to such re-import. Arrangements will meanwhile be made for veterinary inspection and for safekeeping of the animals whilst they are in Hong Kong.

Moses Mayekiso

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to bring pressure to bear on the South African Government to secure the release of Moses Mayekiso of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union and other trade unionists in detention.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has personally made representations to the South African Government about the detention of all those held without charge. The South African authorities can be in no doubt of our strong opposition to the action that they have taken.

Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information Her Majesty's Government have as to the compliance by the Soviet Union with the biologial and toxic weapons convention of 1972.

Mr. Renton: We have no conclusive evidence that the Soviet Union is not in compliance with the 1972 biological weapons convention.

ENERGY

Energy Research

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how much has been expended by Her Majesty's Government on research into the harnessing of tides for the provision of energy during each of the past five years for which records are available;

(2) how much has been expended by Her Majesty's Government on research into the harnessing of solar energy during each of the past five years for which records are available;

(3) how much has been expended by Her Majesty's Government on research into the harnessing of wind energy during the past five years for which records are available;

(4) how much has been expended by Her Majesty's Government on research into the harnessing of hydro-electric energy during each of the past five years for which records are available.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for expenditure by Her Majesty's Government on research into harnessing wind, tidal, solar and hydro-electric power for 1981-82 to 1985-86 are as follows:

£million

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Wind	1·25	2·70	2·82	5·11	5·80
Tide	0·40	0·00	0·02	0·28	0·13
Solar	1·44	2·25	2·48	1·04	1·62
Hydro-electric	0·04	0·04	0·07	0·03	0·06

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what are his proposals for the provision of resources for research into the harnessing of the tides for energy purposes during the years 1987 and 1988, respectively.

(2) what are his proposals for the provision of resources into the harnessing of solar energy during the years 1987 and 1988, respectively;

(3) what are his proposals for the provision of resources for research into the harnessing of wind energy during the years 1987 and 1988, respectively;

(4) what are his proposals for the provision of resources for research into the harnessing of hydro-electric energy during the years 1987 and 1988, respectively.

Mr. David Hunt: Planned expenditure expected for 1986-87 in the Department of Energy's renewables research and development programme for wind, tide, solar and hydro-electric power is given below:

	1986-87
	£ million
wind	4·507
solar	1·000
tide	0·300
hydro-electric	0·100

Estimated contributions from outside contractors to the Department's 1986-87 renewables programme are estimated to be about £3 million.

Figures for 1987-88 are not yet available.

Offshore Oil Extraction

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made as to whether the current level of investment in offshore oil extraction will secure a satisfactory rate of extraction; and what is his estimate of the proportion of reserves which will be extracted in each field currently being exploited.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The rate of investment in the United Kingdom continental shelf is dependent upon a complex of considerations including world oil prices, exploration and development costs and the fiscal regime. Recent commitments to investment have been reduced because of lower oil prices, but the United Kingdom continues to be a very attractive oil province in which to invest and successive Governments have shown their commitment to maintaining a political and fiscal framework in which the industry can have confidence.

Information from operators on individual reservoir performance is provided on a commercially confidential basis. For the United Kingdom continental shelf as a whole recovery factors in producing oilfields are generally in the order of 25 per cent. to 55 per cent. of the oil initially in place. Improved recovery techniques may eventually increase these factors. Operators' estimates of recoverable reserves for each field under development and each producing field are shown in sections 3.3 and 4.10 respectively of the 1986 Brown Book.

Oil Production and Drilling Platforms

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will take steps to ensure that all production and drilling platforms under the United Kingdom's jurisdiction use the best available technology subject to considerations of the guiding discharge values agreed to internationally to prevent oil pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: From the beginning of offshore oil and gas activity on the United Kingdom continental shelf it has been the policy of the Department of Energy that, in accordance with internationally agreed guidelines, the best practicable means would be used to control and reduce oil discharges.

The most relevant standard, agreed within the Paris Commission, is that water discharged after separation from produced oil should not contain more than 40 mg of oil per litre as a monthly average.

Operators are required to monitor oily discharges and to provide the results of their monitoring to the Department of Energy. The Department's inspectors visit installations to check that the required standards are met.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will appoint a responsible person on each drilling and production oil platform in the North sea within the United Kingdom's jurisdiction to monitor the pollution prevention equipment installed.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971, section 4, requires the owner of every offshore installation to appoint an offshore installations manager (OIM) and to inform the Secretary of State of any such appointment. The OIM is responsible for all equipment on the installation and its operation. All discharges which might be oily are monitored on a regular basis and the results sent to the Department of Energy which checks for conformity with conditions set out under the Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971.

North Sea Oil (Technical Equipment)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken during the last three years to ensure that technical equipment used to explore for and exploit petroleum in the North sea, including transportation pipelines, is constructed and operated in conformity with the best available technology.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: From the beginning of offshore oil and gas activity on the United Kingdom continental shelf the Department of Energy has, through continued discussion on develpment proposals prior to approval and by issuing guidance notes, encouraged operators to use the best technology.

Power Stations

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will make available for independent assessment all the details of the incident at Trawsfynydd nuclear power station on 15 September 1981 and all the documents relating to subsequent inquiries;

(2) if he will make available for independent assessment all the details of the incident at Wylfa nuclear power station involving the intake by a health physics monitor of radioactive contamination discovered on 5 May, and all the documents relating to subsequent inquiries;

(3) if he will make available for independent assessment all the details of the incident at Trawsfynydd nuclear power station involving a leaking boiler tube and release into the atmosphere, of radioactive gas on 25 June 1980, and all the documents relating to subsequent inquiries;

(4) if he will make available for independent assessment all the details of the incident at Wylfa involving the radioactive contamination of a man on 15 October 1980, and all the documents relating to subsequent inquiries.

Mr. Goodlad: These incidents were independently assessed at the time by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive. Descriptions of the incidents and the results of investigations which were carried out are given in the HSE's quarterly statements on nuclear incidents for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th quarters of 1980 and the 3rd and 4th quarters of 1981, copies of which are in the Library of the House. Information was also given in the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 31 July 1980 at columns *803-4*.

Responsibilities for safety at nuclear sites falls by law on the operators of those sites. It is not the CEGB's practice to release the full record of investigations as to do so could affect the willingness of staff to participate fully and openly in inquiries.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the total North sea oil output so far in 1986; what is expected to be the annual total for 1986; and how this figure compares with each year from 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Estimates of North sea production for the current year are published monthly in *Energy Trends*. Figures for previous years are set out in the Secretary of State for Energy's report to Parliament (Brown Book).

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the estimated value to gross domestic product in the current year of North sea oil; and how this figure compares with the figures for each year from 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The latest figures for the gross domestic product of the mineral oil and natural gas extraction industry are published in Table 2.2 of the United Kingdom national accounts.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the estimated value to the balance of trade in the current year of North sea oil; and how this figure compares with the figures for each year from 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The latest balance of trade figures for North sea oil are published in table A1 of the monthly review of external trade statistics.

Coal Industry

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the most recent figures on accidents in the coal industry; and if he will give the equivalent figures for each of the last six years.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of accidents for the first half (April-September) of each of the last six years is as follows:

	Number
1986	6,696
1985	7,599
1984	1,600
1983	8,311
1982	10,793
1981	14,127

Accident statistics are published in British Coal's annual report and accounts, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. The Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 required the reporting of accidents which were not originally included and therefore the 1986 figures are calculated on a different basis to earlier years.

Mr. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the most recent figures on deaths in the coal industry and the number of men working in the industry; and if he will give the equivalent figures for each of the last six years.

Mr. David Hunt: So far this year there have been ten fatalities in the coal industry. Comparative figures for the last six years are as follows:

	Fatalities[1]	*Manpower*[2]
1986	7	132,210
1985	12	162,961
1984	6	177,312

	Fatalities[1]	Manpower[2]
1983	11	196,982
1982	24	209,940
1981	20	221,582

[1] First half of year—April to September.
[2] Average number of men on colliery books.

Details of fatality statistics are published in British Coal's annual report and accounts, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister when precisely the Cabinet Secretary sent the report of his leak inquiry to the Attorney-General.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 17 November at columns *49-50*.

Hearing-impaired People (Committee)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Prime Minister if she will now re-establish the Advisory Committee on Services for Hearing Impaired People; what was the cost of the former committee annually; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The decision to wind up the Advisory Committee on Services for Hearing Impaired People in 1980 was taken following the Government's review of all non-departmental bodies and we have no plans to re-establish it. Expenditure on the committee varied from year to year. In 1978-79 and 1979-80, the estimated costs were £3,400 and £5,300 respectively.

State Security

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on ministerial accountability for the security services.

The Prime Minister: I am fully satisfied with the present arrangements for ministerial responsibility for the security and intelligence services which I share with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister if she will set up an inquiry into allegations that Lord Rothschild, a former MI5 officer, solicited Mr. Chapman Pincher to publish the recollections and memoirs of Peter Wright; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 26 November at column *268*.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister (1) if she will now say why no steps were taken to trace and interview the sources of material contained in the book "Their Trade is Treachery" by Chapman Pincher during the two months when the relevant manuscript was in Her Majesty's Government's possession prior to publication;

(2) if she will publish the text of letters between Messrs. Sidgwick and Jackson and Sir Robert Armstrong on the question of the book "Their Trade is Treachery"; and if she will make a statement;

(3) whether any immunity from injunction was granted to Messrs. Sidgwick and Jackson, publishers of "Their Trade is Treachery" by Chapman Pincher, in a letter from the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Robert Armstrong, transmitted in the period prior to publication and distribution of the book; and if she will make a statement;

(4) if she will now say why no interviews were conducted with members of the security services to confirm the sources of material in the book "Their Trade is Treachery" by Chapman Pincher during the two months beginning February to the end of March 1981 when the manuscript was in possession of Her Majesty's Government;

(5) if she will now say why information confidential to the security services was not removed from the books recently published by Sidgwick and Jackson;

(6) if she will now say on what date Her Majesty's Government first became aware of the intended publication of "Their Trade is Treachery" by Chapman Pincher, "Conspiracy of Silence" by Freeman and Penrose, "The Second Oldest Profession" by Philip Knightly and "A Matter of Trust"; MI5 1945-72 by Nigel West; and on what date Her Majesty's Government actually received proof copies of these books;

(7) why Her Majesty's Government did not seek to prevent publication of the recollections and memoirs of Peter Wright in the book "Their Trade is Treachery" by Chapman Pincher;

(8) what discussions she has had with Lord Victor Rothschild concerning the implications for national security of the proposed publication of Mr. Peter Wright's book and about possible ways of preventing its publication in Mr. Wright's name; if she will give the date and outcome of each such discussion; and if she will make a statement;

(9) if she will now say why all information confidential to the security services was not removed from the book by Nigel West "A Matter of Trust";

(10) what discussions she has had with former members of the security services about the implications for national security of allegations concerning Sir Roger Hollis;

(11) what discussions she has had with former members of the security services concerning the proposed publication of books containing material relating to national security;

(12) on what date she first knew of and saw, respectively, the internal MI5 report discussing Lord Rothschild's role in the publication of the book "Their Trade is Treachery" by Chapman Pincher.

The Prime Minister: It would be inappropriate for me to comment on matters which may arise in the proceedings concerning the Peter Wright case in Australia while those proceedings continue. I also intend to follow the precedent set by previous Prime Ministers of not commenting on security matters.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister whether she will carry out an inquiry to identify which security officer revealed to a national newspaper journalist that the Iraqi embassy had been bugged over the last two years.

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of any newspaper report alleging that the Iraqi embassy has been bugged over the past two years.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister in what form Mr. Ronnie Symonds, Mr. William Skarden, Mr. Andrew King, Colonel Leo Long, Lord Rothschild, Lord Clannorris, T. A. R. Robertson, Nigel Burgess, Constance Burgess, Mr. Russell Leigh, Mr. Christopher Haines, Mr. William Luke, Mr. Stephen Demowbray, Lord Dacre, Mr. George Carey Foster, Mr. John Cairncross, Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge, Mr. Robert MacKenzie, Sir Ashton Roskill, Sir Martin Furnival, Mr. Nigel Blair and Mr. Anthony Simkins gave undertakings as officers in Britain's security services not to make statements which breached confidentiality.

The Prime Minister: I am not prepared to comment on individual cases. All members of the security services sign the Official Secrets Act and are made fully aware of their duty of confidentiality.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister if she will make it the policy of Her Majesty's Government, in litigation to which they are a party, to claim public interest immunity against the discovery of documents only in cases where the material in question has not previously been published in other ways; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. Her Majesty's Government will continue to claim public interest immunity against the discovery of documents whenever it is deemed necessary in the public interest to do so.

Engagements

Q2. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 November.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her oral reply*, 25 November 1986, column 135]: I regret that I gave the hon. Gentleman an incorrect figure in my reply to his supplementary question about the Sports Council's grant settlement for 1987-88.

Between 1979 and 1986 its grant has gone up by 42 per cent. in real terms, not 67 per cent. as I said. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the Sports Council has received a substantial real terms increase in its grant between the years in question.

EMPLOYMENT

Restart Scheme

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General if he will publish information showing how many people in the *(a)* Burnley, *(b)* Pendle and *(c)* Hyndburn travel-to-work areas have had their benefit (i) reduced and (ii) withdrawn, in connection with the restart scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No one can lose his or her benefit entitlements solely as a result of the restart programme. The aim of the programme is to interview long-term unemployed people in order to make a suitable offer to them of work, training or a course that will get them on the path back to work.

Under long-standing legal rules people can lose their entitlement to benefit if they fail to attend an interview, are not available for work, or refuse an offer of suitable employment. We have no information available in the precise form requested as it is not possible to break down the figures into the three areas separately. But as at 9 October 1986 the number of people invited to a restart interview who later had benefit disallowed by independent adjudication officers in the three areas, was 23. A further 25 claimants in the areas had benefit suspended and then reinstated after going to a restart interview which they had previously failed to attend.

Mr. Marlow asked the Paymaster General, pursuant to the answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, column *211*, about the number of people ceasing to claim unemployment benefit following invitation to a restart interview, if he will explain the differences between the total given under the second column of that answer and the total given under the third column of the answer on 5 November, *Official Report*, column *459*.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The 86,211 people in the third column of the table in the *Official Report* at column *459* are those who have been sent a letter of invitation to a restart interview but who have ceased to claim benefit at some time after the sending of the letter. They include the 30,218 people referred to in the second column of the table in the *Official Report* at column 211 who have ceased to claim benefit after being interviewed.

The difference between these two figures—55,993—is comprised of people who have been sent a letter but ceased to claim benefit before a restart interview.

Benefits

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Paymaster General how many claims under consideration at the adjudication office in Birmingham on 31 October had been held there for more than a month.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There were 1,000 such cases in the adjudication office in Birmingham on 31 October. These cases were awaiting further comment from either the claimant or the employer. The need to obtain further information inevitably tends to cause delay in deciding a claim but when an employer or a claimant does not reply within a reasonable time, a decision will generally be made on the available evidence.

Job Training Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster-General what estimate he has made of the element of the substitution which will result from the new job training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The new job training scheme pilot programmes combine a period of individual assessment with an integrated package of training and practical experience leading to a recognised vocational qualification. Particular emphasis is placed on the proper integration of training and practical experience.

It is not anticipated that there will be substantial job substitution in the new job training scheme because practical experience placements will be of relatively short duration, probably with more than one employer; practical experience will be interspersed with periods of training away from the workplace.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General in relation to the new job training scheme, whether providers of practical work will pay trainees; and whether he has made an estimate of the costs involved.

Mr. Trippier: Trainees on the new job training scheme pilot programmes will receive a training allowance equivalent to their benefit entitlement. Trainees will not be paid by providers of practical experience.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General if he will make it his policy that participation in the job training scheme will continue to be voluntary and that benefit sanctions will not apply to persons who do not accept offers, or who leave courses prematurely.

Mr. Trippier: Participation in the job training scheme pilots is voluntary and benefit sanctions will not be applied to anyone for not joining, or for leaving before they complete their training programme.

Taster Course (Deptford)

Ms. Richardson asked the Paymaster General, why the taster course for women at the Deptford skillcentre is to be withdrawn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The taster course for women at Deptford skillcentre is being withdrawn because the MSC concluded that provision of this training could be made more cost-effectively elsewhere.

National Advisory Council on Employment of Disabled People

Mr. Knox asked the Paymaster General who has been appointedto the chairmanship of the National Advisory Council on Employment of Disabled People, following the death of Mr. Bob Ramsey earlier in 1986.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. and Noble Friend has today appointed Mr. Ken Baker, a former commissioner of the MSC, to the chair of the National Advisory Council on Employment of Disabled People. He has been appointed to serve until 31 December 1989. NACEDP is due to be reconstituted for a further three years from 1 January 1987 and I hope to make an announcement shortly concerning membership of the council for this period.

Manchester

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will make a statement on the progress made by his Department in the inner-city area of Manchester;

(2) if he will give details of actions taken by the inner-city task force in Manchester;

(3) if he will give details of the budget of the Manchester inner-city task force; and how much has been spent.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1986, c. 324]: The task force has established contacts with a wide variety of local community organisations, with the local authority and with the private sector. A steering group composed of local people has recently been formed to assist the task force in its work. A plan has been drawn up as a guide to action in tackling the problems of the area. Under this plan a number of projects designed to increase employment and improve the employability of local people are being worked up as a matter of priority. These include:

(a) the establishment, in co-operation with a major clearing bank, of a small grant and loan scheme for local small businesses;

(b) assistance to the youth business initiative;

(c) pro-active business counselling support for participants in the enterprise allowance scheme;

(d) the establishment of a managed workshop in the task force area;

(e) support for community programme projects run by newly trained local managers;

(f) support for training local people in housing association work in conjunction for positive action for training in housing (PATH);

(g) the development with the private sector of a scheme to train local people in building and construction skills;

(h) the conversion, by local people, of railway arches in North Hulme into business start up units.

A substantial number of other projects at various stages of development. The task force is also working closely with the private sector, other Government Departments and statutory and voluntary agencies in the area to unlock all available resources and to ensure that they are targeted to maximum effect.

All task forces have access to the central project funds of the inner cities initiative and to date some £33,000 has been allocated to projects in the Moss Side and Hulme task force area. Projects under development so far, which include those described above are expected to attract grant support in this financial year of around £277,000.

My Department also plays a full part, together with the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment, in the Manchester/Salford city action team. In the current financial year together with the Manpower Services Commission, it will be spending some £26 million in the area the team covers on programmes of employment help to local people.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

State Security

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General if he will prosecute Lord Rothschild under section 7 of the Official Secrets Act 1920 for soliciting Mr. Peter Wright, by means of an offer of money, to pass documents known or believed to contain official secrets relating to the security services, to Mr. Chapman Pincher; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I am considering with the Director of Public Prosecutions the allegations that have been made.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General (1) if he will now say why Arthur Martin was not prosecuted for breaching confidence on security matters in statements to Rupert Allason prior to New Year's Day 1983;

(2) if he will now say why Arthur Martin was not prosecuted for breaching confidence on security matters in statements to Rupert Allason after the publication of "A Matter of Trust".

The Attorney-General: I reached my decision not to prosecute Arthur Martin for supplying information to Rupert Allason because I was satisfied that it would not be in the public interest to prosecute.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General why he delayed taking action to prevent the publication of the book "One Girl's War", by Joan Miller, in the Irish Republic.

The Attorney-General: The Government are taking active steps to seek the prevention of the publication and distribution of this book.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answers of 20 November, *Official Report*, columns *263-5*, what criteria were used in deciding on the respective action to be taken in relation to *(a)* Mr. Nigel West, Mr. Ronnie Symonds, Sir Martin Furnival Jones, Mr. Neil Blair and Mr. Anthony Simkins, on the one hand, and *(b)* those persons listed in the answer in columns *264* and *265*, on the other, in respect of allegations relating to the unauthorised use or disclosure of information about the security services.

The Attorney-General: I agreed with the Director of Public Prosecutions that he would ask the Metropolitan Police to investigate certain statements attributed in recent press articles to Mr. Nigel West (some of them as direct quotations) where it appeared that he might be claiming to have in his possession certain security service documents. Because his claims implied that these documents might have been given to him by certain other named individuals I asked the Director of Public Prosecutions to consider the position in relation to these individuals in the light of the result of the police investigation referred to above. Nigel West's claims did not involve the other 18 individuals named in my answer in columns *264* and *265* and for the action taken in the case of these individuals I refer the hon. Gentleman to that answer.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General on what date Sir Robert Armstrong was informed by Sir Richard Franks that the book "Their Trade is Treachery" was to be published.

The Attorney-General: It would be inappropriate for me to comment on matters which are or may be at issue in the proceedings concerning the Peter Wright case in Australia while those proceedings continue.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General on what date he first knew of and saw, respectively, the internal M15 report discussing Lord Rothschild's rôle in the publication of the book "Their Trade is Treachery" by Chapman Pincher.

The Attorney-General: It is not the Government's policy to comment on matters of national security.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General whether he proposes to take any steps against Sir Dick White, Mr. Arthur Martin or Mr. George Russel Leigh in respect of information on MI5 which they have given to authors.

The Attorney-General: The matter remains under consideration.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General (1) whether he proposes to take any steps against Colonel William Skarden in respect of information of MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(2) whether he proposes to take any steps against Andrew King in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(3) whether he proposes to take any steps against Colonel Leo Long in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(4) whether he proposes to take any steps against Lord Rothschild in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(5) whether he proposes to take any steps against Sir Robert McKenzie in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(6) whether he proposes to take any steps against Sir Ashton Roskill in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(7) whether he proposes to take any steps against Mr. Russell Lee in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(8) whether he proposes to take any steps against Mr. Christopher Haines in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(9) whether he proposes to take any steps against Mr. William Luke in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(10) whether he proposes to take any steps against Mr. Stephen Demowbray in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(11) whether he proposes to take any steps against Lord Dacre in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(12) whether he proposes to take any steps against Mr. George Carey Foster in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(13) whether he proposes to take any steps against Mr. John Cairncross in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(14) whether he proposes to take any steps against Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(15) whether he proposes to take any steps against Lord Clanmorris in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(16) whether he proposes to take any steps against Mr. T. A. R. Robertson in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(17) whether he proposes to take any steps against Mr. Nigel Burgess in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department he has given to authors;

(18) whether he proposes to take any steps against Constance Burgess in respect of information on MI5, MI6 or any other security agency or department she has given to authors.

The Attorney-General: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Gentleman in relation to the same persons on 20 November 1986.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Housing (Taxation)

Mr. Raynsford asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the revenue accrued in the current year of restoring income tax on the imputed rent of dwellings at the same rates as applied previously.

Mr. Norman Lamont: At the time of abolition in 1963, schedule A tax charged on owner-occupied properties was mainly based on property valuations of 1935-36. The yield from a similar charge at 1986-87 rates of income tax, based on current valuations for rating purposes (as a proxy for imputed rent income) with an allowance for expenditure on maintenance can be estimated only tentatively, but is unlikely to exceed £500 million in a full year and could be considerably less than this.

VAT

Mr. Bright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy towards the number of late payments of value added tax by a company which will be necessary *(a)* in a year, *(b)* in a three-year and *(c)* in a 10-year period to trigger a penalty by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mr. Brooke: Under section 19 of the Finance Act 1985 a company which fails twice within 12 months to pay value added tax by the due date will be liable to a surcharge for each subsequent default until such time as a 12 month period free of default has elapsed.

Mr. Bright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the implications of the sixth Exchequer directive on value added tax for the proposed compulsory de-registration of businesses below the turnover threshold.

Mr. Brooke: It is not clear whether any proposal to refuse registration to businesses below the registration threshold would be compatible with the European Community sixth VAT directive. In considering such a proposal we would therefore need to discuss the position with the EC Commission and our Community partners.

Mr. Bright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will consider, in the light of responses to the Customs and Excise consultation document, "VAT: Small Business Review" issued in October, reducing the period for which small firms have to keep value added tax records from six to three years.

Mr. Brooke: As the consultation document explains, Customs and Excise are to appoint an independent consultant to review their VAT record keeping and preserving requirements with the following terms of reference:

"To consider the effect on small businesses of the requirement to preserve VAT records for a maximum of six years; the records that need to be covered by these requirements; and to make recommendations consistent with Customs and Excise's needs in respect of the revenue control of the tax."

The Keith committee, which examined the enforcement powers of the revenue departments, reommended that the maximum period for which Customs and Excise can require VAT records to be preserved should be extended from three to six years. However, within the maximum period there is scope for the exercise of discretion as regards earlier disposal of ancillary records. In this connection I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend, the Member for Brentwood and Isleworth (Mr. Hayhoe) during the debate in Standing Committee B on the 1985 Finance Bill on 21 May 1985 at column 200.

Mr. Bright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reactions have come fom organisations representing small businesses to the default provisions set out in the Customs and Excise consultation document, "V.A.T.: Small Business Review", issued in October.

Mr. Brooke: To date, none.

Mr. Bright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why he proposes that small businesses joining the proposed system of annual value added tax returns with payments on account, as set out in the consultation document, V.A.T.: Small Business Review, in October, should be compelled to make nine successive monthly payments on account.

Mr. Brooke: The payment of the anticipated tax liability by means of nine payments on account with an additional final adjusting payment would enable traders to transfer more easily from the existing quarterly to the proposed annual accounting system; would protect revenue flows; and is in line with many commercial arrangements for the payment of regular financial liabilities. The proposal will, of course, be brought under review in the light of reactions to the consultation exercise.

Mr. Bright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria the Customs and Excise envisage applying to calculate anticipated changes in a small business's turnover and trading levels for the purposes of estimating its annual value added tax assessment as outlined in the consultation document, V.A.T.: Small Business Review, issued in October.

Mr. Brooke: The consultative document explains that the preceding year's net tax liability would be used as the base line and that it would be necessary to allow for anticipated changes, in turnover, trading and inflation. Detailed decisions on the criteria to be applied in making such adjustments must await the outcome of the consultation exercise.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the total number of schedule D tax payers who are also registered with the Customs and Excise for value added tax purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I regret that the records are not maintained in this form. The VAT registration records and the Inland Revenue schedule D records are not cross-referred. Registration for VAT is of the "person", that is, sole proprietor, partnership, corporate body and so on, and not necessarily the individual. Schedule D tax is normally levied separately on the individual. Meaningful cross-referencing between the two sets of records is, therefore, not possible.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest available figures for the total number of businesses registered with the Customs and Excise for value added tax purposes.

Mr. Brooke: At 6 October 1986 the total number of persons registered for VAT was 1,489,020.

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to zero rate for value added tax purposes building alterations works for the disabled.

Mr. Brooke: Zero-rating already extends to a wide range of building alterations of significance for the disabled. More general reliefs in favour of the disabled have been considered previously, and ruled out on grounds of revenue cost; but I shall bear my hon. Friend's suggestion in mind.

Freeports

Mr. Rathbone asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to review the operation of freeports in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on their performances to date.

Mr. Brooke: Since the freeports were introduced as an experiment in 1984 their performance has been kept under regular review by Treasury appointed consultants who submit annual progress reports.

Of the six designated sites Liverpool and Southampton are operational and have stated that their throughput is increasing; Birmingham will open at the end of the month; the three other freeports are not operational at present.

Arms Embargo (South Africa)

Mr. Anderson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his general policy on compounding in place of prosecutions for breaches of the arms embargo on South Africa; and whether this policy has been affected by the case of Clement Shaw Ltd.

Mr. Brooke: General policy on the use by Customs and Excise of compounding in place of prosecution remains as set out in the answer given by my hon. Friend the then Minister of State, the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Hayhoe), to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 26 April 1984, at column 542. This policy applies in the case of breaches of the arms embargo on South Africa and has not been affected by the case of Clement Shaw Ltd.

Earnings

Mr. Shore asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will provide figures for the weekly earnings after income tax, national insurance contributions and child benefit at *(a)* actual prices and *(b)* constant April 1986 prices of (i) a single man, (ii) a married man, (iii) a married man with two children under 11 years of age, (iv) a married man with four children, two under 11, one 11 to 15 and of over 16 years age and (v) a single woman, whose gross weekly earnings are at *(a)* the lowest decile, *(b)* the lower quartile, *(c)* the median, *(d)* the upper quartile and *(e)* the highest decile for full-time employees in April 1979 and April 1986, respectively.

Mr. Lawson: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

British Petroleum

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any proposal to sell Government shares in British Petroleum before April 1988.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As my right hon. Friend, the then Chief Secretary told the House on 14 March 1984 at column 420, it is the Government's policy to sell minority residual shareholdings, as the circumstances of the companies, prospectus undertakings and market conditions permit.

Privatisation (Advertising)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money has been spent on advertising in relation to privatisation schemes since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 7 November 1986 at column *628*.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what revenues are attributable to North sea oil production so far in 1986; what is expected to be the annual total for 1986; and how this figure compares with that for each year from 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Government revenues from United Kingdom oil and gas production amounted to £2·7 billion in the first seven months of the 1986-87 financial year. The 1986 "Autumn Statement" contained a forecast of £4½ billion for the whole financial year. The figures for financial years are as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	2,314
1980-81	3,743
1981-82	6,492
1982-83	7,822
1983-84	8,798
1984-85	12,030
1985-86	11,319

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the current levels of manufacturing output and investment; and how these levels compare with those of 1979.

Mr. MacGregor: Figures for the current and 1979 levels of manufacturing output were published in *British Business*, 21 November 1986 on page 30. Figures for manufacturing investment were also published in that issue, on pages 27 and 28.

Commercial Bills

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Bank of England's current holding of commercial bills; and what significance the bank's dealings in commercial bills is assumed to have for monetary policy.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what index is now his preferred indicator of the competitiveness of British manufacturing industry.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Capital Allowances

Mr. Speller asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will reinstate the 100 per cent. write-off on machinery against capital allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish draft clauses following Her Majesty's Customs and Excise consultative document on value added tax input tax dated 7 August.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 November 1986, c. *284*]: No decisions have yet been taken on the range of options set out in the consultative document. The need for changes in primary legislation can only be determined once those decisions are made.

Channel Tunnel (Customs Control)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he proposes to take to ensure the harmonisation of United Kingdom and French customs controls on Channel tunnel trains.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986, c. *80*]: We have agreed with the French that frontier controls for the shuttle trains shall be juxtaposed on entrance to the tunnel in the direction of travel: no decisions have yet been taken about the controls for through trains. However, the arrangements for customs controls are to form part of a protocol to the treaty covering all frontier controls, and this protocol is currently under discussion.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Vietnamese Boat People

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards boat people in closed camps in Hong Kong who have relatives in the United Kingdom; and how many are expected to enter the United Kingdom in the last quarter of the current year;

(2) how many Vietnamese boat people resident in closed camps in Hong Kong were allowed to settle in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Waddinton: Vietnamese refugees are admitted to the United Kingdom both under the family reunion policy, which provides for the spouse and minor children to join refugees already here, and under the United Nation's rescues at sea resettlement offers (RASRO) scheme. In addition, in September 1985, we announced, in response to the report of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration on Vietnmese refugees, that we would accept some 500 refugees in Hong Kong who had relatives in the United Kingdom but who fell outside the criteria for family reunion. Over the last twelve months, about 460 refugees have been admitted on this basis and a further 13 cases are under consideration.

I understand that the refugee agencies are not at the moment putting forward applications to fill the small number of remaining places until future policy has been determined. We are now considering future policy towards the problem of Vietnamese refugees in south-east Asia as a whole. In the meantime, our commitment to RASRO and family reunion continues and 27 people have been accepted under these schemes in the last two months.

The number of those admitted over the last five years are as follows:

1981 1,775
1982 241 of which 2 came from closed camps
1983 101 of which 15 came from closed camps
1984 88 of which 38 came from closed camps
1985 44 none of whom came from closed camps
1986 444 of which 181 came from closed camp

(1981 was the last year of the extended criteria for family reunion and the closed camps were not established until 2 July 1982.)

Telephone Tapping

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether Her Majesty's Government's assurances to honourable Members that their telephone calls will not be tapped applies also to British Members of the European Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

(2) whether, in the case of an individual who has been the subject of telephone tapping and who is subsequently elected to the House of Commons, the records of such tappings are destroyed when the individual under surveillance becomes an honourable Member; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Courts (Staffing)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received from the trade union movement about the staffing of courts in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

Staffing was raised by the trade union side at a recent meeting of the departmental Whitley council. The Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement published on 6 November included provision for additional manpower and money for the courts in England and Wales as represented by the trade union side. Full details will be contained in the next Public Expenditure White Paper.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Lyme Disease

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to stem the incidence of Lyme disease in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie Lyme disease is communicated to man by the bite of a hard tick harboured by deer and wild rodents. It is not common in the United Kingdom — 13 cases were reported from East Anglia in 1984 and several further cases in the New Forest this year. The best preventive measure is to avoid likely tick-infested areas when feasible. The disease responds to phenoxmethyl, penicillin or tetracycline.

The Public Health Laboratory Service's communicable disease surveillance centre will soon begin routine

collection of positive laboratory results, so that cases of Lyme disease may be included in a continuing national surveillance system and the incidence of the disease kept under review.

Residential Care (Costs)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the scope of investigation for the committees he has set up chaired by *(a)* Mrs. Joan Firth and *(b)* Lady Wagner about private residential care costs and standards; and when they are estimated to report.

Mr. Newton: The scope and terms of reference of the two working parties are as follows:

(a) "To review the arrangements throughout the United Kingdom for financial support of residents in local authority, private and voluntary residential care homes, having regard to the three options outlined in the 1985 Working Party Report on Supplementary Benefit and Residential Care and any others which may be identified; to examine the resource and service related implications for both central and local government, any legislative implications, and any need for the transfer of resources; and to make recommendations for a coherent system of financial support which aims to combine flexibility and responsiveness to individual needs and circumstances with the optimum use of public resources."

A copy of the 1985 working-party report is in the Library.

Lady Wagner's working party was set up in March 1985 by the National Institute for Social Work.

(b) "To review the role of residential care and the range of services given in statutory, voluntary and private residential establishments within the personal social services in England and Wales; to consider, having regard to the practical constraints and other relevant developments, what changes, if any, are required to enable the residential care sector to respond more effectively to changing social needs: and to make recommendations accordingly."

(a) is expected to report by next Easter and *(b)* early in 1988.

RAWP (Future Operation)

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy with regard to the future operation of the resources allocation working party; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Government remain fully committed to improving equity of access to services for people in equal need. We have set in hand a review of the RAWP formula to explore the scope for improving the way in which the formula measures relative need. Meanwhile, in order to assist with transitional problems in some districts, my right hon. Friend announced on 6 November the setting up of a special fund of £30 million available over the next two years.

Heating Additions

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total of heating additions for pensioners for the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lyell: The following is the information:

The total number of heating additions paid to supplementary pensioners

	000s
1980	1,450
1981	1,558
1982	1,567
1983	1,442
1984	1,493

Source: Annual Statistical Inquiry.

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, when calculating the level of supplementary benefit, what specific consideration is given to heating costs; and how this is calculated.

Mr. Major: The supplementary benefit scale rates are uprated in line with increases in the retail price index (excluding housing costs) which, among other things, reflects changes in fuel costs. Heating additions are reviewed separately against movements in the fuel element of the price index.

Mr. Leadbitter asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to *(a)* simplify the qualifying requirements for fuel allowances and *(b)* remove the average temperature level assessment, and establish the principle of direct payments for all retirement pensioners during the winter period.

Mr. Major: This Government have simplified the system of weekly heating additions for supplementary benefit claimants by introducing automatic entitlement for certain groups, including householders aged 65 or over, long-term sick or disabled people, and families who have a child under five. These additions are paid throughout the year.

For payment in periods of exceptionally cold weather I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 20 November at columns *326-27*.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present formula for making extreme weather payments; whether he has any proposals to make changes to the formula; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 20 November, at columns *326-27*. The current arrangements for exceptionally severe weather payments are described in the report on the new arrangements by the Social Security Advisory Committee (Cm. 18).

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will explain why temperatures calculated for the exceptionally severe weather allowance for the Cowdenbeath area are to be calculated at Turnhouse airport.

Mr. Major: National climatological message stations (NCMs) have been linked to local office areas in

consultation with the Meteorological Office taking account of factors such as climatological conditions, the reliability of information produced and the speed with which information could be passed onto the Meteorological Office.

Meteorological data collected by the Turnhouse (Edinburgh Airport) NCM is considered to be the more representative of conditions in the area including Cowdenbeath area. This station is nearer to Cowdenbeath than the Tummel bridge station.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services with regard to single payment regulation No. 26, how many times temperatures at *(a)* Tomme bridge and *(b)* Turnhouse have fallen below a weekly average of −1·5°C in *(a)* the most recent four years and *(b)* the most recent 10 years.

Mr. Major: The information held by this Department was published as annex B to the Secretary of State's statement on the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee on proposals for a new scheme of exceptionally cold weather payment (Cm. 18).

Redundancy Pay

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider a revision of his Department's regulation 9(2) *(a)* concerning redundancy pay.

Mr. Major: Lump sum redundancy payments are treated as capital for supplementary benefit purposes and are not affected by regulation 9(2) *(a)* of the Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Regulations 1981 (SI. 1981 No. 1527) which covers the treatment of earnings and other income. Future arrangements for the income support scheme are currently under consideration.

Single Payment Claims, Liverpool

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on outstanding single payment claims in the city of Liverpool.

Mr. Lyell: On 18 November 1986 single payment claims from 2,320 claimants were being processed in eight local offices serving the city of Liverpool. Single payment claims are determined as soon as possible after all information required has been collected. Urgent claims are given priority.

Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money Her Majesty's Government have made available to the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation in each of the past seven years.

Mr. Major: The total amount provided to the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation by Government Departments for each financial year since 1979-80 is as follows:

Year	*£*
1979-80	229,000
1980-81	266,500
1981-82	302,600
1982-83	246,500
1983-84	257,000
1984-85	261,000
1985-86	259,000

Blood Donors (Bone Marrow Donations)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will ask all regional blood transfusion services to tissue-type routinely all blood received from blood donors to discover whether they may be suitable for bone marrow donations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The National Blood Transfusion Service already has a procedure whereby regular blood donors may also volunteer to donate bone marrow. In those cases the individual can be tissue-typed either within the service, or referred to one of the specialist bone marrow registers.

It would not in our view be appropriate to tissue-type blood donors for this purpose unless they had also volunteered to be bone marrow donors.

Psychiatrists

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many consultant psychiatrists are currently employed in the National Health Service; how many will be required by the year 2000 to meet the needs of the care in the community programme; and whether enough training posts exist to ensure that the future demand will be met.

Mrs. Currie: The numbers of consultant psychiatrists currently employed in the National Health Service in England are given in the table. It is for regional health authorities to judge, as an integral part of their planning, how many additional consultants will be needed in future to meet their plans for service development, including the requirements of the care in the community programme. The Department, with appropriate professional advice, is monitoring closely the expected future demand for consultant psychiatrists to ensure that there are enough training posts.

Consultants in psychiatric specialties employed by the NHS in England, as at 30 September 1985

	Numbers
Mental Illness	1,127
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	334
Forensic Psychiatry	35
Mental Handicap	155
Psychotherapy	89
All Psychiatric Specialties	1,740

Figures include senior hospital medical officers with allowance, but exclude staff in special hospitals.

Pathology Testing

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost of a National Health Service pathology test for *(a)* bone marrow typing, *(b)* cervical cancer and *(c)* acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mrs. Currie: These costs are not identified in health authority accounts. Estimates of a typical cost are:

(*a*) Bone marrow typing — up to £25. A donor normally requires only one test; a recipient may need several tests.

(*b*) Cervical cancer—£2 to £4.

(*c*) AIDS — £1·35 with the Blood Transfusion Service and £3 with the Public Health Laboratory Service. A high volume of HIV antibody tests are done by the BTS; this lowers the unit cost. Most other tests are done in PHLS laboratories where lower volume increases unit costs.

AIDS

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider expanding trade-in centres for drug addicts' injection kits; if he proposes to allow hospitals to provide free sterile needles in exchange; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We are considering urgently possible measures to reduce the spread of the AIDS virus amongst drug misusers. In doing so we are looking carefully at the question of the availability of injecting equipment. We hope to be able to make an announcement shortly.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied that all blood supplies used for transfusion purposes are free from the acquired immune deficiency syndrome virus; whether some acquired immune deficiency syndrome viruses are not detectable in blood supplies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will announce urgently when he will commence distributing the leaflets on acquired immune deficiency syndrome to the general public; whether the leaflet is ready for printing; and what information he has as to whether the General Post Office is willing and prepared to start distribution as soon as asked.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 November 1986, c. *152*]: The leaflet for all households is currently being printed. The Post Office is giving the fullest co-operation to ensure that the leaflet will be distributed as soon as possible in the new year.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) why the waiting list figures for Bloomsbury district health authority for 31 March published by his Department on Friday 21 November were lower than those originally submitted to his Department by the health authority;

(2) what was the net change in the hospital waiting list figures for 31 March as a result of the validation process commenced in August and completed in November.

Mr. Newton: The process of validating the waiting list figures submitted by district health authorities begins not in August, but as soon as each return is made over a period which spans several months. No running totals are kept centrally since such figures would have no relevance. For Bloomsbury health authority the waiting list figure published by the Department was the latest submitted by the district.

Single Payments

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for single payments have been received by his Department from people resident in East Lothian during 1986; what was the total sum paid to those claimants for essential and miscellaneous items, respectively; and what is his Department's estimated budget figure for single payments in East Lothian for the next financial year.

Mr. Lyell: East Lothian is covered by the Department's Edinburgh East office but their boundaries are not coterminous. During the year ending April 1986 (the latest for which information is available) 18,404 single payment claims were received at the Edinburgh East office. Information on essential and miscellaneous items is not available. Forecasts on expenditure are prepared for Great Britain as a whole and not for any one area.

Nursery Places

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the percentage change in nursery places, wholetime equivalents, between 1979 and today.

Mrs. Currie: It is estimated that the number of local authority, voluntary and private day nursery places in England has increased by 11 per cent. between 1979 and 1986. Information on whole time equivalents is not available.

Unemployment (Benefit)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many and what percentage of the present total of unemployed persons do not qualify for national insurance related benefit because of insufficient contributions, or because they have been unemployed for over 312 days, respectively;

(2) if he will estimate the number and percentage of the present total of unemployed persons who are *(a)* partially and *(b)* totally dependent on supplementary benefit for their income.

Mr. Major: The information is given in the table:

	Number	*Percentage*
Total unemployed claimants (as at 8 May 1986)	3,079,341	(100)
No unemployment benefit—insufficient contributions	800,454	(26)
Unemployment benefit exhausted after 312 days	1,068,072	(35)
Unemployment benefit with Supplementary Benefit	194,374	(6)
Supplementary Benefit only[1]	1,683,911	(55)

[1] Although no overall figure is available, a significant proportion of these claimants had other resources—for example some 22 per cent. had child benefit.

Special Medical Boards

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions hon. and right hon. Members have written to him about individual findings of the special medical boards in 1985.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November c. *135*]: Hon. and right hon. Members wrote to Ministers on this subject on nine occasions in 1985.

Asbestos

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many awards of industrial death benefit were made in 1985 for *(a)* asbestosis, *(b)* diffuse mesothelioma, *(c)* lung cancer accompanied by asbestosis and *(d)* lung cancer without asbestosis.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November c.*138*]: The information is as follows:

Awards of industrial death benefit in 1985

	Number
(a) Asbestosis	71
(b) Diffuse mesothelioma	196
(c) Lung cancer accompanied by asbestosis	—
(d) Lung cancer without asbestosis	—

Pensioners

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the changes in state support for pensioners in real terms as between 1979 and now.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November c. *202*]: Total state support for pensioners includes both retirement pensions and other benefits for which they are eligible, such as housing benefit and supplementary pension. Between 1978-79 and 1985-86 benefit expenditure on pensioners grew in real terms by over 25 per cent. or £4 billion.

SCOTLAND

Hospital Facilities (U.S. Forces)

Mr. Buchan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which hospitals and hospital facilities under the control of the Scottish Home and Health Department have been earmarked for use by the United States Armed Forces under the United States/United Kingdom lines of communications agreement.

Mr. Lang: Detailed contingency plans are necessarily classified. Planning for the National Health Service in Scotland in time of crisis or war does not, however, include the designation of any specific facilities for the exclusive use of United States forces.

Paediatricians

Mr. Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information that his Department holds on the numbers of consultant community paediatricians employed by health authorities in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: There are three consultant community paediatricians currently employed by health boards in Scotland. In addition, some hospital consultants in medical paediatrics are also involved in providing community services.

Roads Expenditure

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the effects of the Chancellor's autumn statement on public expenditure on the construction and maintenance of national and local authority roads in Scotland for 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90, compared with the figures in the Public Expenditure White Paper for January 1986.

Mr. Ancram: The autumn statement has no effect on public expenditure on the construction and maintenance of national and local authority roads in Scotland in 1986-87. It simply reports forecasts of spending on those activities this year, which are broadly in line with the provision stated in "Public Expenditure to 1988-89: A Commentary on the Scotland Programme", which provides a detailed breakdown of the provision for the roads and transport programme as stated in volume II of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89" (Cmnd 9702-II).

In relation to later years, the autumn statement indicated that the Scotland programme would be increased by £540 million and £670 million in 1987-88 and 1988-89 compared with the figures in Cmnd 9702. I am considering the provision for the various elements of my programme within these revised totals and the total for 1989-90, which was announced for the first time in the autumn statement. I shall announce my detailed decisions in due course and full details will be published subsequently in the 1987 edition of "A Commentary on the Scotland Programme".

As regards relevant current expenditure by local authorities in 1987-88, the provision for roads and road lighting within the total I announced in July is £188·3 million, £8·5 million (4·7 per cent.) above the provision for 1986-87. No separate figure for planned provision on this element of local authority current expenditure was stated in "Public Expenditure to 1988-89: A Commentary on the Scotland programme".

Urban Programme Funding

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to grant the request from Strathclyde regional council for a ministerial meeting concerning urban programme funding.

Mr. Ancram: I have agreed to meet a delegation from Strathclyde regional council on 2 December.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide up-to-date figures indicating *(a)* the number of project applications for urban programme funding from Strathclyde region and Glasgow district, in each of the past five years, *(b)* the number of unsuccessful applications in each of the past five years, *(c)* the number of project applications for urban programme funding from the Hamilton area in each of the past five years and *(d)* the number of unsuccessful applications in each of the past five years.

Mr. Ancram: For 1986-87, information is as follows in respect of all new applications and requests for extensions or to supplementary provision for existing projects:

Local authority	*Applications received*	*Unsuccessful applications*
Strathclyde Regional Council	[1]393	[2]47
Glasgow District Council	44	19
Hamilton District Council	6	1

[1] Fifteen for Hamilton area.
[2] Two for Hamilton area.

Comparable information for previous years could not be compiled except at disproportionate expense.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide figures indicating the amount of urban programme funding allocated to *(a)* Strathclyde region, *(b)* Lothian region and *(c)* Tayside region, in each of the past five years.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

	Capital £ million	*Current £ million*
Strathclyde Region		
1982-83	9·591	15·758
1983-84	11·060	17·675
1984-85	6·173	19·345
1985-86	7·172	21·396
1986-87 (to date)	6·754	19·975
Lothian Region		
1982-83	0·398	0·999
1983-84	0·615	1·182
1984-85	0·745	0·858
1985-86	0·394	1·153
1986-87 (to date)	0·497	1·379
Tayside Region		
1982-83	0·293	0·229
1983-84	0·560	0·378
1984-85	0·708	0·553
1985-86	0·578	0·603
1986-87 (to date)	0·392	0·595

Note: The figures comprise approved expenditure for the regional council and all district councils within those regions for which the information is sought. They are at outturn prices.

Road Humps

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he plans to give local authorities the required power to put down ramps in residential side streets to control traffic speeds; why the grant of these powers has been delayed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: A decision on the commencement of the road hump provisions in the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 will be made once more experience has been gained in the use of road humps in England and Wales. My right hon. and learned Friend has received no representations in favour of road humps from Scottish local authorities.

Community Charge

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the maximum community charge to be paid by pensioners on supplementary pension and others on supplementary benefit as a proportion of the agreed charge.

Mr. Ancram: The community charge rebate scheme in Scotland is likely to follow closely the structure of the revised housing benefit scheme which is to be introduced on 1 April 1988. The illustrative tables included in the White Paper (Cmnd. 9691) which preceded the Social Security Act 1986 and in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) were prepared on the basis that the minimum contribution for those in receipt of income support would be 20 per cent.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons will pay 20 per cent. of the agreed community charge.

Mr. Ancram: The intention is that all those in receipt of income support and those at equivalent levels of net income will pay the minimum contribution to the community charge. No reliable estimates can be made of the numbers involved at this stage.

Parole

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will authorise the disclosure to prisoners in certain cases of the criteria on which their parole applications have been rejected.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to reduce the waiting time for life sentence prisoners between the preparation of reports for parole reviews and the announcement of an official decision.

Mr. Rifkind: I am giving priority to measures to further reduce the backlog as quickly as possible. The staff dealing with life licence reviews has been strengthened and new procedures have been introduced in consultation with the Parole Board for Scotland.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many long-term prisoners in Scotland chose not to be considered for parole, though eligible, in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind: Prisoners or young offenders serving sentences of more than 18 months are eligible for consideration for early release on parole licence. Figures for those who decide not to be considered for parole are given in the annual reports of the Parole Board for Scotland.

For the 10 year period between 1976 and 1985 the information is as follows:

	Total Number of prisoners eligible for parole	*Number of Prisoners who chose not to be considered for parole*
1976	788	110
1977	787	101
1978	807	99
1979	869	105
1980	837	108
1981	903	101
1982	772	94
1983	883	92
1984	819	100
1985	853	101

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to seek to reduce the qualifying period for parole for prisoners in Scotland from 12 months to six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: This proposal was considered but rejected by my predecessor in his statement on the Government's policy on parole on 18 December 1984. The operation of the parole scheme in Scotland is kept under careful review. At this stage, however, I am not convinced that a change of this kind would be appropriate.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to publish revised guidelines for social workers on the compilation of parole reports.

Mr. Rifkind: My predecessor's statement on parole policy in December 1984 made it plain that existing procedures for initial review of parole cases by local review committees would continue. No change was made in the entitlement to parole review or the arrangements for compilation of parole reports for the purposes of review. The Parole Board for Scotland continues to see those cases which it would have seen before after favourable initial review and has the opportunity to bring to my attention any exceptional circumstances which, in their view, might set aside the presumption of my policy on parole in cases to which it applies.

No change in the form or substance of reports by prison social workers or by field social workers on home circumstances has been necessary.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he plans to introduce the practice of allowing certain local review committee recommendations for the release of prisoners to be carried out without reference to the Parole Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no plans to do so at present, but I shall keep this suggestion in mind.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number and percentage of long term prisoners in Scotland eligible for parole under the revised guidelines; how many have been referred to the Parole Board for Scotland for information only; and how many have been recommended for release.

Mr. Rifkind: All prisoners serving more than 18 months are eligible for parole consideration. Details of the numbers of cases reviewed, considered by the Parole Board for Scotland and recommended for release are given in the annual reports of the Parole Board for Scotland.

The lastest available information, for 1985, is as follows:

	Number
Number of cases eligible for consideration	853
Number not wishing to be considered	101
Number referred to the Parole Board for Scotland	483
Number recommended by the Board for parole	226

A total of 63 cases were referred to the Parole Board for Scotland, for information, on the basis of my policy presumption against early release on licence for certain offenders serving sentences of over five years for crimes of violence or drug trafficking. The parole board requested formal referral of four of these cases, two on the current review and two at the next review. My predecessor agreed to both requests for referral on the current review and parole was granted, on the formal recommendation of the parole board, in both these cases.

In addition 50 other cases, in the same categories of sentence and offence were referred to the parole board on a formal basis permitting a period of parole of up to eight months on final review. Parole of periods between four months and eight months was granted in 34 of these cases on the formal recommendation of the parole board.

Nuclear Installations

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what sections of the Torness emergency plan were approved by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate before fuelling of the reactor was started; and if he will arrange for a copy of these sections to be placed in the Library;

(2) what sections of the Torness emergency plan are required to be approved by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate before commissioning procedures beyond the fuelling of the reactor; when these sections were are or likely to be approved; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when he expects the full emergency plan for Torness nuclear power station to be approved by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate.

Mr. Lang: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Chiswick Report

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which of the recommendations of the Chiswick report on suicide precautions at Glenochil detention centre and young offenders institute have now been implemented.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer to the reply given by my hon. Friend, the Minister for Industry and Home Affairs, to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neil) on 25 November at column *94*. I shall write to the hon. Member.

Foodstores

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the final destinations of foodstuffs released from EEC intervention foodstores in Scotland in the latest available year.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available.

Mr. Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now publish in the *Official Report* the average annual amount of foodstock held in EEC intervention foodstores in Dundee in each year since 1980 and the equivalent figures for Scotland overall.

Mr. John MacKay: Intervention stocks are subject to fluctuation and averages for individual stores are not recorded. Stocks in Dundee at 1 January each year since 1980 were:

Tonnes

	Butter	*Beef*
1980	—	13
1981	—	—
1982	—	—
1983	—	—
1984	—	—
1985	90	440
1986	540	679

I regret that information for the whole of Scotland could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the cost to the taxpayer of the operation of EEC intervention stores in Scotland in the latest year, including storage costs.

Mr. John MacKay: Intervention costs are not available for individual countries of the United Kingdom since they are incurred in support of the United Kingdom market as a whole, irrespective of the location of stores.

Radiation

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what further steps he will take to monitor radiation levels in the Fife region and especially the area around Rosyth dockyard.

Mr. Ancram: Monitoring of the area around Rosyth dockyard is undertaken regularly on behalf of the Scottish Development Department and the results are published in statistical bulletins. In addition, a national monitoring programme, which includes regular milk samples from Fife, is maintained by the National Radiological Protection Board and the Harwell laboratory of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

The results do not point to unusual radiation levels in Fife or to any need to extend monitoring there. Monitoring programmes are however kept under review, taking into account the views of local authorities and other interests.

Leukaemia

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he now expects to publish the comprehensive results of the study into leukaemia clusters.

Mr. John MacKay: It is hoped to publish the results of the study shortly.

Caesium 137

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will make a statement on the discovery of concentration of caesium 137 and other isotopes in the silt of the Forth estuary on the Dunfermline district coastline.

Mr. Ancram: Sediments from the Dunfermline district coastline are sampled regularly as part of the marine monitoring programme conducted on behalf of the Scottish Development Department.

Results of this monitoring have been included since 1968 in reports in the series entitled "Radioactivity in Surface and Coastal Waters of the British Isles", published by MAFF and available in the Library. They confirm that the levels of radioactivity present in sediments in the Forth estuary are insignificant.

Forestry

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will publish the names, location and areas of woodlands in Caithness and Sutherland awarded or approved for grants since March 1985 under the Forestry Commission's dedication schemes, basis I, II and III.

Mr. John Mackay [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November, 1986, c. *389*]: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to him on 1 May 1985 in response to a similar question at c. *157*. The information given in that reply is still applicable except for the following changes:

Estate	*Location*	*Woodland Area As at 1 May 1985 Hectares*	*Current Hectares*
BASIS II			
Gordonbush	North and west of Loch Brora	521	534
Lochmore	By Lairg	826	761
Skibo	West Dornoch	1,157	1,123
Uppat	Near Golspie	182	29
BASIS III			
Cnoc A'Bhothain	South West of Thurso-Helmsdale Railway, west of Loch Meadie	194	193
Garbh Loch	North East of Altnabreac	529	537
Gordonbush	North and West of Loch Brora	106	375

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 1 December 1986

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

State Security

55. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the progress of the Government's case in the Australian court in respect of a book concerning an ex-MI5 official.

The Attorney-General: The principle we are seeking to establish is clear—all those who served and have served in the security service owe a life-long duty of confidentiality to the Crown.

So far as the proceedings in Sydney are concerned, I must remind the House that I am the plaintiff and therefore cannot comment on anything which is in issue before the court. Although, under the rules of the House, judicial proceedings abroad are not subject to the sub judice rule, I have to be careful to avoid the risk of prejudicing the case or at the worst being in contempt of court in Sydney. It inevitably follows the Government are handicapped in respect of some of the allegations being bandied about.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General if a Law Officer will prosecute the right hon. and learned Member for Wimbledon (Sir M. Havers) under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act for giving confidential information to Mr. Chapman Pincher on 1 January 1983 concerning conversations between Nigel West and Arthur Martin.

The Solicitor-General: No, Sir.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General when, pursuant to his answer of 26 November, *Official Report*, column *268*, he hopes to complete his consideration with the Director of Public Prosecutions of the allegations against Sir Arthur Franks and Lord Rothschild.

The Attorney-General: The matter remains under consideration.

Westland plc

53. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the role of the Director of Public Prosecutions in relation to the inquiry into the selectively leaked Law Officer's letter in the Westland affair.

The Attorney-General: I have nothing to add to what has already been said in answer to questions and in statements.

Law Centres

56. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Attorney-General if he will list the powers of the Lord Chancellor relating to the funding of law centres.

The Solicitor-General: The Lord Chancellor has no specific statutory powers in relation to the funding of law centres. Grants to those law centres which receive support from the Lord Chancellor's Department are made in accordance with the provisions of the Appropriation Act.

EC Budget

Mr. George Robertson asked the Attorney-General what was the cost to public funds of the legal action taken by Her Majesty's Government in the European Court of Justice against the European Parliament 1986 budget.

The Attorney-General: Disbursements from public funds in respect of legal action taken by Her Majesty's Government in the European Court of Justice against the European Parliament's 1986 Budget amounted to £17,360. Work carried out in connection with the case by Government officials was in the course of their ordinary duties and at no extra cost to public funds.

Fraud (Prosecutions)

Mr. Hancock asked the Attorney-General how many prosecutions have been made for fraud in the last two years; and what proportion have resulted in convictions.

The Attorney-General: Fraud is a generic term covering a wide range of offences of differing degrees of gravity but each involving an element of dishonesty. Such offences are prosecuted by a number of prosecuting authorities, whereas my ministerial responsibility is confined to the work of the Director of Public Prosecutions and my Department holds no figures as to the total number of fraud cases prosecuted.

I am able to inform the hon. Member that, during 1985, the fraud divisions of the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, which handle serious cases of alleged fraud, commenced 150 prosecutions. Fifty-five trials on indictment were completed during that year, of which 42 resulted in conviction and 13 in acquittal. Comparable but more detailed figures for the first nine months of 1986 show that during that period 66 trials on indictment, involving 149 defendants, were completed.

Pleas of guilty or convictions were obtained in 59 cases. The outcome of those cases when analysed in terms of defendants was as follows:

	Number
Pleaded guilty	88
Convicted	45
Acquitted	16

The total sum at risk in the cases dealt with this year to 30 September was £147 million.

TRANSPORT

Airport Charges

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to issue permission to levy airport charges to the British Airports Authority's airports.

Mr. Moore: I have granted permissions to levy charges to the operators of Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Prestwick, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen airports. I have issued the permissions in accordance with part IV of the Airports Act 1986 and in particular under the powers in section 53; they take effect from today. Copies of the permissions have been placed in the Library.

All seven permissions include conditions requiring, inter alia, that the published accounts of the airport companies show any subsidies to the airport business and the income and expenditure attributable to the levying of airport charges and to operational activities at the airport, as defined in section 30(4) of the Airports Act.

In addition, the permissions for Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted include conditions limiting the maximum amounts which may be levied by way of airport charges. This regulation will operate by means of RPI minus X formulae applying for a five-year period both to BAA's London airport system as a whole and to Heathrow and Gatwick airports individually. In each case, X has been set at 1, reflecting an incentive to increase productivity, and recognising the very substantial airport capital investment programme planned for the next few years.

The conditions take effect from 1 April 1987.

The regulatory framework will protect airlines, their passengers and other airports from abuse by the BAA airports of their market power. The information to be provided in their published accounts will ensure that, if the airports receive any subsidies, these are identified, thus aiding the investigation by the Civil Aviation Authority of complaints of monopolistic or predatory practices. Price regulation will encourage increased cost effectiveness and efficiency at BAA's London airports—key goals of the Government's privatisation programme. It will also provide assurance for BAA's London airport users on the future charges they will face. Airlines using Heathrow airport will retain into the future the benefits of the real reductions in average payments per passenger achieved over the last five years, and airlines using both Heathrow and Gatwick airports should enjoy, on average, further real reductions over the next five years.

Airports, airlines and their passengers can now look forward with confidence to the privatisation of BAA plc, planned for summer 1987, and the benefits which this will bring.

PRIME MINISTER

State Security

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government will now withdraw from proceedings on the Wright memoirs in Australia.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether the statement to the House of 26 March 1981, *Official Report*, columns 1079-85, regarding allegations against the former director general of MI5, Sir Roger Hollis, took account of information provided by Mr. Peter Wright since his retirement from the security services; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) on 18 November at column 432.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether she was consulted about the visit of Mr. Peter Wright to the United Kingdom at the invitation of Lord Rothschild in 1980; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 28 November at columns 387-8.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister when, and by what means, a copy was first obtained on her behalf of Chapman Pincher's book, "Their Trade is Treachery"; and why she formally requested a copy of the book about three days before publication.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 28 November at columns 387-8.

Iran-Iraq (Arms Supplies)

Mr. Latham asked the Prime Minister whether she will outline the policy of Her Majesty's Government regarding the supply of British made weapons or spare parts to either belligerent power in the war between Iran and Iraq; whether this policy has remained in place throughout the conflict; and what steps have been taken to ensure that it has been fully implemented and supervised throughout.

The Prime Minister: From the beginning of the conflict in 1980, we have consistently been impartial and adopted a highly restrictive policy on the supply of defence equipment to Iran and Iraq.

In 1984 this policy was refined to make it clear that we would not sell any defence equipment to either side that could significantly enhance their capacity to prolong or exacerbate the conflict. The revised guidelines were announced to the House by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on 29 October 1985 at column 454. The guidelines are applied rigorously and fairly.

Civil Servants (Appeals)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether she has instituted the system of appeals by civil servants to the head of the Civil Service proposed in the Government's reply to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee's report on "Civil Servants and Ministers: Duties and Responsibilities".

The Prime Minister: In their reply, Cmnd. 9841, to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee report, the Government noted that they accepted in principle the Committee's recommendation that the head of the home Civil Service should be prepared personally to consider appeals from officials in certain circumstances. The reply went on to note that the arrangements and procedures for this right of appeal would be discussed with the Civil Service unions. These discussions are not yet complete.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister why the Solicitor-General was not consulted regarding the public disclosure of extracts of his letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 17 November, at columns 49-50.

EC Grants

Mr. Hancock asked the Prime Minister what has been the value of grants from the European Economic Community to the United Kingdom for non-agricultural uses, for each of the last five years.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the latest public expenditure White Paper, Cmnd. 9702, pages 62 to 65.

Ministerial Titles

Mr. Frank Field asked the Prime Minister if she will take steps to ensure that the list of Ministers published periodically in the *Official Report* contains the correct designation of the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) as the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no responsibility for the contents of the *Official Report*. The October 1986 edition of the "List of Ministerial Responsibilities" published by the Cabinet Office accurately records the courtesy title of my hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon as Minister for Social Security and the Disabled.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Mr. William McCrae

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland with regard to the death of Mr. William McCrae in April 1985, at what stage and on what grounds the procurator fiscal at Inverness decided that there were no suspicious circumstances involved in Mr. McCrae's death.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The procurator fiscal reached a preliminary view that there were no suspicious circumstances after initial investigations had been completed and after receiving the results of the post mortem examination. The grounds on which he reached that view are confidential. His preliminary view, however, was confirmed on completion of full investigations.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland, with regard to the death of Mr. William McCrae in April 1985, at which hospital the post-mortem took place; by whom it was carried out; and to which members of the deceased's family the resulting information was given.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The post-mortem was performed at Raigmore hospital, Inverness by Dr. Richmond; the resulting information was given to the deceased's brother.

EMPLOYMENT

Dock Workers

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Paymaster General what is the reducible minimum of dock workers he envisages being employed in the dock labour scheme; and when he expects it will be reached.

Mr. Lee: These are matters of speculation. The number of registered dock workers has been declining for many years and some further decline is to be expected.

Port Employers (Redundancy Payments)

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the likely cost to the taxpayer of writing off debts by port employers in respect of redundancy payments over the next three years.

Mr. Lee: Arrangements for Government grants to assist with the financing of current and future severances of registered dock workers remain as set out by my hon. Friend and predecessor the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) on 24 October 1985 at column 242. In respect of past severances, the same reply stated:

"Interest and capital repayments on the outstanding Government loans to the National Dock Labour Board of £44·5 million will not be sought pending an opportunity to seek parliamentary approval for the write-off of the loans". No suitable opportunity for this has yet arisen.

Work Test

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General how many of the 1,500 new staff needed to conduct the new availability for work test are in place.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I announced on 28 October that the additional staff required for the new procedure is 1,400. They are being introduced progressively over the next few months. Staff are recruited to meet the needs of new tasks and normal turnover and it is not possible to say how many currently in post relate to availability testing which is part of ordinary benefit assessment work rather than a separate function. However the number of offices who have introduced the new procedures was 386 at 21 November.

Claimant Officers

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Paymaster General if there is to be any link between a claimant officer's pay or bonus or incentive scheme and the reduction in the number of claimants on the unemployment register attributable to the work of that officer.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Claimant advisers are paid in accordance with standard Civil Service rates of pay and do not receive any form of performance bonus or incentive.

I should also refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), on 4 November 1986 at column 805, in which I said that no targets had been set for claimant advisers to reduce the number of people on the unemployment register.

Restart

Mr. Knox asked the Paymaster General how much is being spent in the current financial year on television advertising for the restart programme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Manpower Services Commission expects to spend some £11·3 million on television advertising for the restart campaign this year. The purpose of this expenditure is to prepare people for their counselling session and introduce them to the wide range of programmes on offer at their restart interview, so as to increase the take up of these programmes and improve the motivation and expectations of those who take part in them. The spending on advertising represents less than 1 per cent. of the total expenditure on these programmes.

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General how many long-term unemployed people restart counsellors are expected to interview each week; and what is the average number of interviews given.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A survey of interviews in the nine restart pilot areas earlier this year indicated that a counsellor should be able to carry out about 45 interviews per week on a regular basis and to exceed that number for short periods.

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General what is the average length of a restart interview; and how that average is worked out.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A survey of interviews in the nine restart pilot areas earlier this year indicated that the average length of a restart interview was about 30 minutes. Some lasted an hour, while many were appreciably shorter than the average. The length of each interview will vary according to the circumstances of the individual person whom the interviewer is seeking to help.

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General how many long-term unemployed people there were in the Huddersfield travel-to-work area before the introduction of the restart scheme; and how many have now been interviewed as part of the restart scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Printing Industry, London

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General what information he has about the extent of skill shortages in the London printing industry; and what steps are being taken to remedy them.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General if he will give the figures for unfilled vacancies at Coventry jobcentre, at the latest convenient date, broken down into *(a)* full-time jobs, *(b)* part-time jobs, *(c)* jobs located (i) within the city boundaries, (ii) up to 25 miles from Coventry and (iii) over 25 miles from Coventry and *(d)* placements on Government schemes.

Mr. Lee: Of the vacancies which had been notified to Coventry jobcentre, 1,198 remained unfilled as at 3 October. The detailed information requested is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General if he will give the latest information on the numbers of unemployed workers in Coventry, broken down by age, sex and duration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Following is the requested information, which is available in the Library.

Age and Duration Analysis of the Unemployed for Statistical Date 9 October 1986
Local Authority District Coventry
Males

Duration of Unemployment in weeks	*Under 17*	*17*	*18*	*19*	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45-49*	*50-54*	*55-59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
One or less	14	16	16	23	79	47	33	21	22	19	23	44	32	389
Over 1 and up to 2	13	16	15	32	101	63	30	29	25	10	19	33	29	415
Over 2 and up to 4	26	34	33	42	115	42	38	50	26	27	31	28	31	523
Over 4 and up to 6	105	74	88	49	123	68	45	40	28	20	30	32	23	725
Over 6 and up to 8	39	34	55	21	84	41	23	26	18	22	16	19	13	411
Over 8 and up to 13	9	48	61	57	222	108	77	73	49	48	61	70	97	980
Over 13 and up to 26	31	109	106	113	449	261	157	140	83	93	80	131	127	1,880
Over 26 and up to 39	33	63	77	67	268	166	136	76	85	61	75	94	110	1,311
Over 39 and up to 52	0	41	73	49	202	140	113	88	73	60	64	55	74	1,032
Over 52 and up to 65	0	78	94	71	212	138	86	76	70	60	64	75	48	1,072
Over 65 and up to 78	0	20	52	43	166	92	68	61	39	35	59	48	3	686
Over 78 and up to 104	0	0	44	66	250	169	127	108	99	84	90	85	15	1,137
Over 104 and up to 156	0	0	56	118	412	275	199	175	135	116	124	144	15	1,769
Over 156 and up to 208	0	0	0	29	361	186	144	164	128	104	159	161	7	1,443
Over 208 and up to 260	0	0	0	0	251	184	162	141	150	117	139	180	11	1,335
Over 260	0	0	0	0	177	334	312	298	308	262	268	319	27	2,305
Total Males	270	533	770	780	3,472	2,314	1,750	1,566	1,338	1,138	1,302	1,518	662	17,413

Females

Duration of Unemployment in weeks	*Under 17*	*17*	*18*	*19*	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45-49*	*50-54*	*55-59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
One or less	12	16	19	8	39	24	12	13	16	7	10	5	0	181
Over 1 and up to 2	9	14	19	20	62	33	21	14	8	9	6	8	0	223
Over 2 and up to 4	16	25	39	19	92	52	20	14	13	11	15	9	0	325
Over 4 and up to 6	87	52	95	42	73	43	35	22	16	19	17	18	0	519
Over 6 and up to 8	39	22	40	28	56	37	20	19	10	9	6	4	0	290
Over 8 and up to 13	13	44	64	37	154	91	60	37	28	29	23	17	0	597
Over 13 and up to 26	21	81	87	90	352	202	109	86	57	69	49	44	0	1,247
Over 26 and up to 39	23	46	57	42	201	141	77	51	63	53	44	47	0	845
Over 39 and up to 52	1	31	46	33	146	113	45	46	23	30	31	39	0	584
Over 52 and up to 65	0	79	101	74	106	75	34	29	30	30	20	29	0	607
Over 65 and up to 78	0	14	39	36	58	43	18	9	27	24	33	26	0	327
Over 78 and up to 104	0	1	30	40	98	45	37	27	37	42	46	36	0	439
Over 104 and up to 156	0	0	43	77	161	60	39	37	54	61	61	62	0	655
Over 156 and up to 208	0	0	0	24	135	35	22	13	27	30	66	60	0	412
Over 208 and up to 260	0	0	0	0	107	20	15	16	24	25	49	44	1	301

Duration of Unemployment in weeks	Under 17	17	18	19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60 and over	Total
Over 260	0	0	0	0	65	72	44	18	25	48	66	82	1	421
Total Females	221	425	679	570	1,905	1,086	608	451	458	496	542	530	2	7,973

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of people unemployed in each district ward of Coventry and the number of such people who have been unemployed for one year or more.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the numbers of unemployed claimants at 9 October 1986 in each electoral ward in the Coventry local authority district, and the number of those who have been unemployed for over one year.

	Total unemployed	Unemployed over one year
Bablake	698	272
Binley and Willenhall	1,966	1,081
Cheylesmore	1,008	466
Earlsdon	945	426
Foleshill	2,316	1,180
Henley	2,094	1,182
Holbrook	1,456	680
Longford	1,683	856
Lower Stoke	1,482	773
Radford	1,813	950
St. Michaels	2,378	1,389
Sherbourne	1,155	578
Upper Stoke	1,396	737
Wainbody	412	138
Westwood	1,098	590
Whoberley	1,097	489
Woodlands	1,137	545
Wyken	1,252	578

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General what information he has on the number of construction workers who are unemployed in Coventry and in the west Midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: According to the labour force survey in the spring of 1985, the number of people without jobs and looking for work having left employment at some time within the previous three years with their last job in the construction industry was 23,000 in the west midlands region and 11,000 in the west midlands metropolitan area. Figures for Coventry are not available because of the sampling error that would be involved.

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General what has been the average number of registered job vacancies in Coventry each month of the current year.

Mr. Lee: Information on unfilled vacancies is only available for a specified day in each month. The following table shows numbers of unfilled vacancies at the Coventry jobcentre on these dates in the period January 1986 to October 1986. This information is available in the Library.

	Number
3 January	729
7 February	663
7 March	692
4 April	746
2 May	750
6 June	908
4 July	932
8 August	1,014
5 September	1,005
3 October	1,198

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General if he will list the numbers of people unemployed for each of the last three months in the parliamentary constituency of Birkenhead; and if he will give these figures as a percentage of the total population of the constituency.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The numbers of unemployed claimants in the Birkenhead parliamentary constituency for the last three months are as follows:

	Number
August 1986	9,922
September 1986	9,933
October 1986	9,614

The latest estimates of population for parliamentary constituencies are based on the 1981 census when less than half the population of 90,913 in the Birkenhead constituency were economically active. Estimates of the current population are not available.

TVEI

Mr. O'Brien asked the Paymaster General if resources will be made available for all schools to carry out technical and vocational education initiative courses from September 1987.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Workfare

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General when he expects to complete his study into the workfare scheme in the United States of America; and whether he will publish the full report of this study, including his assessment of its relevance to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: The research study on "Workfare" is continuing and I cannot say yet when it will be completed. I hope that the results will be published in due course.

Parental Leave

Ms. Richardson asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the progress of the European Commission parental leave directive during the last six months.

Mr. Lee: No discussions have taken place since the Commission announced at the June meeting of the Council of Labour and Social Affairs Ministers that, instead of pursuing discussions on the draft directive, they would be proposing a small series of "actions" in the area of sharing family and occupational responsibilities.

Community Programme

Dr. McDonald asked the Paymaster General what was the number of married women in the community programme for each year since it started; and if he will also give the total number of participants.

Mr. Lee: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Students

62. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of students being grant-aided for studies on the development of rural and other co-operative societies at the Co-operative college, Loughborough, giving their country of origin.

Mr. Chris Patten: Forty-five overseas students have received assistance under the aid programme during 1986 for study at the Co-operative college, Loughborough. Twenty-three are there at present. I shall publish in the *Official Report* their country of origin.

Following is the information:

	Number
Africa	
Botswana	4
Cameroon	6
Kenya	3
Liberia	1
Namibia	2
Sudan	1
Swaziland	1
Tanzania	3
Uganda	1
Zimbabwe	2
Asia	
Bangladesh	6
India	2
Nepal	1
Philippines	1
Sri Lanka	1
Thailand	1
Caribbean	
Dominica	3
Jamaica	1
St. Vincent	1
Pacific	
Solomons	2
Tonga	1
Tuvalu	1
Vanuatu	1
TOTAL	45

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Overseas Aid

63. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the proportion of gross domestic product represented by expenditure on overseas aid in 1979; and what is the comparable proportion for 1986-87.

Mr. Chris Patten: Net public expenditure on overseas aid as defined in *British Aid Statistics*, copies of which are in the Library of the House, represented 0·44 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1979 and 0·34 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1985, the latest year for which figures are available.

Children (Immunisation)

64. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the Government's contribution to the United Nations International Emergency Fund project to immunise children against six preventable diseases.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government's normal contribution to UNICEF covers the immunisation programme for children. In addition, we have agreed to contribute £1 million in response to the latest UNICEF appeal for Africa, which will support immunisation programmes.

Pakistan

65. **Mr. Grist** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the size and range of the British aid programme to Pakistan and the level of support provided.

Mr. Chris Patten: We expect to spend about £25 million in Pakistan this year. The main elements of the programme are in irrigation, flood control, agriculture and power.

During my visit last week, I visited the left bank outfall drain project, to which we are contributing £27 million, the Sukkar barrage rehabilitation project to which we are contributing £9·4 million, and the Allama Iqbal open university project. I also announced that we would be providing a further £15 million grant for projects in the power sector. We are also assisting Afghan refugees within Pakistan. I visited some of the camps and announced that the Government would be giving £3·5 million to UNHRC for its work with the refugees.

EC Food Aid

66. **Mr. Sims** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the arrangements for providing European Community food aid to developing countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government have been concerned for some time at the inadequacies of the Community's food aid programme, but the new powers and procedures agreed by the Development Council on 11 November, while not perfect, provide the basis for a great improvement in the future.

Caribbean Basin

Mr. Garrett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit any aid project in any of the countries in the Caribbean basin.

Mr. Chris Patten: Neither my right hon. and learned Friend nor I have at present any plans to visit aid projects in the Caribbean or Central America.

Agriculture

Mr. Madel asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans for increasing the emphasis on agricultural development in the aid programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: During the past two years project aid related to agriculture has increased from 14·5 per cent. of the total project aid programme to 18 per cent. I intend that this trend should accelerate.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Cutlery

Mr. Flannery asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will insist that all cutlery imported into the United Kingdom is clearly marked with the country of origin;

(2) if he will take steps to ensure that manufactured goods imported into the United Kingdom are clearly marked with the country of origin;

(3) what steps he is taking to protect the Sheffield cutlery industry when the country of origin is not clearly marked on imported cutlery.

Mr. Howard: The European Court of Justice has already made it clear that a requirement for imported goods, including cutlery, to be origin-marked irrespective of the circumstances, is incompatible with the EEC treaty.

As regards to the position on misleading indications of origin I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave today to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

Motor Cars

Mr. Malins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing information to him on (i) production, (ii) exports and (iii) imports of motor cars by Japan, the United States of America and the European Community as a whole for the years 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Alan Clark: The readily available information is in the following tables:

Production of passenger cars

Millions

	Japan	*USA*	*European[1] Community(12)*
1970	3·2	6·6	9·9
1975	4·6	6·7	8·8
1980	7·0	6·4	10·1
1985	7·6	8·2	10·8
1986 Jan-June	4·0	4·3	6·0

[1] Not including Ireland and Denmark.
Source: Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

Trade in passenger motor cars[1]

US$ Million

	Japan		*USA*		*European Community (12)*	
	Exps	*Imps*	*Exps*	*Imps*	*Exps*	*Imps*
1970	903·4	54·1	837·2	3,914·3	6,510·6	3,052·2
1975	4,030·0	236·9	2,892·2	7,548·4	13,977·6	8,022·7
1980	16,114·6	452·0	4,030·9	18,017·3	32,4101	22,920·8
1985	25,402·2	538·7	6,102·9	39,088·9	35,075·1	22,158·8
1986 Jan-July	19,281·2	594·1	4,081·4	33,153·8	31,022·8	[2]21,818·4

[1] Standard International Trade Classification (Rev 2), Group 781 (1970 and 1975 Rev 1, 732.1)
[2] January to August
European Community includes intra-Community trade.
Sources: OECD Series "C" (Eurostat and national sources for 1986)

Trade Statistics

Mr. Malins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish (i) a table showing European Community exports to and imports from Japan in United States dollars for each year from 1970 to 1985 with estimates for 1986 together with the percentage change in each from the previous year, with a separate column showing the overall trade balance for each year and (ii) comparable information available to him on United States—Japan trade.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following tables:

European Community Trade with Japan

	Exports		*Imports*		
	Total US$ million	*Change from Previous Year per cent.*	*Total US$ million*	*Change from Previous Year per cent.*	*Crude Balance US$ million*
1970	1,426	26	2,085	46	−659
1971	1,430	0	2,529	21	−1,099
1972	1,740	22	3,373	33	−1,633
1973	2,982	71	4,798	42	−1,816
1974	3,457	16	5,868	22	−2,411
1975	2,905	−16	6,858	17	−3,953
1976	3,265	12	8,604	25	−5,339
1977	3,690	13	10,538	22	−6,848
1978	4,996	35	12,715	21	−7,719
1979	6,791	36	15,077	19	−8,286
1980	6,695	−1	19,701	31	−13,006
1981	6,589	−2	19,462	−1	−12,872
1982	6,466	−2	19,188	−1	−12,722

	Exports Total US$ million	Exports Change from Previous Year per cent.	Imports Total US$ million	Imports Change from Previous Year per cent.	Crude Balance US$ million
1983	6,834	6	19,972	4	−13,138
1984	7,403	8	20,944	5	−13,541
1985	8,032	8	22,684	8	−14,652
1985 January to June	3,744	—	10,445	—	−6,701
1986 January to June	5,178	38	16,180	55	−11,002

Note: European Community (12) throughout.
Source: OECD Series "A".

United States Trade with Japan

Years	Exports US$ million	Change from Previous Year per cent.	Imports US$ million	Change from Previous Year per cent.	Balance US$ million
1970	4,652	33·3	5,875	20·2	−1,223
1971	4,055	−12·8	7,261	23·6	−3,206
1972	4,942	21·9	9,065	24·8	−4,123
1973	8,312	68·2	9,644	6·4	−1,332
1974	10,679	28·5	12,455	29·1	−1,776
1975	9,565	−10·4	11,425	−8·3	−1,860
1976	10,144	6·0	15,683	37·3	−5,539
1977	10,522	3·7	18,902	20·5	−8,380
1978	12,886	22·5	24,934	31·9	−12,048
1979	17,579	36·4	26,398	5·9	−8,819
1980	20,790	18·3	30,866	16·9	−10,076
1981	21,823	5·0	37,655	22·0	−15,832
1982	20,966	−3·9	37,744	0·2	−16,778
1983	21,894	4·4	41,183	9·1	−19,289
1984	23,575	7·7	57,136	38·7	−33,561
1985	22,631	−4·0	68,783	20·4	−46,152
1985 January to June	15,138	—	44,830	—	−29,692
1986 January to June	18,286	20·8	54,756	22·1	−36,470

Source: OECD Series "A".

GNP Statistics

Mr. Malins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will publish a table showing information available to him on (i) the nominal gross national product in United States dollars for Japan, the United States of America and the European Community for the years 1970, 1975, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986, estimated, and (ii) the nominal gross national product of Japan expressed in yen for the same years;

(2) if he will publish a table showing information available to him on (i) nominal gross national product per capita in United States dollars for Japan, the United States of America and the European Community for the years 1970, 1975, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986, estimated, and (ii) nominal gross national product per capita in Japan expressed in yen for the same years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following tables. Estimates for the whole of the European Community in 1986 are not readily available.

Gross domestic product at current prices

	United States of America Billion US dollars	European Community[1] Billion US dollars	Japan Billion US dollars	Japan[2] Thousand billion yen
1970	989·5	681·6	203·7	73·2
1975	1,542·2	1,519·9	499·8	148·2
1980	2,606·6	3,051·7	1,059·3	240·1
1981	2,934·9	2,680·7	1,167·0	256·8
1982	3,045·3	2,574·1	1,082·5	269·7
1983	3,275·7	2,484·4	1,180·0	280·6
1984	3,634·6	2,364·1	1,255·0	298·6
1985	3,840·7	2,439·9	1,329·3	317·3
1986	[3]4,050	. .	[4]1,840	[4]330

. . Not readily available.
[1] Present membership throughout.
[2] Gross National Product.
[3] Estimate based on 9 months data.
[4] Estimate based on 6 months data.
Source:
OECD National Accounts.
OECD Main Economic Indicators.

Gross domestic product per capita at current prices

	United States of America US dollars	European Community[1] US dollars	Japan US dollars	Japan[2] Thousand yen
1970	4,826	2,247	1,964	706
1975	7,141	4,865	4,481	1,329
1980	11,446	9,599	9,069	2,056
1981	12,758	8,399	9,918	2,183
1982	13,097	8,045	9,139	2,277

	United States of America US dollars	European Community[1] US dollars	Japan US dollars	Japan[2] Thousand yen
1983	13,951	7,748	9,894	2,353
1984	15,335	7,358	10,457	2,488
1985	[3]16,051	7,575	11,008	2,628
1986	[3]16,900	. .	[4]15,200	[4]2,710

. . Not readily available.
[1] Present membership throughout.
[2] Gross National Product.
[3] Estimate based on 9 months data.
[4] Estimate based on 6 months data.
Source:
OECD National Accounts.
OECD Main Economic Indicators.

Mr. Malins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing information available to him on the annual growth of real gross national product, both by annual gross domestic product index and by growth rate for Japan, the United States of America and the European Community as a whole for every year since 1970, including estimates for 1986.

Mr. Alan Clark: Data for the European Community as a whole in 1986 are not readily available. The other information is in the following table.

Gross Domestic Product

Index 1980 = 100

	USA	Change on previous year percentage	European Community (12)	Change on previous year percentage	Japan	Change on previous year percentage
1970	74·9	−0·3	74·9	4·8	63·6	9·5
1971	77·3	3·2	77·5	3·5	66·2	4·1
1972	81·4	5·4	80·9	4·4	71·8	8·4
1973	86·0	5·7	85·8	6·1	77·5	7·9
1974	85·3	−0·9	87·3	1·7	76·5	−1·2
1975	84·6	−0·8	86·5	−0·9	78·5	2·6
1976	88·6	4·7	90·8	5·0	82·3	4·8
1977	93·5	5·5	93·0	2·4	86·6	5·3
1978	97·9	4·7	95·9	3·1	91·0	5·1
1979	100·4	2·6	99·0	3·2	95·7	5·2
1980	100·0	−0·4	100·0	1·0	100·0	4·4
1981	103·4	3·4	99·8	−0·2	103·9	3·9
1982	100·3	−3·0	100·4	0·6	106·8	2·8
1983	103·3	2·9	101·7	1·3	110·2	3·2
1984	110·7	7·2	103·8	2·1	115·7	5·0
1985	113·1	2·2	106·0	2·1	121·0	4·6
1986	[1]115·1	[1]2·7	. .	. .	[2]123·0	[2]2·7

[1] Estimated on three quarters data.
[2] Estimated on first half data.
. . Not readily available.
Source:
OECD National Accounts.
OECD Main Economic Indicators.

Radio Transmitter, Eastcote

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, in the light of the continued interference to the radio, television and telephone reception of the residents in Tudor Close, Eastcote, Middlesex from an amateur radio transmitter in the neighbourhood, he will now use his powers permanently to revoke the licence of this amateur radio transmitter.

Mr. Butcher: Reports of further reception problems in the locality have been received recently and are being investigated by the Department's radio investigation service. However, the amateur radio station in question still remains closed down pending the outcome of licence variation proceedings. I am now awaiting the results of exhaustive tests on the station that have been conducted by the radio investigation service jointly with representatives of the radio amateur concerned. When the report on these tests have been received and assessed a decision will be made as to what restrictions, if any, need to be applied to the amateur's licence.

Demon Pressure Washers

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he hopes to make a decision on regional selective assistance to Demon Pressure Washers, Ivybridge, Devon; and if he will explain the 11-month delay in processing the application.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Department of Trade and Industry has not received a formal application for regional

selective assistance from Demon Pressure Washers, Ivybridge, Devon. I understand that the company has discussed a potential application with the Department's regional officials on a number of occasions during the past year, but has yet to submit a fully documented application.

Takeovers

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is his policy towards takeovers of public limited companies by management groups from outside such companies;

(2) if the Director General of Fair Trading has provided him with information about the management buy-in of Simon Engineering plc by means of an offer by a new management and institutional consortium through Valuedale plc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Invisible Exports

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to what factors he attributes the increase in the invisibles trade surplus in the month of October; and whether there have been any changes in methodology or statistical assumption in the calculation of the invisibles balance.

Mr. Alan Clark: The projection of the invisible balance for October is based on the same methodolgy as previous figures prepared at this stage of the quarterly cycle of balance of payments statistics. It reflects the latest evidence on trends in the main components of the invisible account available up to the middle of November on interest and exchange rate movements since the third quarter. It is rounded to the nearest £100 million to emphasise its approximate nature.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the basis for the upward revision of the invisibles balance for the months of July, August and September; when was the last occasion on which the balance for the previous quarter was revised upward by one third; and whether there has been any previous occasion on which the projected monthly figures for the invisibles balance were revised in advance of the estimate for the full quarter.

Mr. Alan Clark: The revision to the monthly figures for July, August and September was based on the latest assessment of the main credit and debit flows in the invisible account in the third quarter based on information received from surveys of firms' overseas transactions, returns from financial institutions, etc by the middle of November.

The projected balance has frequently been revised upwards or downwards by £100 million when firm information becomes available, and in the third quarter of 1984 the initial projection of £250 million was later revised to £455 million.

The current practice is not to revise the quarterly projection until the quarterly figures are published in the full balance of payments accounts unless there is strong evidence that a substantial revision is required.

For the previous quarters of 1986, the indications were that the actual quarterly figures were reasonably close to the projection, allowing for rounding, but for the third quarter a significantly higher level was indicated.

Anti-pollution Technology

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will estimate the contribution to the United Kingdom economy and the export value of British anti-pollution technology, in particular catalytic converters for cars and gas cleaning equipment for power stations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will provide estimates of the employment currently produced by, and reliant on, anti-pollution technology in Britain, in particular the production of catalytic converters for cars and gas cleaning equipment for power stations; and if he envisages any growth in this sector.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Anti-pollution equipment provides important opportunities for British industry. Catalytic converters for cars are manufactured for domestic consumption and export. The Government's recent decision to fit flue gas desulphurisation equipment to certain power stations will provide further opportunities. No estimates are yet available of the precise effect on employment or exports.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at what time and on what date his predecessor, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) became aware that the Solicitor-General was contemplating writing to the then Defence Secretary regarding alleged material inaccuracies in relation to Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Westland Helicopters.

Mr. Channon: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to him by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 17 November, at columns 49-50.

NEDC (Research and Development)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet the National Economic Development Council to discuss research and development funding.

Mr. Butcher: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

EC (Regional Fund)

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will produce a table in the *Official Report* showing the regional distribution of the European Economic Community's regional fund's project aid and showing the percentage allocation to Wales, Scotland, the west midlands, the east midlands, the north-west, Northern Ireland, Yorkshire and Humberside, the north and the south-west for each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I will write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Moneylending (Licences)

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many money lending licence applications have been received and how many licences issued over the current year, under the Consumer Credit Act 1974;

(2) how many money lending licence applications have been received and how many licences issued over the current year under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 and in the Bristol district council area;

(3) how many money lenders licences the Director General of Fair Trading has suspended during the current year; and for what reason;

(4) how many money lenders licences the Director General of Fair Trading has suspended during the current year in the Bristol district council area; and for what reasons;

(5) how many current money lending licences have been issued under the Consumer Credit Act 1974.

Mr. Howard: The licensing of moneylenders under the Consumer Credit Act is the direct responsibility of the Director General of Fair Trading and I will ask him to write to the right hon. Member.

Trade Descriptions

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) why he has decided to seek to repeal the Trade Descriptions Act 1972; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he will take to ensure that consumers are aware of the country of origin of products following the repeal of the Trade Descriptions Act 1972; and if he will make a statement;

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from the European Economic Community seeking the repeal of the Trades Descriptions Act 1972; whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to comply with those representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Earlier this year, the European Commission served formal notice, under article 169 of the EEC treaty, of its intention to open infraction proceedings against the United Kingdom in connection with the Trade Descriptions Act 1972. The Commission regard the Act as incompatible with article 30 of the treaty.

After careful consideration of the legal position, in particular the earlier judgment of the European Court of Justice against the Trade Descriptions (Origin Marking) (Miscellaneous Goods) Order 1981, the Government reluctantly concluded that the United Kingdom could not reasonably expect successfully to defend a case against the 1972 Act in the court. The Government accordingly informed the Committee of their intention to repeal the Act, and provision for this is made in the Consumer Protection Bill which is now before another place.

The Government remain of the view that consumers are entitled to protection against being misled about the origin of the goods they purchase and has already informed consumer and trade associations of its intention to explore with them the possibility of an order under section 8 of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, to supplement the basic prohibition against false or misleading indications of origin in that Act, which itself is not in question. The Government will welcome any suggestions for such an order consistent with the requirements of Community law.

It is also the Government's intention that the entry into force of the repeal of the 1972 Act should coincide with that of any order providing for successor arrangements. Nothing in these developments affects in any way the right of British manufacturers to mark their goods "Made in Britain", nor the existing penalties for false statements of origin.

Rolls-Royce plc

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, following his answer of 24 November, *Official Report*, columns 8-9, on the arrangements for employees of Rolls-Royce plc to purchase shares in the offer for sale, what percentage of the offered shares could be purchased if all employees availed themselves of the special arrangements, excluding the 5 per cent. maximum of priority applications.

Mr. Pattie: The figure requested cannot be calculated until the offer price of the shares has been decided. A maximum of 5 per cent. of the offered shares will be reserved for the elements of the offer to which the hon. Member refers.

Telecommunications Apparatus (Approval)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to authorise the Director General of Telecommunications to approve telecommunication maintenance contractors to approve telecommunications apparatus and to designate standards, as provided for in the Telecommunications Act 1984.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has today authorised the Director General of Telecommunications, under sections 20 and 22 of the Telecommunications Act 1984, to approve telecommunication maintenance contractors; to approve apparatus for connection to telecommunication systems; and to designate telecommunication standards.

Shipbuilding (Intervention Fund)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if any European shipbuilding intervention and payments have been made to private shipbuilding yards; and if he will list any such payments and the shipbuilding yards concerned.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 November 1986, c. 376]: Since the shipbuilding intervention fund scheme began in 1977, the following payments have been made to shipbuilding yards in private ownership:

Richards (Shipbuilders) Ltd.—£5,869,247 in respect of 11 ships.
Cochranes (Shipbuilders) Ltd.—£5,029,459 in respect of 20 ships.
Richard Dunston Ltd.—£3,600,000 in respect of 10 ships.
McTay Marine Ltd.—£2,628,479 in respect of 17 ships.
James Cook Ltd.—£328,273 in respect of 2 ships.
Cubow Ltd.—£197,110 in respect of 2 ships.
G. &. O. Brown Ltd.—£137,808 in respect of 2 ships.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if any intervention fund payments have been, or are to be made for shiprepair work.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 November 1986, c. 376]: Under the existing European Council directive on state aid to shipbuilding, shipbuilding intervention fund may not be used to support repairing. The draft directive now being discussed makes no provision for ship-repair contracts to receive production aid of this kind.

Cigarette Vending Machines

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is satisfied with the operation of the regulations governing cigarette vending machines and, in particular, measures to deter juveniles from using them.

Mrs. Currie: I have been asked to reply. The Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986 obliges the court to order those responsible for tobacco vending machines to prevent them being used by young people or to remove them. A circular drawing attention to these provisions was issued on 8 October, the day the Act came into force, to bodies responsible for enforcing the law and for the educational and social well being of young people. A copy was placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Tests (Radiation)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the survey by the National Radiological Board of service men who took part in the nuclear tests was set up; who were the members of the board; what percentage of those considered to be at risk were surveyed; on what criteria it was decided who was at risk; and when the results of the survey are expected.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The composition of the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) in October 1983 when the study commenced was as follows:

Sir Frederick Dainton (Chairman)
Mr. A. M. Allen
Professor R. J. Berry
Dr. J. S. Charlton
Professor K. M. Clayton
Professor K. T. Evans
Professor D. J. Jackson
Dr. R. Owen
Professor D. W. Pearce
Professor T. R. E. Southwood
Professor E. M. McGirr
Professor R. E. Steiner
Dr. J. W. Laws

Details of all United Kingdom personnel whom it is known may have participated including the 5,000 or so for whom radiation dose records are available, have been supplied to the NRPB. It is for the NRPB to decide the criteria for inclusion in the study.

The findings of the study are expected to be available in spring of next year.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to set up a judicial inquiry into the current health of ex-service men who took part in the nuclear tests.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Any further inquiry would not be appropriate whilst the independent study by the National Radiological Protection Board is in train.

Crown Proceedings Act 1947

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make a statement on section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947.

Mr. Freeman: We are not yet able to set a date for an announcement of the outcome of our review of section 10. I can however confirm that such an announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Departmental Computers

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a list showing for each Cray computer system in his Department *(a)* the year and month of ordering and *(b)* the year and month of acceptance.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following information is based upon dates of final order letters, and formal written acceptances. Broader conventions underlay the information that I gave on 30 October at c. *263-4* and account for the discrepancies.

Model	*a. Ordered*	*b. Accepted*
Cray 1A	October 1978	April 1979
Cray 1S	November 1982	February 1983
Cray 1S	January 1983	February 1984
Cray XMP	March 1983	January 1984

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information can be given on the approximate purchase costs of each Cray computer system in his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is a long-standing practice of the Ministry of Defence to treat details of individual contract prices as commercially confidential.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any information has been received by his Department from United States authorities on the operational specifications of Cray computers used for research and development purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will publish a list showing for each year since 1979 the number and types of DEC VAX computers *(a)* on order for use at his Department's research and development establishments and *(b)* operational at his Department's research and development establishments, specifying the relevant establishment in each case;

(2) if he will publish a list showing for each year since 1979 the numbers and types of IBM computers *(a)* on order for use at his Department's research and development establishments and *(b)* operational at his Department's research and development establishments, specifying the relevant establishment in each case.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Noble Friend, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence, further to his reply of 17 November, *Official Report*,

column 62, to the hon. Member for Yeovil, if he will describe the composition and membership of the evaluation team for each Cray computer system in his Department; if he will describe the functions of such teams; if he will list the dates each such team was formed; and whether each such team has completed its functions.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: These teams were composed of representatives of the user establishment, the MOD IT project support directorate, and project and contract staff of the Central Computer Telecommunications Authority (CCTA) of HM Treasury. The functions of the teams were to identify user requirements, discuss them with potential suppliers, and then evaluate the tenders and place the contract. The teams were formed at AWRE in 1977 and 1983, RAE and RARDE in 1981. All the teams have completed their functions.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated spending on outside consultancy contracts by his Department's research and development establishments in the current year; whether this estimated spending includes any consultancy advice on computer systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated expenditure on separately identifiable outside consultancy contracts by the MOD research establishments in 1986-87 is £1,487,000. This figure includes £368,000 of expenditure on advice on computer systems.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the spending on outside consultancy contracts by his Department's research and development establishments in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The expenditure since 1979 on separately identifiable consultancy contracts by the MOD research establishments is:

Year	*£*
1979-80	60,000
1980-81	62,000
1981-82	60,000
1982-83	583,000
1983-84	1,563,000
1984-85	1,159,000
1985-86	1,271,000
1986-87	1,487,000

Airborne Early Warning System

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent the Boeing offset offer for an airborne early warning system includes the large orders already placed or in the pipeline *(a)* at Shorts of Belfast for civil airliner parts and *(b)* at Rolls-Royce for engines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The precise way in which the Boeing company proposes to fulfil its offset commitment in the event that we decide to buy the E-3A airborne early warning system is a matter for it, but we would seek to ensure that as high a percentage as possible of such work was related to high technology defence industry.

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, in the financial comparison between the Nimrod and AWACS airborne surveillance systems, both tenders will be treated equally in respect of currency exchange, taxes and funding costs; what allowance he proposes to make for the airborne warning and control system purchase being in United States dollars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The assessment of the cost of the two systems has been done with due regard to all these factors.

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to how many right hon. and hon. Members have flown on the airborne warning and control system aircraft since they have been in service with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information sought is not available.

Iran (Arms Sales)

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date arms sales to Iran were restarted; if he will list (i) items supplied to Iran since 1979, (ii) the suppliers and (iii) the value of those items; whether they would be used in that country's war with Iraq; and if the United States Government was consulted at any stage.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No general embargo has been imposed upon the supply of defence or defence-related equipment to Iran. Deliveries were suspended at the time of the Iranian revolution and during the United States hostage crisis. Since then restrictions on defence exports have been applied. Currently these are as set out in the answer given on 29 October 1985 by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in reply to a question by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel).

It has been the consistent policy of this and previous Administrations not to reveal details of specific defence exports to other countries or their consideration.

Chile

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many visits have been made by Chilean Government representatives, or defence personnel, to naval bases in the United Kingdom in the last five years.

Mr. Stanley: This information is not readily available and could not be compiled except at disproportionate cost.

USS Nathanael Greene

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what information is available to his Department on whether the USS Nathanael Greene proceeded to Holy Loch under nuclear propulsion or conventional propulsion following the recent incident in which it sustained damage; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the United States authorities informed his Department of any release of radioactive substances by the USS Nathanael Greene in United Kingdom waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I understand that the nuclear propulsion system of the USS Nathanael Greene was not damaged in the incident on 13 March 1986; that there was no release of radioactive substances; and that the boat proceeded under nuclear power to the Holy Loch.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans Her Majesty's Government have for researching strategic defence initiative technologies designed specifically to provide extra protection from ballistic missile attack for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As part of the United Kingdom's participation in the United States SDI research programme a study is currently being undertaken into the systems that would be necessary for the integrated defence of Europe within the context of a strategic defence system for the defence of the continentla United States and its Allies against ballistic missiles. This study is known as the European architecture study.

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest information as to the proportion of the United States defence budget for the financial years ending 1986 and 1987 which is assigned to researching strategic defence initiative technologies designed specifically to provide extra protection from ballistic missile attack from Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The SDI research programme accounts for about 1 per cent. of the United States defence budget in fiscal years 1986 and 1987. Much of the programme would be relevant to the problem of defending Europe against ballistic missile attack as well as the United States.

SCOTLAND

Drink Driving

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he is taking during the current year to deter the drinking driver and to reduce his risk of involvement in alcohol-related road traffic accidents.

Mr. Ancram: The Government's road safety publicity campaign aims at making people more aware of the dangers of drinking and driving. It has been focused on specific times of year, and the December phase this year will again convey a clear cut message: "If you drink and drive you're a menace to society."

In addition, as part of European Road Safety Year, police forces in Scotland have initiated a policy of breath-testing, where practicable, every driver and motorcycle rider involved in a road acciden'

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps have been taken to achieve equal opportunities throughout his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Since January 1984 an officer within my Department has been designated as equal opportunities officer with responsibility for co-ordinating policy and advising on all equal opportunity matters concerning racial and sexual discrimination.

The implementation of the programme of action on equal opportunities for women in the Civil Service is being progressed in my Department by a joint management and trade union group and advice is given to staff as matters are agreed by the group.

Cumbernauld Development Corporation

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce any new appointments to the board of Cumbernauld Development Corporation.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 27 November the appointment of Mr. David W. Mitchell as chairman of Cumbernauld Development Corporation with effect from 1 January 1987. A further announcement about other appointments to the corporation will be made shortly.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current waiting list for hospitals administered by the Greater Glasgow health board and Lanarkshire health board.

Mr. John MacKay: The numbers on waiting lists as at 30 September 1985, the lastest year for which statistics are available, are as follows:

	Numbers
Greater Glasgow Health Board	16,006
Lanarkshire Health Board	6,605

These figures show continuing reductions from 1983 and 1984.

AIDS

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his projected estimate of the numbers of persons suffering from acquired immune deficiency sydrome over the next five years in each health board area;

(2) what is his projected estimate of babies who will be born with the acquired immune deficiency syndrome virus over the next five years in each of the health board areas.

Mr. John Mackay: I regret that it is not possible to provide such estimates.

New Towns (Houses)

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses, formerly owned by the development corporations, have been sold in each of the new towns over the past five years.

Mr. Lang: The information is as follows:

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Cumbernauld	565	203	419	448	311
East Kilbride	832	501	874	614	575
Glenrothes	279	379	635	508	378
Irvine	21	55	93	98	84
Livingston	148	224	369	295	225

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been realised from the sale of assets, other than housing, in each of the new towns between 1980 and 1985.

Mr. Lang: Details of receipts from assets, other than housing, sold by the Scottish new town development corporations for the financial years 1980-81 to 1985-86 are given in the following table.

Receipts from Non-Housing Assets Sold by New Town Development Corporations

(£ million)

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-4*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Cumbernauld	2·5	0·3	0·5	0·7	1·1	1·9
East Kilbride	3·1	0·8	0·4	0·8	0·3	1·6
Glenrothes	1·0	0·3	1·1	2·5	1·4	1·5
Irvine	1·3	1·4	0·2	—	3·1	4·8
Livingston	1·6	1·9	1·9	1·2	1·4	1·6

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of people employed in manufacturing industry in Kilmarnock and Loudoun in 1979; and what are the latest available figures.

Mr. Lang: Comprehensive estimates fo the number of people working in manufacturing industry in Kilmarnock and Loudaun are not available. However, the estimated number of those working in manufacturing plants with over 10 employees in the Kilmarnock travel-to-work area in 1979 was 13,800 and in 1985, 8,600. These estimates are taken from the regional data system (RDS). No reliable information is available from this source for plants with less than 10 employees. The estimate for 1985 is provisional.

Industry Acts (Assistance)

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the amount of money paid to companies under the Industry Acts in Kilmarnock and Loudoun since 1983; and how many jobs were either created or protected as a result.

Mr. Lang: In the period between the start of 1983 and 31 October 1986, total payments of regional selective assistance (RSA) to companies in the Kilmarnock and Loudoun parliamentary constituency amounted to £951,000. Comprehensive information on payments of regional development grant (RDG) on a constituency basis is not available. However, since 1983, payments of RDG exceeding £25,000 to firms in the Kilmarnock employment local office area amounted to over £2·3 million. Information on jobs created or safeguarded in the period since 1983 as a result of awards of RDG and RSA and on payments for other forms of assistance under the Industry Acts is not readily available.

Unemployment (Kilmarnock and Loudoun)

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Kilmarnock and Loudoun have been unemployed for one year or more.

Mr. Lang: On 9 October 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of claimants who had been unemployed for one year or more in Kilmarnock and Loudoun local authority district was 2,188. This informaton is available in the Library.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of people unemployed in Kilmarnock and Loudoun district at the latest available date; what percentage rate this implies; and what are the comparable rates for Ayrshire and Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the precise form requested. On 9 October 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of unemployed claimants in Kilmarnock and Loudoun local authority district totalled 5,479. Unemployment rates are not calculated for local authority districts or for Ayrshire. However, for the Kilmarnock travel-to-work area, the unemployment rate on the same date was 17·3 per cent.; the equivalent rates for Strathclyde region and Scotland were 18·3 per cent. and 15·6 per cent. respectively.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the average length of time a person spends on the unemployment register in Kilmarnock and Loudoun in each year since 1980.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The table below relates to unemployed claimants who had completed a period of unemployment in the Kilmarnock and Loudoun local authority district in October each year from 1983.

Kilmarnock and Loudoun local authority district

Year (October)	*Median length of unemployment (weeks)*
1983	9·7
1984	9·5
1985	10·8
1986	14·2

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the average number of people unemployed annually in Kilmarnock and Loudoun in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The average number of people unemployed in the Kilmarnock travel-to-work area in each year since 1979 is shown in the table below. This information is available in the Library. Due to the various changes which have taken place in the compilation of the unemployment statistics the figures are not directly comparable.

Kilmarnock travel-to-work area

Year	*Average number of unemployed*
1979	3,263
1980	4,704
1981	5,923
1982	6,955
1983	5,765
1984	5,621
1985	5,816
1986[1]	5,703

[1] 10 months only

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many school leavers under the age of 18 years have never had a job since leaving school in Kilmarnock and Loudoun.

Mr. Lang: On 9 October 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of school leavers under the age of 18 years who had never had a job since leaving school in Kilmarnock and Loudoun local authority district totalled 368. This information is available in the Library.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers in each district council ward in Kilmarnock and Loudoun classified as economically active in the 1981 census.

Mr. Lang: The numbers of people, aged 16 or over and usually resident in each ward who were economically active at the time of the 1981 census are given below.

Kilmarnock and Loudoun district ward
Numbers usually resident, economically active, aged 16 plus

	Numbers
DW 1	2,347
DW 2	1,436
DW 3	2,301
DW 4	1,955
DW 5	2,360
DW 6	2,537
DW 7	1,817
DW 8	1,906
DW 9	2,003
DW10	1,878
DW11	2,267
DW12	2,308
DW13	2,178
DW14	2,346
DW15	2,125
DW16	2,214
DW17	2,283
DW18	2,101

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the latest unemployment figures for Kilmarnock and Loudoun in the *Official Report* by district council ward boundary.

Mr. Lang: I am arranging for this information to be printed in the *Official Report* today.

On 9 October 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed claimants in each electoral ward of Kilmarnock and Loudoun local authority district was as shown in the table. This information is available in the Library.

Kilmarnock and Loudoun local authority district

Ward name	*Unemployed claimants*
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 1	197
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 2	395
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 3	446
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 4	300
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 5	314
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 6	362
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 7	259
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 8	145
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 9	302
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 10	253
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 11	256
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 12	536
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 13	248
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 14	317
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 15	349
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 16	264
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 17	315
Kilmarnock and Loudoun No. 18	221
TOTAL	5,479

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish figures showing unemployment by age group in Kilmarnock and Loudoun.

Mr. Lang: On 9 October 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed claimants by age group in the Kilmarnock and Loudoun local authority district was as shown in the table. This information is available in the Library.

Kilmarnock and Loudoun local authority district

Age group	*Unemployed claimants*
Under 17	162
17	318
18	296
19	224
20 to 24	1,055
25 to 29	752
30 to 34	563
35 to 39	482
40 to 44	369
45 to 49	371
50 to 54	402
55 to 59	411
60 and over	74
TOTAL	5,479

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average level of unemployment in Kilmarnock and Loudoun in *(a)* 1966, *(b)* 1976 and *(c)* May 1979; and how this compares with the current figures.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The average number of people unemployed in the Kilmarnock travel-to-work area for the periods specified was as shown in the table below. Due to various changes which have taken place in the compilation of the statistics, the figures are not comparable.

Average unemployment in Kilmarnock travel to work area

Year	*Number unemployed*
1966	906
1976	2,151
May 1979	2,937
October 1986	5,479

Housing (Kilmarnock and Loudoun)

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses have been started or completed in the public and private sector in Kilmarnock and Loudoun, and Ayrshire in each year since 1979.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is set out in the table for Kilmarnock and Loudoun district. This information is not collected centrally for areas other than district council areas.

House starts and completions, Kilmarnock and Loudoun district

Year	Starts		Completions	
	Public Sector	Private Sector	Public Sector	Private Sector
1979	40	157	226	317
1980	—	84	62	110
1981	—	47	27	63
1982	52	48	—	40
1983	21	101	40	60
1984	—	83	33	68
1985	—	242	—	133

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the level of housing support grant to Kilmarnock and Loudoun in each year since 1979; and if he will express such figures at constant prices.

Mr. Ancram: The information is given in the table below:

Housing Support Grant Paid (£)

Year	At Outturn Prices	At 1985-86 [1]Averages Prices
1979-80	3,584,819	5,786,446
1980-81	4,168,590	5,672,014
1981-82	1,885,952	2,335,776
1982-83	298,335	344,573
1983-84	—	—
1984-85	—	—
1985-86	—	—

[1] Using GDP Deflators.

Job Vacancies

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current number of vacancies for jobs in *(a)* Kilmarnock and Loudoun, and *(b)* Ayrshire.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The table below shows the number of vacancies notified to jobcentres in Ayrshire which remained unfilled on 3 October 1986. The number of vacancies notified to jobcentres nationally is estimated to be only one third of existing vacancies overall.

Jobcentre	Vacancies unfilled
Ayr	296
Cumnock	85
Girvan	25
Irvine	332
Kilbirnie	32
Kilmarnock	403
Kilwinning	86
Largs	42
Saltcoats	191
Troon	53

Amphibians and Reptiles

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to improve the protection of amphibians and reptiles, especially the common lizard, slow worm, grass snake and adder; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him today on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Local Government

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a list of those responding *(a)* in favour and *(b)* against the proposals in the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government", and those responding to the consultation paper, "Community Charge: Operational Issues."

Mr. Ancram: I have placed in the Library of the House the following list of all the organisations which responded to the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) and to the consultation paper, "Community Charge: Operational Issues." Most of the responses to the Green Paper include comments in favour of some of the detailed proposals and against others. It is not therefore possible to provide separate lists in the form requested.

RESPONSES TO THE GREEN PAPER 'PAYING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT' (CMND. 9714)

Local Authorities

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)

Regional Councils

Borders
Fife
Grampian
Highland
Lothian
Strathclyde
Tayside

District Councils

Angus
Argyll and Bute
Badenoch and Strathspey
Bearsden and Milngavie
Berwickshire
Caithness
Clydebank
Clydesdale
Cumnock and Doon Valley
Dumbarton
Dundee City
Edinburgh City
Ettrick and Lauderdale
Glasgow
Inverclyde
Kilmarnock and Loudoun
Kincardine and Deeside
Midlothian
Moray
Motherwell
North East Fife
Roxburgh
Stewartry
Stirling
Strathkelvin
Sutherland
Wigtown

Island Councils

Orkney
Shetland
Western Isles

Community Councils

Aithsting and Sandsting, Shetland
Avich and Kilchrenan, Argyll
Bearsden North
Burra and Tronda, Shetland
Croy
Cumbernauld
Cumbrae
Delting, Shetland
Fetlar, Shetland
Govan
Gulberwick, Quarff & Cunningsburgh, Shetland

Helensburg
Knightswood
Lenzie
Lerwick, Shetland
Loanhead
Northmavine, Shetland
Sandness and Wallis, Shetland
Sandwick, Shetland
Stepps
Unst, Shetland
Westfield (Cumbernauld)

Ratepayer organisations and tenants' associations
Ayr and District Ratepayers' Association
Clarkston and Busby Ratepayers' Association
Cross Stobs/Boylestone Ratepayers' Committee (Glasgow)
Esk Place Tenants' Association (Dalkeith)
Federated Associations of Owner-Occupiers of Glasgow
Federation of Scottish Ratepayers
Garscadden Tenants' Association (Glasgow)
Helensburgh and District Ratepayers' Association
Lower Woodburn Tenants' Association (Dalkeith)
Muirend and Netherlee Residents' Association (Glasgow)
Murrayburn Tenants' Association (Edinburgh)
Ratepayers Action Group Executive—Lothian (RAGE)
Renfrew Owner Occupiers' Association
Sandyhills Owner-Occupiers' Association (Glasgow)
Scottish Federation of Owner-Occupiers
Wakefield Ratepayers' Association
Wester Hailes Representative Council

Political parties and groups
Dunfermline West Conservative Association
Edinburgh Central Liberal Association
Labour Party (Scottish Council)
North CunninghameConservative Association
Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association (Central and Southern Area Council)
Scottish Liberal Party
Scottish National Party
Scottish National Party (Rates Action Group)
SDP
South Aberdeen Conservative Association
Stirling District Council Conservative Group

Professional bodies
Association of Valuation Office Valuers
British Association of Social Workers (Scottish Committee)
Chartered Association of Certified Accountants (Scottish Committee)
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)
Institute of Cost and Management Accountants
Law Society of Scotland
Rating Officers' Guild
Rating Surveyors' Association
Rating and Valuation Association
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (Scottish Branch)
Scottish Assessors' Association
Scottish Universities Joint Committee on Valuation and Rating
Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Scottish Branch) (SOLACE)

Trade unions and trades councils etc.
Co-operative Union Ltd. (Parliamentary Committee)
Edinburgh and District Trades Council
Inland Revenue Staff Federation
Moray Trades Council
NALGO—Midlothian
NALGO—Scottish District Local Government Committee
National Farmers Union (Scotland)
NUS (Scotland)
NUPE (Scottish Office)
STUC
University of St. Andrews Students' Association

Social welfare and other organisations
Central Council of Physical Recreation
Church of Scotland (Law Department)
Church of Scotland (Committee on Church and Nation)
Council of Social Service (Stirling)
Edinburgh Council of Social Service
Grampian Welfare Rights Project
Harris Council of Social Service
Jobs Action Group, Irvine
National Council of Women
National League of the Blind and Disabled
National Trust for Scotland
Queensberry House Hospital, Edinburgh
Scottish Arts Council
Scottish Consumer Council
Scottish Convention of Women
Scottish Council for Community and Voluntary Organisations
Scottish Council of Women's Citizens' Associations
Scottish Library Association
Scottish Sports Association
Scottish Sports Council
Scottish Age Concern

Trade associations and other economic organisations
Association of British Riding Schools
Association of Scottish Chambers of Commerce
Association of Scottish Self-Caterers
Ayrshire Chamber of Industry
British Aggregate and Construction Materials Industries Association
British Horse Society
British Hotels, Restaurants and Caterers' Association
British Paper and Board Industry Federation
British Retailers' Association
CBI (Scottish Office)
Campaign against the Unfair Rating Burden (CURB)
Chemical Industries Association Ltd.
Dundee and Tayside Chamber of Commerce
Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce
Forum of Private Business
Gatehouse of Fleet Chamber of Trade
Kirkwall Chamber of Commerce
Lerwick Harbour Trust
National Association of Steel Stockholders
National Association of Warehouse Keepers
National Chamber of Trade
National Federation of Retail Newsagents
National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses
National Federation of Self Employed and Small Bussinesses (Borders branch)
National Federation of Site Owners
Perthshire Chamber of Commerce
Property Owners and Factors Association (Scotland)
Scotch Whisky Association
Scottish Council Development and Industry
Scottish Landowners' Federation
Scottish Licensed Trade Association
Scottish Recreational Land Association
Shetland Chamber of Commerce
Shetland Retailers' Association
UK Agricultural Supply Trade Association

Individual Businesses and Public Bodies
Bowfield Country Club (Renfrewshire)
British Airports Authority
BP
Esso Chemicals (Mossmorran)
Fuller Peiser (Chartered Surveyors)
House of Fraser
ICI
Livingston Development Corporation
Royal Highland and Agricultural Society
Shell UK Ltd
Sullom Voe Terminal Association
There were in addition 522 responses from individuals.

RESPONSES TO THE "COMMUNITY CHARGE: OPERATIONAL ISSUES"
Local authorities
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

Regional Councils
Central Regional Council

Fife Regional Council
Grampian Regional Council
Highland Regional Council
Lothian Regional Council
Tayside Regional Council

District Councils
Argyll & Bute District Council
City of Dundee District Council
City of Edinburgh District Council
Kincardine and Deeside District Council
Kyle and Carrick District Council

Educational Bodies
Aberdeen College of Education
Craigie College of Education
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Education
Dundee College of Education
Dundee College of Technology
Dunfermline College of Physical Education
Edinburgh College of Art
Glasgow College of Technology
Glasgow School of Art
Joint Committee of Colleges of Education in Scotland
Jordanhill College of Education
Leith Nautical College
Napier College of Commerce and Technology
Paisley College of Education
Queen Margaret College
Queen's College Glasgow
Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology
Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama
Scottish College of Textiles
University of Stirling

Others
Carnegie & Co. (Chartered Surveyors)
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
Faculty of Advocates
Institute of Cost and Management Accountants
Lands Tribunal for Scotland
Law Society for Scotland
Rating and Valuation Association
Scottish Assessors' Association
Scottish Council for Single Homeless
Scottish Federation of Owner-Occupiers
Scottish Standing Committee of the Council on Tribunals
Sheriffdom of Lothian and Borders
Sheriffs' Association
Society of Messengers-at-Arms and Sheriff Officers
Queensberry House Hospital

Universities

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the amount of funds given by his Department to extra-mural and continuing education in Scottish universities at the latest available date.

Mr. John MacKay: Grants for 1986-87 towards the administrative costs of extra-mural departments of universities in Scotland are as follows:

	£
University of Aberdeen	8,100
The University, Dundee	5,400
University of Edinburgh	10,000
University of Glasgow	1,500

Torness Power Station

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for East Lothian on 26 November, *Official Report*, column 274, if he will publish the formal comments of Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate on the exercise that was conducted at Torness power station on 18 September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for East Lothian on 26 November, *Official Report*, column 274, if the advanced gas-cooled simulator at Oldbury which has been used for the training of staff for Torness power station replicates that at the Heysham II station.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by the South of Scotland Electricity Board that the Oldbury AGR simulator replicates the Heysham II station which is, apart from some differences in control equipment, identical to Torness.

Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Act

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to bring into operation the Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Act 1986.

Mr. Rifkind: I have authorised the commencement of the provisions of the Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Act 1986 with effect from 8 December 1986.

WALES

Motor Rallies

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state how many applications were made, through the Royal Automobile Club Motor Sports Association Ltd. for authority to hold motor rallies in each county of Wales during 1985; how many of these applications were granted and refused in the case of each county; whether any complaints were received subsequent to any of these rallies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: During 1985 the Royal Automobile Club Motor Sport Association dealt with 132 applications to hold motor sport rallies in Wales. The applications were recorded on the basis of police force areas and are given in the following table:

Police area	*Applications*			
	Received	*Cancelled by organisers*	*Rejected*	*Approved*
Dyfed/Powys	74	6	11	57
Gwent	11	—	4	7
North Wales	30	4	4	22
South Wales	17	—	2	15
TOTAL	132	10	21	101

I understand that complaints were received after one of the rallies. I believe that each complaint was carefully investigated by the RAC with the aim of attempting to avoid in future the problem which gave rise to the complaint.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what comments he has received from social services departments of the Welsh counties in response to Welsh health circular (85)46 on "The Changing Role of Specialist Mental Handicap Hospitals in Wales"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None. The circular was addressed to district health authorities, who were asked to put forward proposals in consultation with county councils.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for each of the counties of Wales the number of persons aged 16 years of age who were admitted during 1985 to mental handicap hospitals and units, other than as short-term case admissions; and if he will identify the reasons why these young people could not be cared for within the community.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The number of people aged 16 who were admitted to mental handicap hospitals and units in Wales in 1985 for periods of more than a fortnight was as follows:

Area of residence	*Admissions*
Clwyd	1
Gwent	2
Mid Glamorgan	1
WALES TOTAL	4

Information on reasons for admission is not held centrally. The aim of the all-Wales strategy for the development of services for mentally handicapped people is to prevent admission to hospital for reasons of mental handicap alone, but it will take time for services to build up to realise this aim.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total employed labour force in *(a)* the private sector and *(b)* the public sector in Wales; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The distinction between private and public sector employment is not usually made in the preparation of employment statistics for Wales. Work to provide a regular series for public sector employment for the period referred to is, however, currently in hand and I hope to make the results available soon.

Kidney Disease

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales what statistics he has on the prevalence of kidney disease in Wales since 1960; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not available centrally. The following table shows the numbers of new in-patients and day cases diagnosed as having kidney disease at hospitals in Wales in each year since 1971:

Year	*Number*
1971	812
1972	975
1973	880
1974	1,016
1975	1,016
1976	956
1977	1,011
1978	1,022
1979	1,291
1980	1,395
1981	1,469
1982	1,234
1983	1,427
1984	1,479
1985	1,574

Hospitals

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received concerning hospital services in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I receive many representations concerning a variety of aspects in relation to services in Wales. If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about any particular matter, he may wish to write to me.

Radiography

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the review of regional radiography services in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The review has been completed and a report is being prepared for submission to Ministers.

Home Improvement

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those organisations in Wales that have responded to the May 1985 Green Paper, "Home Improvement — A New Approach".

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Welsh Association of District Councils
Aberconwy Borough Council
Alyn and Deeside District Council
Arfon District Council
Blaenau Gwent District Council
Brecknock Borough Council
Cardiff County Council
Carmarthen District Council
Colwyn Bay Borough Council
Cynon Valley Borough Council
Islwyn District Council
Llanelli Borough Council
Merthyr Borough Council
Monmouth District Council
Neath Borough Council
Newport Borough Council
Ogwr Borough Council
Port Talbot Borough Council
Preseli District Council
Radnor District Council
Rhondda Borough Council
Rhymney Valley District Council
Rhuddlan District Council
South Pembrokeshire District Council
Swansea County Council
Taff Ely Borough Council
Torfaen Borough Council
Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council

Wrexham Maelor Borough Council
Ynys Mon Borough Council
Building Employers Confederation
Building Societies Liaison Committee for Wales
Federation of Master Builders
Ferndale Home Improvement Service with Shelter
Gwent Health Authority
Gwynedd County Council
Housing Centre Trust
Mid Glamorgan Health Authority
Pembrokeshire Health Authority
South Glamorgan Health Authority
South Wales Chief Housing Officers Group
UWIST (Department of Town Planning)
The House Builders Federation
The Housing Corporation
Welsh Consumer Council
Welsh Housing Aid
West Glamorgan Building Trust

Perinatal Mortality

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to make a statement on the all Wales perinatal mortality survey before 31 December.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The final report of the survey group set up under this initiative will be published very shortly and a statement will be made at that time.

Artificial Limbs

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales are waiting for artificial limbs to be *(a)* repaired and *(b)* adjusted.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: On 26 November 1986, the numbers of unmet orders for repairs at the Cardiff and Morrison limb centres were 110. Adjustments are undertaken locally as required.

NHS Waiting Lists

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about national health waiting lists in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We have received a number of representations about NHS waiting lists in Wales. If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about a particular aspect, he may wish to write.

Day Nurseries

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many children have attended day nurseries in Wales in each of the last seven years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information on the numbers of children attending day nurseries in Wales is not available centrally. The numbers of places available at day nurseries in Wales for each of the last seven years are given in the following table:

Number of places available[1] at 31 March

Year	Number
1980	926
1981	904
1982	934
1983	1,025
1984	1,226
1985	1,243
1986	1,286

[1] Includes facilities provided by local authorities, other registered premises and premises exempt from registration (eg those on Crown property).

Private Schools

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to how many Welsh children attend private or independent schools in Wales; and if he will give the figures for each year from 1979-80 to 1986-87.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The available information is as follows and refers to January for each academic year:

Number of full-time and part-time pupils in independent schools in Wales

	Number
1979-80[1]	12,703
1980-81	12,795
1981-82	12,348
1982-83	11,747
1983-84	11,427
1984-85	11,129
1985-86	11,423

[1] Figures include information on three direct grant schools which, from 1980-81, became independent.

Amphibians and Reptiles

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any plans to improve the protection of amphibians and reptiles, especially the common lizard, slow worm, grass snake and adder; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him today by my hon. Friend, the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government.

ENERGY

Insulation

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the number of homes in Great Britain which are inadequately insulated; and what would be the total cost of ensuring that they are all fully and properly insulated.

Mr. Hunt: The latest estimates of the information requested are:

Type of insulation	Definition of adequate[1] level	Number of inadequately insulated homes[2] in Great Britain million	Cost of insulating each home[3] £	Total cost[4] £ million
1. Hot water cylinder jackets	75-80 mm	8·4	10	80

Type of insulation	Definition of adequate[1] level	Number of inadequately insulated homes[2] in Great Britain million	Cost of insulating each home[3] £	Total cost[4] £ million
2 Loft insulation	100 mm in homes with access to loft	9·7	90	900
3 Draughtproofing	Insulation at least in main rooms	12·5	60	750
4 Cavity wall insulation	Insulation in homes with cavity walls	10·6	300	3,200
Total		[5]n.a.	—	5,000

[1]Adequate insulation is taken to be the amount of insulation that, on average, is cost-effective to instal in existing homes. The standard of loft insulation is the mandatory requirement under the Building Regulations for new homes.
[2]*Source*: Audits of Great Britain Ltd. survey for December 1985.
[3]*Source*: Department of Energy estimates. The cost estimates for measures 1-3 exclude labour; that for 4 includes labour.
[4]The total cost estimates are rounded.
[5]The available data do not indicate how many dwellings lack at least one of these measures.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Library Expenditure

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to expand the allocation of central Government funds specifically intended for book purchase and other library expenditure in universities, polytechnics and colleges.

Mr. Dunn: For the universities, my right hon. Friend has said that he expects the University Grants Committee to make provision for increases in library purchasing from the additional grants for the universities of £61 million for the financial year 1987-88 and £71 million for 1988-89 that he announced on 6 November at column 490. There is no specific earmarking of funds for book purchase and library expenditure in the advanced further educaton pool from which polytechnics and colleges are funded. The AFE pool will, however, show an increase of provision of 8 per cent. in 1987-88 over the current year.

Truancy

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his assessment of the relationship between the truancy rate in inner-city schools and the social and economic structures of *(a)* inner-city constituencies in general and *(b)* Lambeth and Vauxhall in particular.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department does not collect figures about truancy. Socio-economic factors may contribute indirectly to school attendance problems, but the attitude of parents to education and the quality of the experience offered to children at school are in the Government's view more influential in promoting good attendance. The important initiatives which the Government is taking to improve the quality of teaching, the school curriculum and examinations should affect school attendance beneficially.

Universities (Listed Buildings)

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether any provision is made in the calculation of the funds made available to the University Grants Committee for the upkeep of listed buildings occupied by universities and other institutions of higher education.

Mr. Dunn: There is no specified provision for the upkeep of listed buildings either in the recurrent grant allocated to universities on the advice of the UGC or in the funding of local authority and grant aided institutions of higher education.

Teachers of the Deaf

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he now expects to be able to make a statement about the training of teachers of the deaf.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government's policy on the training of teachers of the deaf, and teachers of children with other disabilities, was announced in "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469), paragraphs 145-147, published in March 1985.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will extend the mandatory qualification for teachers for the deaf to teachers in a peripatetic-advisory role; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to amend the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1982 as regards the mandatory qualifications for teachers of both the hearing impaired. Before extending the present requirement, he would need to be satisfied that there were sufficient opportunities for specialist training to meet the extra demand that would be created.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to reply to the letter sent to his Department by the National Deaf Children's Society on 1 August concerning the training of teachers of the deaf.

Mrs. Rumbold: I replied to the society's letter and subsequent correspondence on 27 November, and a copy of my reply has been sent to the right hon. Member.

Pupil Numbers

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, by education authority, those maintained schools with fewer than 20 pupils on the roll in January 1986.

Mr. Dunn: The names of the maintained primary, middle and secondary schools in English local education authorities which had fewer than 20 pupils on the roll in January 1986 are:

Doncaster
Fishlane Endowed First
Sykehouse First

Kirklees
Whitley Lower Church of England First and Middle

Leeds
Immigrant Reception Centre
St. Peters Church of England Infants, Morley

Isles of Scilly
St. Agnes Church of England Primary School
St. Martin's Church of England Primary School
Tresco Church of England Primary School

Avon
Abbots Leigh County Primary

Bedfordshire
Wilden Church of England Lower

Buckinghamshire
Coleshill Church of England First
Parslow County First School, Drayton
Slapton County First
Stoke Goldington Church of England First
Stoke Hammond Church of England First

Cambridgeshire
Little Ouse

Cheshire
Kettleshulme Church of England Primary
Marbury-with-Quoisley Church of England Primary
Nether Tabley County Primary School, Knutsford
St. Mary's Church of England Primary School, Bosley

Cornwall
Bolventor
Breage Church of England Primary
Tresillian Infants

Cumbria
Beetham Church of England
Blennerhasset County Primary
Bootle Hycemoor Church of England Primary
Kaber County Primary
Kirkandrews-on-Eden County Primary
Milburn County Primary
Penwick County Primary
Uldale Church of England Primary
Warwicksland County Primary

Derbyshire
Birchover Church of England Infant
Combs Infant School, Chapel en le Frith
Cressbrook County [illegible]ton
Earl Sterndale Church of England, Hartington
Fernlee Infant, Whaley Bridge
Idridgehay Parochial
Litton Church of England Primary
Taddington and Priestcliffe Church of England
Ticknall Parochial Church of England
Weston-on-Trent Parochial

Devon
All Saints Church of England Primary, Axminster
Black Torrington Church of England
Broadhempston School
Poughhill Church of England
Rockbeare Church of England
Sparkwell Church of England

Dorset
Buckhorn Weston County Primary
Halstock County Primary
Powerstock Church of England

Essex
Foulness Island Church of England
Foxearth Church of England

Gloucestershire
Coates Church of England
Daglingworth Church of England
Down Ampney Church of England
Maisemore Church of England
Sandhurst Church of England
Staverton

Hampshire
Upton Grey Church of England Primary

Hereford and Worcester
Severn Stoke

Hertfordshire
Bayford Church of England

Humberside
Bishop Burton Church of England
Wootton Church of England

Kent
Lower Hardres Church of England

Lancashire
Bleasdale (Church of England)
Forest Tosside Parochial School, Gisburn
Holmeswood Methodist School, Rufford
Nateby County
Roughlee

Leicestershire
Barkestone Church of England

Lincolnshire
Leverton
Nocton

Norfolk
Beachamwell
Bodham
East Barsham
Felthorpe Church of England First
Stow Bridge
Tibenham

North Yorkshire
Aldbrough St. John Church of England
Arkengarthdale Church of England
Arncliffe Church of England
Bishop Thornton Roman Catholic
Bolton Percy Church of England
Chapel Haddlesey Church of England
Constable Burton Church of England
Dishforth RAF Station
Farnley Church of England Primary
Flaxton on the Moor Church of England
Folkton Church of England
Fountains Earth Lofthouse Endowed
Ganton Church of England

North Yorkshire
Grantley
Hunsingore
Newton upon Ouse Church of England
Nun Monkton
Reighton and Speeton
Silton and Berwick
Wighill Church of England Primary School

Northamptonshire
Apethorpe Church of England
Naseby Church of England
Weedon Lois Church of England School, Weston and Weedon

Northumberland
Byrness County First
Greenhaugh County First
Harbottle Church of England First
Holy Island Church of England First
Keilder County First
Kirknewton Church of England First

Northside First School, Netherton
Thropton County First
Whitfield Church of England First

Oxfordshire
Alvescot Church of England
Ascott under Wychwood Church of England
Kiddington
St. Blaise Church of England School, Milton

Salop
Acton Burnell Church of England

Staffordshire
Bradley Endowed Church of England First

Suffolk
Icklingham Church of England Primary
St. George's Church of England Primary School, Bradfield
Stoke by Clare Church of England Primary
Ufford County Primary
Wattisfield Church of England Primary

Warwickshire
Baddesley Clinton Roman Catholic Junior and Infants
Stourton and Cherington Church of England Junior and Infants
Whichford County Junior and Infants

West Sussex
Sheddingdean County Infants School, Burgess Hill

Wiltshire
Chilmark Church of England First
Dinton Church of England First

Institute of Marine Biochemistry

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, *Official Report*, 24 November, columns 35-6, he will itemise *(a)* the anticipated building costs consequent upon the removal of work from the Institute of Marine Biochemistry in Aberdeen to the Scottish Marine Biological Association Laboratory in Oban, *(b)* the anticipated receipts from the sale of the Institute of Marine Biology building, *(c)* the costs of the transfer of mobile staff to Oban and severance payments for non-mobile staff and *(d)* the forecast running costs at Oban as compared with Aberdeen, expressed as cost per employee.

Mr. Dunn: The information on the anticipated receipts from the sale of the Institute of Marine Biochemistry building at Aberdeen is commercially sensitive, but the receipts are likely to be comparable with the anticipated building costs consequent on the removal of work from the IMB to the Scottish Marine Biological Association laboratory at Oban.

The information requested for *(c)* and *(d)* is as follows:

(c) the costs of transfer of mobile staff to Oban are estimated to be £100,000. The severance payments of non-mobile staff are estimated to be £40,000 in the first year and £8,000 thereafter.

(d) The cost of running the IMB work at Aberdeen, excluding support staff, is £80,000 per year. The forecast running costs at Oban after the transfer are estimated to be £40,000 per year. Expressed as cost per scientist — i.e. mobile staff — the respective running costs are £5,700 at Aberdeen and £2,900 at Oban. In addition, the Natural Environment Research Council anticipates that furthrr savings in running costs will result from employing fewer support staff at Oban compared with the present situation at Aberdeen.

Construction and Engineering Courses (Brent)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response has been received from the Brent education authority as to what action they and the governors of Willesden college of technology are proposing to take in response to the findings of Her Majesty's Inspectors on aspects of part-time further education professional courses in construction and engineering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Brent education authority has been unable to respond within the normal consultation period but has informed the Department that the newly reconstituted governing body of Willesden college of technology will be considering a report from the acting principal on 3 December. My officials will be meeting officers of the Brent education authority in December to discuss the accommodation problems of the college.

Avon

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how much has been spent per pupil in the county of Avon's infant schools in each year since 1979;

(2) how much has been spent per pupil in the county of Avon's secondary schools in each year since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: The information given in the table shows how much was spent per pupil in primary and secondary schools in Avon. Information is not available, centrally, on the expenditure on infant schools.

Net Institutional Expenditure per pupil

	Primary Schools £ cash	*Secondary Schools £ Cash*
1979-80	418	581
1980-81	520	739
1981-82	592	849
1982-83	660	946
1983-84	703	1,023
1984-85	736	1,087

Miss Maureen McGoldrick

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, in the light of Brent council's decision to hold a disciplinary enquiry into the conduct of Miss Maureen McGoldrick, he will use his powers under section 68 to issue a direction to the council.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has asked the authority to explain immediately why it considers it reasonable to proceed with a disciplinary hearing; and under what powers it is suggested that the authority might investigate the behaviour of school governors and parents in this case. My right hon. Friend will consider whether further action is appropriate in the light of the authority's reply.

Extramural Departments

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the amount of funds given by his Department to extramural departments with responsible body status at the latest available date.

Mr. Dunn: Just over £5,462,000 was paid in grant by my Department to university extramural departments in the financial year 1985-86.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about Government policy on intermediate range nuclear weapons.

Mr. Renton: The Alliance has consistently made it clear that agreements on INF must include equal and global limits. An agreement for the elimination of longer-range intermediate nuclear forces in Europe would have to include tight constraints on the numbers of SS20s in Soviet Asia, and on Soviet short-range INF. As in other areas of arms control, effective verification will be essential.

Daya Bay Nuclear Plant (Hong Kong)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assurances the Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Edward Youde, gave to senior Chinese officials in Beijing in September regarding the Hong Kong Government's intention to stand by its original decision to support the construction of the Daya Bay nuclear power plant.

Mr. Renton: The Governor of Hong Kong discussed the Daya Bay project with senior Chinese officials during his visit to Beijing in September. He confirmed to them that the Hong Kong Government would stand by the commitments it had made in respect of the project, and conveyed to them the concern felt by people in Hong Kong on Daya Bay. The Chinese authorities assured the Government that they were fully alive to and understood these concerns.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether he will now instruct the Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Edward Youde, to release the full Lazard Brothers report dealing with the financial and economic aspects of the Daya Bay nuclear power plant; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will now instruct the Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Edward Youde, to release the full Harwell report dealing with radiation monitoring, public education, accident assessment and contingency planning in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. These are matters for the Hong Kong Government.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Edward Youde, voted on the motion calling for a special debate before the signing of the Daya Bay nuclear power station contract; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The possibility of a request to the President for a special debate during the summer recess was discussed at an in-house meeting of members of the Legislative Council on 3 September 1986. The Governor of Hong Kong as President of the Council does not attend these meetings. The majority of members present at the meeting voted against the suggestion.

Hong Kong

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the economic concessions that the United Kingdom expects to obtain in return for the transfer to China of sovereignty over Hong Kong.

Mr. Renton: None.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received the report from Dr. Steven Brown, technical attaché at the British embassy in West Germany, on the radioactive waste disposal facilities in that country and the report on the visit of the county councils coalition on 29 October; and if he will publish these reports.

Mr. Renton: No comprehensive report has been received recently from Her Majesty's embassy in Bonn either on radioactive waste disposal in the Federal Republic of Germany or to date on the visit of the county councils coalition.

Middletown (Terrorist Attack)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the British ambassador in Dublin made any representations to the Government of the Republic of Ireland following the attack by terrorists from Irish Republic territory on the joint army/police station in Middletown in the United Kingdom on Sunday, 23 November.

Mr. Eggar: No formal representations were made. There has been co-operation between the Garda Siochana in the Republic of Ireland, and the security forces in Northern Ireland over the incident; and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has discussed the incident with the Irish Minister for Justice.

Legion Zimbabwe

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Zimbabwe regarding the detention of the staff of the Legion Zimbabwe.

Mrs. Chalker: Of the two Legion Zimbabwe staff who were detained, one was a mono-British citizen and the other had dual Zimbabwean and British citizenship. However, both were released on bail after overnight detention. There was therefore no occasion for representations. Our High Commission in Harare is closely monitoring the situation and will continue to offer such consular assistance as they properly can during any subsequent legal proceedings.

Hong Kong (Elephants)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ensure that the Hong Kong authorities issue entry permits for three elephants, Camilla, Leila and Mina owned by Chipperfields circus.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Harry Cohen) on 28 November, at column *382*.

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps will be

taken by the Hong Kong authorities to assure the physical and physiological welfare of the three elephants, Camilla, Leila and Mina owned by Chipperfields at present on the way by ship to Hong Kong.

Mr. Renton: The Hong Kong Government have confirmed that all necessary arrangements will be made for veterinary inspection and for safe keeping of the animals while they are in Hong Kong.

Suriname

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British subjects are currently living in Suriname; what is the level of British investment there; what was the volume of trade between Britain and Suriname in each of the last three years; what overseas aid his Department has granted Suriname in the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Consular records indicate that the British Community in Suriname consists of 21 British citizens and 284 British Dependent Territories citizens.

There are no figures available with regard to the level of British investment there.

British trade with Suriname over the last three years was as follows:

	£ million
British exports	
1983	8·9
1984	9·6
1985	9·4
British imports	
1983	11·6
1984	18·3
1985	15·4

We have no aid programme to Suriname.

THE ARTS

Scottish Arts

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Minister for the Arts what recent representations he has received from the Scottish Arts Council about the level of central Government funding for the arts in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: None. Central Government basic provision for the Arts Council in 1987-88 will be £113·8 million; it will be for the council to determine the Scottish share of this. In addition, the Government have continued the special provision of £0·6 million for the support of Scottish national companies which was made in 1986-87 following Scotland's local government re-organisation.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister for the Arts what is the increase in real terms in central Government and local authority funding for the arts within the arts programme between 1979-80 and 1987-88 *(a)* including the extra expenditure consequent upon the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan counties and *(b)* excluding such money.

Mr. Luce: The increases in central Government and local authority funding between 1979-80 and 1987-88 are 16 per cent. and 10 per cent. in the two cases, respectively.

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister for the Arts what is the increase in central Government funding of the Arts Council in real terms between 1979-80 and 1987-88 *(a)* including the extra expenditure condsequent upon the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan counties and *(b)* excluding such money.

Mr. Luce: The increases in Government funding of the Arts Council in real terms are 30 per cent. and 8 per cent, respectively.

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister for the Arts what is the increase in real terms in central Government expenditure on the arts between 1979-80 and 1987-88 *(a)* including the extra expenditure consequent upon the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan counties *(b)* excluding such money.

Mr. Luce: The increase in the two cases are 28 per cent. and 13 per cent., respectively.

NATIONAL FINANCE

£1 Coin

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what numbers, respectively, of £1 coins with the thistle reverse in 1984 and the leek reverse in 1985 were put into circulation; and what proportion of the 440,000 coins with flax reverse issued in 1986 have been put into circulation in 1986.

Mr. Lawson: Sixty-nine million £1 coins with the thistle reverse and 178 million £1 coins with the leek reverse have been put into circulation. All 442,000 £1 coins with the flax reverse in 1986 have been put into circulation. The Royal Mint is expecting to issue a further 8·5 million coins bearing the flax plant design in the week commencing 1 December.

European Community (Grants)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all current grants, subsidies and other receipts from the European Communities for Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland; and if he will publish a table listing the main projects which benefit from such financial assistance.

Mr. Brooke: A breakdown of Community budget receipts by receiving departments (including the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Officer) and by type of expenditure—for example, the regional development and social funds — is contained in table 3.3.3 of the last public expenditure White Paper, Cmnd. 9702-II, pages 62 to 65. Information concerning the precise breakdown of Community receipts by territorial areas could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

On-course Betting

Mr. Charles Morrison asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the revenue from on-course betting duty for each of the last five years with the percentage increase over the previous year; and if he will break down these figures into 1 April to 30 September and 1 October to 31 March for each year, again with percentage increases.

Mr. Brooke: Following is the information:

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
1 April—30 September* (£ million)	9·5	10·6	9·8	11·1	12·1
Change from previous year (percentage)	−12·7	+10·6	−7·5	+13·7	+9·1
1 October—31 March* (£million)	7·6	7·4	7·3	7·4	7·9
Change from previous year (percentage)	+2·4	−2·6	−0·9	+0·1	+7·1
Financial year* (£ million)	17·2	18·0	17·1	18·5	20·0
Change from previous year (percentage)	−6·6	+4·8	−4·8	+7·8	+8·3

* These figures include revenue from Totalisators, and have been rounded; the percentage increases have been calculated from the unrounded figures.

Scenic Land

Dr. David Clark asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the scenic land, for which exemption from capital transfer tax or inheritance tax has been given, stating in each case the area of land concerned, the cost to the nation of the exemption, and the additional public access which has been obtained to the land as a result of the exemption.

Mr. Norman Lamont: This information is not maintained centrally and could not be produced without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources. Tax confidentiality would in any event prevent me from listing areas of land by name. The available statistical data is as follows. With the exception of the years immediately following the introduction of the present scheme of heritage relief in 1976, there is no breakdown between land of outstanding interest (historic, scientific or scenic), buildings of outstanding interest (historic or architectural) and land essential for the protection of the character and amenities of an outstanding building.

Table

Year	*No. of cases for which conditional exemption given*	*Minimum value of exempted property*[1] *£ million*
1976[2]	[4]4	n/k
1977[2]	[4]4	n/k
1978[2]	[4]5	n/k
1979[2]	[4]1	n/k
1980-81[3]	[5]45	40·3
1981-82[3]	[5]43	7·3
1982-83[3]	[5]59	5·5
1983-84[3]	[6]16	9
1984-85[3]	[6]18	12
1985-86[3]	[6]22	9·5
1986-87 to date[3]	[6]4	0·3

n/k not known
[1] These values are not negotiated.
[2] Calendar year.
[3] Fiscal year.
[4] Land of outstanding interest only — but no breakdown of whether of scenic, historic or scientific.
[5] Covers outstanding land, outstanding buildings etc. *and* chattels of national interest.
[6] Outstanding land etc. but *not* chattels of national interest.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Freud asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of harmonisation of value added tax on the commercial viability of the British antique trade; what letters he has received on this subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The effect would depend on the nature of the harmonisation — a hypothetical question. I have received a number of letters from the arts and antique trade and from the Museums and Galleries Commission.

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the annual value of zero-rated transactions in the United Kingdom on those goods and services which are the subject of infraction proceedings before the European Court on the issue of whether or not they should be subjected to value added tax.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Freud asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effects of harmonisation of value added tax on the art market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The question is entirely hypothetical, but the effects would depend on the nature of the harmonisation.

European Community (Receipts and Contributions)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the net contribution or net receipt which each member state of the European Economic Community paid or received in the calendar year 1985.

Mr. Brooke: The Commission does not publish such figures, and the United Kingdom does not have the figures available from which to estimate accurately what they might be. A considerable amount of relevant information will become available when the Court of Auditors publishes its report on the 1985 financial year. We expect this about the end of the year.

Oriental Credit

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Bank of England has been involved in the supervision, and eventual liquidation, of a licensed deposit taker called Oriental Credit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Bank of England supervises all licensed deposit-takers and recognised banks under the Banking Act 1979 and subject to the requirement of confidentiality imposed by section 19 of that Act. The steps taken by the Bank under the Act in respect of any particular institution are a matter for the Bank. The Bank has informed me that Oriental Credit Ltd. decided to cease trading on 3 October 1986, that a liquidator was appointed by the creditors at a meeting on 27 October, and that Oriental Credit Ltd. has been removed from the Bank's list of institutions licensed under the Act.

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the implications for his policy on banking supervision by the Bank of England of its appointment of a liquidator in the case of Oriental Credit.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer to my answer of today to the hon. Member which explains that the liquidator was appointed by the creditors.

Football Pools

Mr. Alton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the expected revenue from the levy on income from football pools in 1986-87.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1986, c. *343*]: I presume that the hon. Member is referring to pool betting duty. It is estimated that the revenue yield from pool betting duty in 1986-87 will be £260 million.

Income Tax

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the tax yield for the higher rate incomes falling within each band of 40 per cent., 50 per cent., 55 per cent.; and 60 per cent., and if he will give the total yield figure for the current financial year.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1986, c. *342*]: The latest estimates in respect of tax liabilities in 1986-87 are shown below. The figures show the liabilities in excess of the basic rate in respect of the slices of income chargeable at each higher rate.

Tax liabilities 1986-87

Income tax rate (per cent.)	*Tax in excess of the basic rate (£ billion)*
40	0·3
45	0·4
50	0·4
55	0·3
60	0·8
Total	2·2

Capital Allowances

Mr. Tony Speller asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will reinstate the 100 per cent. write-off on machinery against capital allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 November 1986, c. *399*]: No. The phasing out of 100 per cent. first year allowances for capital expenditure on machinery or plant was an integral part of the business tax reform strategy. This was specifically aimed at producing a more neutral system based on lower rates of tax and allowances for depreciation more closely linked to the useful life of capital assets.

Commercial Bills

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Bank of England's current holding of commercial bills; and what significance the Bank's dealings in commercial bills is assumed to have for monetary policy.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 November 1986, c. *398*]: At the end of October, the Bank of England's holdings of commercial bills were £9·6 billion.

The object of the Bank's dealings in commercial bills is broadly to offset the cash flows between the Bank and the money markets, and to leave the clearing banks within reach of their desired operational balances. The terms on which the operations are conducted may influence interest rates.

Earnings

Mr. Shore asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will provide figures for the weekly earnings after income tax, national insurance contributions and child benefit at *(a)* actual prices and *(b)* constant April 1986 prices of (i) a single man, (ii) a married man, (iii) a married man with two children under 11 years of age, (iv) a married man with four children, two under 11, one 11 to 15 and over 16 years of age and (v) a single woman, whose gross weekly earnings are at *(a)* the lowest decile, *(b)* the lower quartile, *(c)* the median, *(d)* the upper quartile and *(e)* the highest decile for full-time employees in April 1979 and April 1986, respectively.

Mr. Lawson [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 November 1986, c. *397*]: Information in the following table is based on estimates of earnings for men or women as appropriate, in full-time work paid at adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. Estimates are based on information from the annual new earnings surveys. The calculations take no account of income-related benefits to which those at the lowest decile and quartile may be entitled. Taxpayers are assumed to have no reliefs or allowances other than the appropriate personal allowance.

Earnings after income tax, national insurance contributions[1] and child benefit

£ per week

	Single man		*Married man[3] no children*		*Married man[3] two children[4]*		*Married man[3] four children[5]*		*Single Woman*	
	At current prices	*At constant April 1986 prices[2]*	*At current prices*	*At constant April 1986 prices[2]*	*At current prices*	*At constant April 1986 prices[2]*	*At current prices*	*At constant April 1986 prices[2]*	*At current prices*	*At constant April 1986 prices[2]*
Lowest decile of earnings										
April 1979[6]	44·09	79·32	47·90	86·17	55·90	100·56	63·90	114·95	32·78	58·96
April 1986	82·09	82·09	89·45	89·45	103·45	103·45	117·45	117·45	64·41	64·41
Lower quartile of earnings										
April 1979[6]	52·62	94·65	56·43	101·51	64·43	115·90	72·43	130·29	37·26	67·02
April 1986	100·94	100·94	108·30	108·30	122·30	122·30	136·30	136·30	73·16	73·16
Median of earnings										
April 1979[6]	63·94	115·01	67·75	121·86	75·75	136·15	83·75	150·64	43·55	78·34
April 1986	127·78	127·78	135·15	135·15	149·15	149·15	163·15	163·15	89·53	89·53

	Single man		Married man[3] no children		Married man[3] two children[4]		Married man[3] four children[5]		Single Woman	
	At current prices	At constant April 1986 prices[2]	At current prices	At constant April 1986 prices[2]	At current prices	At constant April 1986 prices[2]	At current prices	At constant April 1986 prices[2]	At current prices	At constant April 1986 prices[2]
Upper quartile of earnings										
April 1979[6]	78·28	140·80	82·08	147·65	90·08	162·04	98·08	176·43	52·38	94·23
April 1986	164·12	164·12	171·48	171·48	185·48	185·48	199·48	199·48	114·58	114·58
Highest decile of earnings										
April 1979[6]	96·89	174·28	100·69	181·13	108·69	195·52	116·69	209·91	64·12	115·34
April 1986	215·14	215·14	222·50	222·50	236·50	236·50	250·50	250·50	143·10	143·10

[1] At the contracted-in rate.
[2] By reference to the Retail Price Index.
[3] Assuming no wife's earnings.
[4] Children aged under 11.
[5] Two children under 11, one 11 to 15, one over 16.
[6] Under the April 1979 tax-benefit regime.

CIVIL SERVICE

Consultants (Fees)

Mr. Dobson asked the Minister for the Civil Service what will be the spending of all Government Departments and agencies on fees to outside consultants in the current year; and what it was in 1979-80 and each intervening year.

Mr. Luce [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1986, c. *363*]: Information is available only for management and computer consultants employed by Government Departments. Figures showing spending from 1984-87 are given below. The information for 1979-80 to 1983-84 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

	£
1984-85	27,604,098
1985-86	45,327,450
1986-87[1]	70,071,359

[1] Estimated

These totals include figures from those Departments to whom the hon. Gentleman has addressed individual questions. They do not include any figures from the Home Office which will provide them at a later date.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Herring

Mr. Wallace asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding the 1987 share out of North sea herring between the European Community and Norway.

Mr. Gummer: The industry has urged us to press for a lower share of North sea herring for Norway than was agreed that year, bearing in mind the need for continued access to whitefish opportunities in Norwegian waters.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Wareing asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new measures he is taking to help the fishing industry exploit the new fishing opportunities arising from the introduction of the new 150-mile fishery limit around the Falklands.

Mr. Gummer: We hope that the establishment of the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone, in itself, will give the United Kingdom fishing industry the opportunity to expand its activities around the Falklands. However, this should be seen as an opening for private enterprise.

Fishing Industry (Aid)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards grant-aids being given towards the building of new pursers or new fishing vessels with a pursing capability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Fish Disease

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research Her Majesty's Government have commissioned or completed to examine the nature and causal factors of fish disease in coastal waters bordering the North sea within the last five years.

Mr. Gummer: My Department and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland have a continuing programme of research to investigate the occurrence and cause of diseases of commercial fish stocks in the North sea. This research work involves investigative voyages and the examination of disease during stock assessment.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set out in tabular form the milk quota for 1986-87, in thousands of tonnes for each of Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, The United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and Denmark; and what information he has about the population of each country.

Mr. Gummer: The 1986-87 milk quota for each member state named by my hon. Friend and the latest information available to my Department relating to each country's population is as follows:

Member state	1986-87 Quota 1,000 tonnes (excluding Community Reserve)	Total Population[1] '000
Germany	23,553	61,175
France	26,508	54,947
Netherlands	12,074	14,424
Belgium	3,611	9,855
United Kingdom	15,725	56,488
Republic of Ireland	5,296	3,535
Denmark	4,883	5,112

[1] Source: Eurostat

Nuclear Installations

Mr. Ashdown asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on making available to independent researchers all records held by his Department of environmental monitoring around licensed nuclear installations; and if he will describe the arrangements under which such records may be used by independent researchers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Much of the environmental monitoring around licensed nuclear installations is undertaken by the operators as a condition of their authorisations under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. Summaries of the environmental monitoring data are regularly published for the benefit of local liaison committees. The more detailed information remains the property of the site operators and requests to consult it should be addressed to them.

The monitoring carried out by this Department provides independent verification of the accuracy and reliability of the site operators' data. Summaries of the information gathered on the aquatic environment are published annually and copies placed in the library of the House. Summaries of the information obtained in the terrestrial environment will be published annually from next year. The Ministry is always prepared to make available relevant data to the fullest practicable extent on written application.

Cod Fishing Ban

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any proposals to compensate the inshore fishermen financially for their loss of income due to the European Economic Community cod ban.

Mr. Gummer: No provision exists for compensation to be paid. However, the hon. Member will now know that we have been able to lift the cod ban with effect from 2 December following a quota swap with the Republic of Ireland.

Intervention Stores

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the quantity of butter in European Economic Community intervention which is two years old or more; what is the estimated value of such butter expressed in pence per pound; and what is the estimated cost of storing it for the average period in which such stocks have been in intervention.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current price, expressed in sterling per litre, at which wine is made available from European Economic Community intervention stocks for sale to eastern Europe; and what was the comparable figure 12 months previously.

Mr. Gummer: It is wine alcohol rather than wine that is held in Community public intervention stocks. However, the current minimum price at which low quality wine from the Community is available in bulk for export to some countries outside the Community, including some in eastern Europe, is about 6p per litre. This compares with a price of about 6·6p per litre at this time last year.

My hon. Friend will wish to be aware that the prices quoted do not include the costs of bottling, transportation, distribution, duty and VAT, which, by way of illustration, together make up nearly 90 per cent. of the price of a bottle of wine retailed at £2 in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the latest levels of various foodstuffs and wine in European Economic Community private and public intervention stores; and what were the totals 12 and 24 months previously.

Mr. Gummer: A note setting out, inter alia, the quantities of produce in intervention and private storage in the European Economic Community has been deposited monthly in the Library of the House since January 1985. The quantities for November 1984 are as follows:

Products in Intervention Storage: November 1984

'000 tonnes

Product	Stock Level
Public intervention	
Butter	1,026
Skimmed Milk Powder	816
Wheat	5,975
Barley	1,506
Rye	337
Durum	837
Beef	547
Olive Oil	83
Oilseeds	20
Private Storage	
Cheese	105
Butter	178
Pigmeat	26
Dried Fruit	46
Beef	143
Table Wine (million hectolitres)	6·28

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total sum spent by the European Economic Community, expressed in terms of pounds per week, on the storage, export and withdrawal of food and wine respectively, over the most recent annual period for which figures are available.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is as follows:

	1985 expenditure converted to weekly basis £
Storage of products in public intervention	15
Export refunds	75
Withdrawals (fish, fresh fruit and vegetables)	3

Source: EC Commission figures.

Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the official status of the Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs within the European Economic Community; if the organisation receives any funding from the European Economic Community or its various institutions; and what contact his Ministry maintains with the organisation.

Mr. Gummer: I understand that the bureau is the representative organisation at Community level of consumer organisations in member states, and that it is consulted on consumer matters by the Commission, from which it receives a small subsidy. My Department maintains contact with the United Kingdom consumer organisations which are members of the bureau.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will urgently review the regulations and conditions under which live elephants may be removed from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) on 27 November 1986 at column *340*.

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria were used in deciding that the crate containing three elephants belonging to Chipperfields, and now en route to Hong Kong, was satisfactory; whether his officials were informed in advance that the elephants were to be shipped to Hong Kong; and if he will take steps to ensure that elephants are not in future permitted to leave British ports under similar conditions.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 November 1986, c. *375*]: The container in which the elephants were shipped was examined by a Ministry veterinary officer to ensure that it conformed with the provisions of the Transit of Animals (General) Order 1973. In particular he was instructed to ensure that the container was soundly constructed, adequately ventilated and of a size suitable for the species of animals to be carried; that it afforded protection against the action of the weather or the sea and that it was free of any internal projections or removable partitions that might injure the elephants or cause them unnecessary suffering. He was also asked to satisfy himself that sufficient quantities of bedding were provided and that the container would be properly stowed with a clear area on all sides.

The exporter's agents informed my officials of the approximate date of shipment so that arrangements could be made to examine the container and inspect the elephants. Provided that the arrangements made for their journey comply with the requirements of the Transit of Animals (General) Order 1973 and the animals are fit to travel, I see no reason to place further restrictions on the shipment of elephants from British ports.

Departmental Information Technology Staff

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average number of days training per year given to professional information technology staff within his Department who are no longer trainees, in the most recent years available.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986, c. *61*]: The average number of days training in information technology given, off-the-job, to staff classed as automatic data processing functional specialists in my Department was six in 1985 and 6·6 in 1986.

Rhizomania

Mr. Freud asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the testing time for rhizomania in respect of the different crops on which tests are carried out;

(2) whether he intends to seek to ban imported vegetables unless they have been washed; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the tonnage of unwashed potatoes imported from Holland in each of the last seven months;

(4) if he is satisfied that sufficient controls exist to minimise the spread of rhizomania in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he will list the number and locations of reported cases of rhizomania brought to the United Kingdom from the Continent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 November 1986, c. 375]: We have taken a number of measures to guard against the risk of rhizomania being imported into the United Kingdom. In particular, we have taken steps, by statutory order, to:

(i) impose import controls to ensure that all beet seed and stecklings brought into the United Kingdom are free of the disease;

(ii) require all imported seed potatoes to come from areas free from rhizomania;

(iii) require all agricultural machinery to be thoroughly cleaned before import.

In addition, we published last year a code of practice for the safe disposal of waste from imported vegetables which was distributed to all processing, packaging and waste disposal firms which have been encouraged to observe it on a voluntary basis. I regard these controls as providing a good defence against the introduction of this disease.

There have been no outbreaks of rhizomania in the United Kingdom. We were fortunate in being able to take preventive action when it became apparent that the disease was spreading in northern Europe some three years ago.

As part of our monitoring and risk assessment some tests have been carried out on soil attached to imports of ware potatoes: these tests take some eight weeks to complete. In one case rhizomania was detected in soil attached to potatoes imported from the Netherlands for processing in Cambridgeshire. This finding did not alter our assessment of the risk from this source, nor was any special action required as the waste from the consignment in question had already been disposed of in conformity with the voluntary code of practice to which I have referred.

Intensive surveys for signs of rhizomania in growing crops have revealed no trace of the disease in sugar or other beet crops in the United Kingdom. Laboratory tests on beet are necessary only when symptons of possible infection are found during growing crop inspections: these tests can take some two to three weeks.

I am looking into the question of the need for any additional arrangements to further minimise the risk from soil attached to imported vegetables for processing and packaging and I shall make a further statement about this.

Statistics available on imports from the Netherlands do not distinguish between washed and unwashed potatoes.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Northeye Prison

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has yet discussed with the Prison Officers Association the report of the Prison Reform Trust on the events that took place at Northeye prison on 30 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No. The trust submitted its report to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, who will evaluate it in preparing his report on the disturbances at Northeye and elsewhere.

Crime (Bristol)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many crimes were committed in Bristol in each month since the beginning of 1985; and if he will break these down into the main crime categories.

Mr. Mellor: The information that is available relates to the Avon and Somerset police force area and is given in the following table:

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in Avon and Somerset

Offence groups	*1985*				*1986*	
	1st quarter	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*	*4th quarter*	*1st quarter*	*2nd quarter*
Violence against the person	608	632	722	750	650	768
Sexual offences	114	116	140	135	92	305
Burglary	4,217	4,262	4,262	5,097	5,345	5,538
Robbery	59	66	74	143	132	171
Theft and handling stolen goods	10,317	11,534	11,614	12,048	12,449	13,665
Fraud and forgery	1,090	1,025	1,088	923	1,040	1,002
Criminal damage	2,166	2,499	2,452	2,726	2,619	2,920
Other offences	53	61	75	140	55	35
Total	18,624	20,195	20,427	21,962	22,382	24,404

"Operation Delivery"

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people were *(a)* arrested and *(b)* charged as a result of "Operation Delivery" in Bristol on 11 and 12 September; and with what offences;

(2) how many people charged as a result of "Operation Delivery" in Bristol on 11 and 12 September were *(a)* granted bail and *(b)* remanded in custody; and how many are still being held;

(3) how many people charged as a result of "Operation Delivery" in Bristol on 11 and 12 September have been *(a)* convicted and *(b)* acquitted; and how many charges have been (i) dropped or (ii) reduced;

(4) how many charged with affray as a result of "Operation Delivery" in Bristol on 11 and 12 September have been *(a)* convicted and *(b)* acquitted; and how many have had the charge (i) dropped or (ii) reduced and to what offence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Avon and Somerset Police that a total of 109 persons were arrested as a result of the operation referred to. Fifty-eight persons were arrested for alleged drugs offences only. The remaining 51 persons were arrested for alleged offences not connected with the purpose of the operation. Details of the latter cases, including offences charged and the outcome of court proceedings, are being collected centrally and will be published in due course. However, information is not being collected centrally on whether those charged were remanded, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Civil Defence

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library copies of the scenarios for the two regional civil defence exercises in the south-east and north-west at the end of November.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Yes. I have done so today.

Sentencing

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people convicted during 1985 for offences involving violence received non-custodial sentences;

(2) how many people convicted during 1985 for offences not involving violence received custodial sentences.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is summarised in table 7.2 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1985" (Cmnd. 10).

Police Officers (Murder)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers were murdered between the years 1960 to 1970, 1970 to 1980 and 1980 to 1985 in the United Kingdom as a whole and in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland, separately; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In a case of homicide, it is not possible in the absence of a court decision to distinguish between offences of murder and manslaughter. The available information is given in the following table.

Offences currently[1] recorded as homicide where the victim was a police officer on duty by outcome
United Kingdom 1960-85

Number of offences

Year offence initially recorded	*Number of offences*	*Decided by the court to be* *Murder*	*Section 2 manslaughter*	*Other manslaughter*	*Other outcome*
England and Wales					
1960-69	11	6	1	1	3[2,3]
1970-79	13	9	1	2	1[4]
1980-85	17	6	—	2	9[4,5]
Scotland					
1960-69	2	2	—	—	—
1970-79	1	1	—	—	—
1980-85	1	1	—	—	—
Northern Ireland[6]					
1969	1	..	..	..	..
1970-79	130	..	..	..	..
1980-85	92	..	..	..	..

[1] As at 1 September 1986.
[2] One suspect committed two offences then committed suicide.
[3] Suspect unfit to plead.
[4] Includes offences for which there were no suspects.
[5] Includes one offence for which court proceedings are still pending.
[6] Figures for Northern Ireland are only available from 1969 and relate to offences initially recorded as homicide.
.. Not available.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer in the *Official Report*, 19 November, column *201*, how many police officers work on weeding records from the police national computer as a significant part of their duties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that the weeding of the criminal names index of the police national computer currently forms a significant part of the duties of 16 members of the Metropolitan police civil staff. No police officers are employed on this work.

Police (Graduates)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many graduate entrants have joined the Metropolitan police in each of the last five years; what proportion of that force's manpower they represent; and what proportion of graduates recruited to the police service in England and Wales they represent.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of graduates recruited by the Metropolitan Police was 158 in 1981, 175 in 1982, 195 in 1983, 122 in 1984 and 113 in 1985. On 31 August, 1,324 graduates were serving with the Metropolitan Police —4·9 per cent. of the force strength and 24·2 per cent. of the total number of graduates serving in police forces in England and Wales.

Prisons

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information is available to him to show the average time served in prison by offenders sentenced to a term of nine months' and 18 months' imprisonment, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The average time served under sentence in prison department establishments in England and Wales by prisoners discharged in 1985 from sentences of nine months was about five months and from sentences of 18 months about seven and a quarter months. This excludes time served in custody on remand by sentenced prisoners, for which reliable estimates are not available centrally. The corresponding informaton for adult males analysed by sentence length is published in table 4*(f)* of "Prison statistics England and Wales 1985" (Cmnd. 9903).

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost per head of keeping a prisoner at each of Her Majesty's prisons; and how this compares with figures for each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: The cost per head of keeping a prisoner at each of Her Majesty's prisons during the financial year 1985-86, the latest year for which information is available, was published in the "Work of the Prison Department 1985/86" (Cmnd. 1) appendix 3, table F. The information for 1984-85 was published in Cmnd. 9699, appendix 2, table D, and for 1983-84 in the "Prison Department Financial Report 1983/84", appendix 1, table 7. Copies of these reports are available in the Library. The figures for earlier years are not available.

Immigration

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average length of time taken for his office to give decisions following hon. Members' representations on immigration cases during the past 12 months.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that this information is not available.

Ford Village

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of Wiltshire as to how many police officers were on duty in Ford village, Wiltshire on 14 and 15 November; why the police dispersed people standing outside the home of the right hon. Member for Bridgwater; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable that 16 officers were available for duty but not all were deployed. The police asked people standing outside the home of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) to disperse in order to avoid possible obstructions to the highway and breaches of the peace.

Court Clerks

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he received the Justices' Clerks Society's report "Professional Qualification of Court Clerks in the Magistrates' Courts"; and what substantive reply he made.

Mr. Mellor: We received the society's paper in September 1985. My right hon. Friend recently informed the society of his decision, not to propose any change in the qualifications provided for by the justices' clerks (qualifications of assistants) rules 1979 for the foreseeable future.

Broadcasting

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conclusions he draws from the broadcasting research unit survey of television viewers' attitudes to *(a)* the British Broadcasting Corporation taking advertising, *(b)* coverage of crisis situations and *(c)* the role of current affairs programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We conclude that these are complex matters on which a wide range of views and research findings exist.

Extradition

Mr. Stanbrook asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conclusions he has reached following the review of procedures and the handling of extradition cases in the Irish Republic announced by him in the House on 24 March.

Mr. Mellor: Work is well advanced under the auspices of the intergovernmental conference on drawing up a memorandum giving guidance on the preparation of warrants. The purpose of this document is to reduce the risk that United Kingdom warrants are rejected by Irish courts on technical grounds.

Parole

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, following the restricted release criteria announced by him on 30 November 1983, he will state *(a)* the number of prisoners who, prior to 30 November 1983 were eligible for consideration by the Parole Board but were not so considered thereafter, *(b)* the number of prisoners serving over five years imprisonment for offences of violence or drug trafficking who have been considered for parole in the period November 1983 to November 1986, *(c)* the number of such prisoners who were recommended for release by the Parole Board as exceptional cases, *(d)* the number of prisoners so recommended who were released, *(e)* the average length of time such prisoners spent on parole before their expected date of release and *(g)* the reasons which guided the Secretary of State to exercise his discretion for and against early release.

Mr. Hurd: The more restricted policy on granting parole to certain categories of prisoners announced by my predecessor on 30 November 1983 did not affect the parole eligibility of any prisoner. Between that date and 30 December 1985, around 1,900 prisoners serving sentences of over five years for offences of violence or drug trafficking were considered for parole by the Parole Board. This figure does not represent the total number of prisoners in those categories who were considered for parole since the cases of some of those found unsuitable for parole by the local review committee at the prison are not referred to the board for further consideration. As recorded in its annual reports for 1984 and 1985, the board concluded that, in addition to those prisoners recommended at final review for a short period on licence at the end of their sentence where it was considered that parole was likely to reduce the long-term risk to the public, there were a further 80 prisoners who were regarded as suitable for parole on genuinely exceptional grounds. The board's recommendation was accepted in 38 of these cases. The average time served on licence by these prisoners was between 15 and 16 months. Each case was considered on its individual merits against the background of the general policy set out in the statement of 30 November. It has never been the practice to give the reasons for parole in individual cases.

Figures for 1986 are not yet available.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, following the restricted release criteria announced by him on 30 November 1983, he will state for life sentence prisoners (i) the number of prisoners considered by the Parole Board in the three years prior to November 1983, (ii) the number of prisoners considered by the Parole Board in the three years since November 1983, (iii) the number of prisoners considered who were recommended for release by the Parole Board as exception cases, (iv) the number of prisoners so recommended who were released, (v) the average time spent in custody by such prisoners at their release, (vi) the number of prisoners so recommended who were not released, (vii) the average time spent in custody by these prisoners at the time of their review and (viii) the reasons which guided the Secretary of State to exercise his discretion both for and against release in these cases.

Mr. Hurd: The total number of life sentence cases considered by the Parole Board during the period 1981-85 is as follows:

	Number
1981	325
1982	310
1983	264
1984	235
1985	276

The figure for 1986 is not yet available, but it will exceed that for 1985.

No life sentence prisoners in the specific categories mentioned in my predecessor's announcement of 30 November 1983 have been recommended for release by the Parole Board since that date.

Women Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women, both on remand and sentenced, were held in police cells in England and Wales on 1 November and for each succeeding day, to the latest day available.

Mr. Mellor: The number of women prisoners held in police cells in England and Wales from 1 November 1986 onwards was as follows. Records available centrally do not distinguish between untried and sentenced prisoners.

November	*Number*
1	73
2	77
3	77
4	82
5	75
6	86
7	83
8	68
9	58
10	58
11	67
12	67
13	74
14	70
15	69
16	65
17	65
18	69
19	75
20	81
21	87
22	93
23	93
24	98
25	102
26	109
27	86
28	87

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the longest period that a female prisoner has been held in police cells in the current year.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not readily available and could only be ascertained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of women aged under 21 years who have been held in police cells during 1986.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not recorded centrally.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the total number of women held in prison establishments in England and Wales at the latest date available; and what it was on 31 December 1985 and 31 December 1984;

(2) what is the total number of women held on remand in England and Wales at the latest date available; and what it was at 31 December 1985 and 31 December 1984.

Mr. Mellor: The total number of women and the number of unsentenced women held in prison establishments in England and Wales on the dates requested, which are not strictly comparable, was as follows:

Date	*Total*	*Unsentenced*
31 October 1986	1,567	334
31 December 1985	1,476	345
31 December 1984	1,359	320

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total number of women sentenced to a period of imprisonment during 1985;

(2) what was the total number of women sentenced to a period of imprisonment for a crime of violence during 1985;

(3) what was the total number of women aged under 21 years sentenced to a period of imprisonment during 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is published in "Criminal Statistics: England and Wales, 1985" (Cmnd. 10) and the supplementary volumes. Table 7.20 gives numbers sentenced by age group and table S1.1(A) and 2.1(A) give numbers sentenced by offence group.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the certified normal accommodation and the number of women actually held for each of the following establishments for the latest date available (i) Her Majesty's prison Holloway, (ii) Her Majesty's prison Styal, (iii) Her Majesty's prison Bulwood Hall, (iv) Her Majesty's prison Cookham Wood, (v) Her Majesty's prison Askham Grange, (vi) Her Majesty's prison Durham H Wing, (vii) Her Majesty's prison Pucklechurch, (viii) Her Majesty's prison Risley, (ix) Her Majesty's prison Drake Hall, (x) Her Majesty's prison Low Newton, and (xi) Her Majesty's prison Sutton Park.

Mr. Mellor: On 28 November 1986 the certified normal accommodation and total female populations of the establishments requested was as follows:

Establishment	*Certified normal accommodation*	*Population on 28 November 1986*
Her Majesty's prison Holloway	247	358
Her Majesty's prison and Her Majesty's youth custody centre Styal	237	279
Her Majesty's prison and Her Majesty's youth custody centre Bullwood hall	120	146
Her Majesty's prison Cookham Wood	120	120
Her Majesty's prison Askham Grange	134	111
Her Majesty's prison Durham H Wing	39	38
Her Majesty's remand centre Pucklechurch	56	81
Her Majesty's remand centre Risley (female wing)	92	123
Her Majesty's prison and Her Majesty's youth custody centre Drake Hall	252	246
Her Majesty's remand centre Low Newton	35	42

Establishment	*Certified normal accommodation*	*Population on 28 November 1986*
Her Majesty's prison and Her Majesty's youth custody centre East Sutton Park	74	75
Total	1,406	1,619

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of women remanded in custody during 1985 and subsequently either found not guilty, not proceeded with or given a non-custodial sentence.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is published in table 2.4 of "Prison Statistics England and Wales" (Cmnd. 9903).

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women with no previous convictions were given a prison sentence during 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is published in tables 3.5 and 5.3 of "Prison Statistics England and Wales" (Cmnd. 9903).

London Borough of Brent

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will direct the Local Government Boundary Commission to review council ward boundaries in the London Borough of Brent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. Under section 50 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Secretary of State has no power to direct the Local Government Boundary Commission to carry out a review for the purpose of making proposals for a substantive change of electoral arrangements.

Equal Opportunities Commission

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in the last three months on the case for increased resources for the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

"Violence Against Women"

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he will take to monitor the implementation by chief constables of Home Office circular 69/1986 "Violence Against Women".

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The advice to chief officers of police contained in Home Office circular 69/1986 on violence against women provides guidance on operational matters. It is for individual chief officers to act on this advice in the light of local needs. I have asked Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary to discuss the circular's recommendations with chief constables during their annual force inspections.

Griess Test

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to whom the forensic laboratory at Chorley provided details of the method used by Dr. Skuse in his application of the Griess test on 22 November 1974.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to whom his Department has given copies of the letter from the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), to the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills dated 11 September concerning the method used by Dr. Skuse for the Griess test on 22 November 1974.

Mr. Mellor: I sent a copy, at his request, to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay). This was on the understanding that my hon. Friend had made public the text of the letter.

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what tests his Department has made or has been made aware of in respect of Dr. Skuse's method for the Griess test of using a 0·1 per cent. caustic soda solution; and what results were obtained.

Mr. Mellor: A reappraisal of the Griess test by the Home Office forensic science service, included examination of the effect of using various concentrations of caustic soda, including 0·1 per cent. on the specificity of the test. We are considering the results of this reappraisal in the context of our review of the case of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to whether Granada Television was provided with details of Dr. Skuse's method for the Griess test used on 22 November 1974 whilst Dr. Skuse was still in service, in connection with the "World in Action" programme on the Birmingham pub bombing.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Patrick Hill

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action has been taken following the letter to the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills of 5 February, concerning inquiries by the governor of Gartree prison into the tape-recorded interview with Patrick Hill.

Mr. Mellor: The governor's inquiries into the precise circumstances of this matter proved inconclusive. Staff have been reminded of the need to follow laid-down procedures regarding visits.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Unemployment

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the level of long-term unemployment in the Province.

Mr. Viggers: At 9 October 1986, 64,251 claimants had been continuously unemployed for more than one year in Northern Ireland, representing 49·2 per cent. of unemployed claimants in the Province on that date.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of unemployment in Belfast at the latest date; and what were the figures for December 1979.

Mr. Viggers: At 9 October 1986 there were 41,994 unemployed claimants in the Belfast employment service jobmarket area. At 6 December 1979 there were 21,325 people registered as unemployed in the Belfast jobmarket area. Figures are not comparable due to changes in the method of counting.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures are being taken to reduce unemployment in the Province; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: Government measures are extensive and operate in a wide field. They include the substantial measures to secure new jobs in Northern Ireland through the Industrial Development Board, the Local Enterprise Development Unit and through a unique framework of financial assistance, distributed to that end. They also include a variety of employment measures such as Action for Community Employment, Enterprise Ulster, the new workers scheme, jobclubs, the restart programme and the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of youth unemployment in the Province at the latest date; and what were the figures in December 1979.

Mr. Viggers: At 9 October 1986, 49,356 unemployed claimants in Northern Ireland were under 25 years old; 5,940 of these claimants were under 18 years old. At January 1980 (figures for December 1979 are not available) 26,899 unemployed people under 25 years old, of whom 5,111 were under 18 years old, were registered at employment service jobmarkets in Northern Ireland. Figures are not comparable due to changes in the method of counting.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if any further measures are to be introduced to help reduce the level of long-term unemployment in the Province.

Mr. Viggers: I have recently increased the number of restart courses on the programme from 11 to 19 and I intend to provide more jobclubs in the Province. I am considering what further measures might be appropriate, including the possible further extension of the restart programme, taking account of the pilot projects now under way in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the measures to reduce youth unemployment in the Province.

Mr. Viggers: I keep under constant review, and commission specific evaluations of, all measures introduced both to reduce youth unemployment and to assist young unemployed to get jobs or to become self-employed.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of unemployment in the Province at the latest date; and what were the comparable figures for December 1979.

Mr. Viggers: At 9 October 1986 there were 130,635 unemployed claimants in Northern Ireland, representing 19·3 per cent. of the working population. This compares with an estimated claimant figure of 60,200 at December 1979, representing 8·8 per cent. of the working population.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list the unemployment levels in Northern Ireland constituencies at the latest date;

(2) if he will list the current level of unemployment in the Province on a constituency basis.

Mr. Viggers: The numbers of unemployed claimants in each parliamentary constituency in Northern Ireland at 9 October 1986 are as follows:

Parliamentary constituency	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Belfast East	3,504	1,556	5,060
Belfast North	6,646	2,315	8,961
Belfast South	4,350	2,215	6,565
Belfast West	9,755	2,533	12,288
East Antrim	4,932	2,223	7,155
East Londonderry	6,948	2,472	9,420
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	6,374	2,247	8,621
Foyle	9,552	2,512	12,064
Lagan Valley	4,439	2,085	6,524
Mid-Ulster	6,525	2,343	8,868
Newry and Armagh	6,468	2,385	8,853
North Antrim	5,088	2,077	7,165
North Down	2,850	1,639	4,489
South Antrim	4,223	2,020	6,243
South Down	4,506	2,168	6,674
Strangford	2,759	1,671	4,430
Upper Bann	5,019	2,236	7,255
Northern Ireland Totals	93,938	36,697	130,635

Amphibians and Reptiles

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to improve the protection of amphibians and reptiles, especially the common lizard, slow worm, grass snake and adder; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: No. The common, or viviparous, lizard is already listed in the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 as an animal which is protected at all times; the slow worm, grass snake and adder are not native Northern Ireland species and do not naturally occur there.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing, for the last three years, a list of those voluntary organisations which have received grants from Departments under his control, together with the amounts received in each case; if he will state the total amount paid in grants to voluntary organisations and the headings under which they were paid; what steps are taken to monitor the use to which these funds are put; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The answer is as follows:

Northern Ireland Office

	£
Belfast Law Centre	68,000
Northern Ireland Association for the care and resettlement of offenders	180,268
Extern	300,070
Northern Ireland Intermediate Treatment Association	1,099

	£
Save the Children Fund	145,409
Co-operation North	35,000

Department of finance and personnel

	£
Refreshment Clubs	353,000
Northern Ireland Civil Service Sports Association	34,682
Northern Ireland Civil Service Retirement Fellowship	1,465
Army Benevolent Fund	15,000
Police Benevolent Fund	50,000
Ulster Defence Regiment Benevolent Fund	20,000
Public Service Training Council	165,000
Northern Ireland Economic Development Office	225,000
Incorporated Council of Law Reporting	3,000

Department of Health and Social Services

	£
Northern Ireland Council of Social Service	199,990·21
Community Service Volunteers	8,065
Society of St. Vincent de Paul	39,303
Belfast Voluntary Welfare Society	4,000
Carafriend	4,625
Retirement Association of Northern Ireland	6,890
International Voluntary Service	11,000
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents	25,970
Northern Ireland Council for Orthopaedic Development	16,000
National Deaf Children's Society	2,300
Ulster Institute for the Deaf	6,000
Age Concern	68,450
Abbeyfield	2,400
Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults	4,000
Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health	69,252
Northern Ireland Marriage Guidance Council	60,600
Northern Ireland Council on Alcohol	139,461
British Epilepsy Association (Northern Ireland Region)	2,650
Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation	20,700
Gingerbread	46,500
Catholic Marriage Advisory Council	35,378
Church of Ireland Social and Family Welfare Society	1,060
Blind Centre for Northern Ireland	10,000
Motability	11,376
Multiple Sclerosis Action Group	12,700
Soldiers, Sailors and Airmens Families Association	650
Physically Handicapped and Able-Bodied	8,250
Family Planning Association (Northern Ireland Region)	3,300
Joseph Rowntree Trust (Family Fund)	142,065
Council on Alcohol Related Problems	18,887
Multiple Sclerosis Society (Northern Ireland Branch)	3,000
Northern Ireland Widows Association	1,525
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	5,250

	£
Northern Ireland Hospice	100,000
Praxis	30,629
Health Education Council	256,040
British Red Cross Society	1,060
St. John Ambulance (NI District)	1,060
Order of Malta Ambulance Corps	1,060
National Health Service Retirement Fellowship Association	530
Crossroads Care Attendance Scheme	5,833
SHARE	7,700
Disabled Drivers Association	1,000
National Rubella Campaign	500
Newcastle Society for Mentally Handicapped	15,000
Arthritis Care	1,000
Omagh Community Development Project	1,500
Newry and Mourne Co-operative Society	7,500

	£
Enterprise Carrickfergus Limited	7,500
Belfast Voluntary Welfare Society	7,000
Springfield Charitable Association	7,000
Aileach Development Society Limited	7,500
Orana Children's Home, Newry	2,085
Glendhu Children's Hostel, Belfast	9,027
Marianville Mother and Baby Home, Belfast	10,125
Johnston Memorial House, Belfast	51,153
Nazareth Lodge, Belfast	11,000
Manor House, Ballycastle	666
Northern Ireland Pre-School Playgroups Association	37,241
National Childminding Association	2,053
Barnardo's Carraigfoyle Paediatric Support Unit	25,508
Extern—West Belfast Auto Project	24,201
Northern Ireland Intermediate Treatment Association	1,098
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders	3,280
National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations	774
Northern Ireland Foster Care Association	2,391
Save the Children Fund—Minnowburn Youth Farm	15,237
Parents Advice Centre	2,470
Belfast Voluntary Welfare Society—Home Start Scheme	5,037
Community Service Volunteers—Children in Care Scheme	3,580
Down and Connor Catholic Family Welfare Society	48,093
NSPCC	35,393

Department of Education

	£
Arts Council for Northern Ireland	2,795,600
Linenhall Library	54,000
NI Library and Information Services Council	287
Forum for Community Work Education	23,000
Protestant and Catholic Encounter	9,500
Corrymeela	61,000
Harmony Community Trust	16,500
Irish Council of Churches/Irish Commission for Justice and Peace—Peace Education Programme	3,530
Children's Community Relations Holiday Scheme	88,353
Churches Central Committee for Community Work	12,555
Citizen's Advice Bureaux Headquarters	88,841
Voluntary Sports Organisations	1,150,460
Glencairn Community Association	666
Ulster Peoples College	12,780
Methodist College Inter-Schools Project	1,370
All Children Together	100
Association of Teachers of Cultural and Social Studies	185
Sixth-formers Community Relations Project	104
United Sportsmens Service	200
Youth Clubs and Youth Organisations	1,330,706
Ulster American Folk Park	309,000
NI UNESCO Committee	2,669
Workers Educational Association	98,500
Educational Guidance Service for Adults	27,992
Retirement Association of NI	1,000
NI Council for Educational Research	171,679
Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research	3,000
British Association for the Advancement of Science	3,184
Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges	58,481
League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers	6,461
Council for Education in World Citizenship	920
Ulster College of Music	7,410
Ulster Society for Irish Historical Studies	1,275

Department of Agriculture

	£
Royal Ulster Agricultural Society	45,400
Down Royal Corporation of Horse Breeders	1,927

	£
Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster	28,599
Various Show Societies	1,779
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents	125
Seed Potato Promotions Ltd	120,300

Department of Economic Development

	£
The Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions	72,884
Northern Ireland Industrial Safety Group	2,800
Employment and Training Committee for the Printing and Publishing Industry	10,276
Action for Community Employment (funded 862 projects in private and voluntary sector organisations)	7,930,000
Youth Community Projects (funded 30 projects in private and voluntary sector organisations)	1,148,000
Community Volunteering Scheme (funded 19 voluntary sector organisations)	331,000
Work Preparation Units	11,274,175
Younghelp	839,063
National Trust	185,797
Incorporated Cripples Institutes and Holiday Homes	45,523
Thomas Doran Training Centre	130,164
Glencraig Village Community	116,904
Marine Grange Village Community	181,992
Royal National Institute for the Blind	16,791
Irish Linen Guild	9,000
Automation Centre (Queen's University, Belfast)	99,000
Wolfson Signal Processing Unit (Queen's University, Belfast)	8,750
The Lambeg Industrial Research Association	132,000
Occupational Respiratory Surveillance Scheme	16,000
Occupational Health Survey (Queen's University, Belfast)	10,500
Northern Ireland Consumer Council	40,000

Department of the Environment

	£
Ulster Game and Wildfowl Society	100
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	9,750
Strangford Lough Wildfowlers' Association	700
Copeland Bird Observatory	1,000
Northern Ireland Bird Records Committee	475
British Trust for Ornithology	2,250
Antrim Ringing Group	140
Grass Roots Conservation Corps	219
Strangford Lough Wildlife Scheme (National Trust)	11,000
Conservation Volunteers	15,691
Ulster Trust for Nature Conservation	4,500
Northern Ireland Council of Social Services	3,382
National Trust	307,978
Ulster Architectural Heritage Society/ACE	10,969
HEARTH	2,600
The Linenhall Library, Belfast	7,000
Road Safety Council (NI)	64,355
RoSPA	36,045
Environmental Improvement Scheme	2,600
Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations	76,500
National Federation of Housing Associations	200
Registered Housing Associations	36,239,616
Unregistered Housing Associations	65,913
Belfast Housing Aid Society	16,190

Northern Ireland Office

	£
Belfast Law Centre	70,200
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders	210,094
Extern	303,122

	£
Northern Ireland Intermediate Treatment Association	1,365
Save the Children Fund	152,697
Presbyterian Church (Thompson House)	49,778
Ulster Quaker Service	9,304
Dismas House	18,701
Belfast Voluntary Welfare Society	12,001
Citizens Advice Bureau	825
Belfast Rape Crisis Centre	250
Co-operation North	35,000

Department of Finance and Personnel

	£
Refreshment Clubs	380,659
Northern Ireland Civil Service Sports Association	27,500
Northern Ireland Civil Service Retirement Fellowship	4,100
Army Benevolent Fund	15,000
Police Benevolent Fund	49,000
Ulster Defence Regiment Benevolent Fund	20,000
Public Service Training Council	178,673
Northern Ireland Economic Development Office	240,000
Incorporated Council of Law Reporting	3,000
Civil Service Benevolent Fund	13,000

Department of Health and Social Services

	£
Northern Ireland Council of Social Services	276,000
Community Service Volunteers	5,381
St. Vincent de Paul Society	52,026
Belfast Voluntary Welfare Society	3,500
Carefriend	5,147
Retirement Association of Northern Ireland	7,235
International Voluntary Service	14,438
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA)	27,268
Northern Ireland Council for Orthopaedic Development	16,800
National Deaf Children's Society	2,420
Ulster Institute for the Deaf	6,300
Age Concern	71,873
Abbeyfield Society	2,400
Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults	7,560
Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health	81,432
Northern Ireland Marriage Guidance Council	31,981
Northern Ireland Council on Alcohol	55,599
British Epilepsy Association (Northern Ireland Region)	6,000
Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation	30,300
Northern Ireland Widows Association	5,230
Gingerbread	45,660
Catholic Marriage Advisory Council	70,900
Church of Ireland Social and Family Welfare Society	1,120
Blind Centre for Northern Ireland	18,000
Motability	11,111
Multiple Sclerosis Action Group	13,340
Soldiers, Sailors and Airmens Families Association	700
Physically Handicapped and Able-Bodied	13,000
Family Planning Association (Northern Ireland Region)	3,500
Council on Alcohol Related Problems	23,924
Crossroads Care Attendant Scheme	14,700
Multiple Sclerosis Society (Northern Ireland Branch)	3,150
Ambulance Services	3,150
Womens Health Fair	2,250
National Health Service Retirement Fellowship	557
PRAXIS	22,298
Home Insulation Schemes	56,437
Disabled Drivers' Association	1,050
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	16,065
National Council for Carers and the Elderly Dependants	500

	£
National Rubella Campaign	700
Northern Ireland Hospice	50,000
Northlands Centre	17,000
Marie Carie Memorial Foundation	5,000
Industrial Therapy Organisation	25,000
Order of Malta Ambulance Corps	15,500
British Red Cross Society	1,289
Womens Information Group	2,000
CRUSE in Northern Ireland	11,250
Open Door Housing Resettement Project	7,000
Presbyterian Church in Ireland	1,820
Northern Ireland Council for the Single Homeless	1,500
Workers Education Association	2,400
Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust	10,000
Northern Ireland Childminders Development Committee	4,193
Parents Advice Centre	2,913
Extern—West Belfast Auto Project	26,770
Northern Ireland Foster Care Association	4,163
Northern Ireland Pre-School Playgroup Association	66,954
Northern Ireland Intermediate Treatment Association	1,364
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders	3,443
Down and Connor Catholic Family Welfare Society	53,225
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children	37,444
Dr. Barnardo's	53,926
Belfast Voluntary Welfare Society—Home Start Scheme	5,016
Community Service Volunteers—Give and Take Scheme	20,455
National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations (Northern Ireland Group)	1,833
National Playbus Association	671
Glendhu Children's Hostel, Belfast	3,827
Johnston Memorial Children's Home, Belfast	10,000
Manor House Children's Home, Lisburn	15,223
Marianville Mother and Baby Unit, Belfast	14
Nazareth House, Londonderry	2,619
Orans Children's Home, Newry	415
Glebe House Holiday Home, Kilclief	1,187

Department of Education

	£
Arts Council for Northern Ireland	2,849,000
Linenhall Library	52,000
NI Library and Information Services Council	628
Forum for Community Work Education	35,000
Protestant and Catholic Encounter	9,300
Corrymeela	69,989
Harmony Community Trust	18,000
Irish Council of Churches-Irish Commission for Justice and Peace—Peace Education Programme	14,248
Children's Community Relations Holiday Scheme	106,398
Churches' Central Committee for Community Work	17,982
Citizens' Advice Bureaux Headquarters	109,000
Voluntary Sports Organisations	1,407,567
Glencairn Community Association	181
Ulster Peoples College	7,524
Methodist College Inter-Schools Project	2,455
Sixth-formers Community Relations Project	127
Youth Clubs and Youth Organisations	1,486,479
Ulster American Folk Park	355,000
NI UNESCO Committee	12,983
Workers Educational Association	97,774
Educational Guidance Service for Adults	34,215
Retirement Association of NI	4,000
NI Council for Educational Research	163,802
Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research	3,000
British Association for the Advancement of Science	3,345
Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges	56,560
League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers	9,019
Council for Education in World Citizenship	915
Ulster College of Music	6,809
Ulster Society for Irish Historical Studies	1,640
Christian Education Movement	468
Community of the Peace People	4,475
Irish Genealogical Association-Christian Heritage	475
Joint Ecumenical Talks Project	270
Community Relations Information Service	630
Federation for Ulster Local Studies	500
Community Relations in Schools—(East Belfast) Project	7,615
Federation of Women's Institutes (NI)	1,000

Department of Agriculture

	£
Royal Ulster Agricultural Society	48,248
Down Royal Corporation of Horse Breeders	55,866
Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster	46,000
Various Show Societies	1,695
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents	125
Seed Potato Promotions Ltd.	130,000

Department of Economic Development

	£
The Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions	80,000
Action for Community Employment (funded 860 projects in private and voluntary sector organisations)	9,724,000
Community Volunteering Scheme (funded 24 voluntary sector organisations)	523,000
Youth Community Projects (funded 27 projects in private and voluntary sector organisations)	877,539
Community Workshops	12,094,737
Younghelp	587,175
National Trust	171,657
Incorporated Cripples Institutes and Holiday Homes	46,942
Thomas Doran Training Centre	264,856
Glencraig Village Community	88,742
Mourne Grange Village Community	154,923
Clanabogan Village Community	8,000
Royal National Institute for the Blind	10,309
Irish Linen Guild	9,148
Automation Centre (Queen's University Belfast)	47,250
Wolfson Signal Processing Unit (Queen's University Belfast)	7,000
The Lambeg Industrial Research Association	96,439
Occupational Respiratory Surveillance Scheme	15,217
Occupational Health Survey	2,789
Northern Ireland Consumer Council	50,000
University of Ulster (CAD Engineer) R&D Purposes	25,279
The Scottish-Irish Trust of Ulster	99,042
The Railway Preservation Society	2,700
YMCA	4,466

Department of Environment

	£
Antrim Ringing Group	480
British Trust for Ornithology	2,500
Copeland Bird Observatory	1,000
Irish Brent Geese Expedition	1,000
National Trust Strangford Lough Wildlife Scheme	32,500
North Down Ringing Group	400
Northern Ireland Bird Records Committee	435
Northern Ireland Ornithologists Club	580
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	12,594
Strangford Lough Wildflowers Association	500
Ulster Game and Wildfowl Society	250
Ulster Trust for Nature Conservation	1,050
National Trust	415,000
Conservation Volunteers (NI)	75,080
Northern Ireland Council for Social Services	3,505

	£
HEARTH	9,554
Road Safety Council (NI)	65,000
RoSPA	41,593
Environmental Improvement Scheme	2,737
St. Oliver Plunkett Environmental Committee	41,350
Belfast Voluntary Welfare Society "Better Belfast" Project	20,040
Northern Ireland Federation 66 Housing Associations	70,500
National Federation of Housing Association	200
Registered Housing Associations	41,413,371
Unregistered Housing Associations	66,725
Belfast Housing Aid Society	20,000
Tenants Participation Advisory Service	12,500
Community Technical Aid	10,000

Northern Ireland Office

	£
Belfast Law Centre	100,000
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders	258,017
Extern	347,849
Northern Ireland Intermediate Treatment Association	1,555
Save the Children Fund	158,726
Presbyterian Church (Thompson House)	58,357
Ulster Quaker Service	12,070
Dismas House	21,154
Belfast Voluntary Welfare Society	1,250
Citizens Advice Bureau	1,500
Belfast Rape Crisis Centre	11,000
Co-operation North	35,000

Department of Finance and Personnel

	£
Refreshment Clubs	433,738
Northern Ireland Civil Service Sports Association	29,000
Northern Ireland Civil Service Retirement Fellowship	4,100
Army Benevolent Fund	15,000
Police Benevolent Fund	55,000
Ulster Defence Regiment Benevolent Fund	20,000
Public Service Training Council	199,852
Northern Ireland Economic Development Office	239,717
Incorporated Council of Law Reporting	3,000
Civil Service Benevolent Fund	13,000
Economic Research Centre	45,000
Policy Research Institute	9,314

Department of Health and Social Services

	£
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action	182,960
Community Service Volunteers	6,146
St. Vincent de Paul Society	28,080
Belfast Voluntary Welfare Society	4,000
Carafriend	3,865
Retirement Association of Northern Ireland	6,600
International Voluntary Service	15,925
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA)	28,359
Northern Ireland Council for Orthopaedic Development	17,472
National Deaf Children's Society	2,517
Ulster Institute for the Deaf	6,552
Age Concern	74,748
Abbeyfield Society	2,250
Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults	38,276
Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health	84,700
Northern Ireland Marriage Guidance Council	35,617
Northern Ireland Council on Alcohol	57,950
British Epilepsy Association (Northern Ireland Region)	7,040
Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation	32,049
Northern Ireland Widows Association	6,513
Gingerbread	71,676
Catholic Marriage Advisory Council	43,723
The Northlands Centre	22,500
Industrial Therapy Organisation	25,000
Life Care and Housing Trust	9,336
Outreach Anorexia	1,000
Northern Ireland Council for Travelling People	15,058
Womens Information Groups	2,080
Combat Huntingdon's Chorea	1,000
CRUSE in Northern Ireland	10,920
Open Door Housing Resettlement Project	16,863
Presbyterian Church in Ireland (Board of Social Witness)	10,650
Northern Ireland Rape Crisis Association	4,325
Workers' Education Association	3,900
National Council for Carers and their Elderly Dependants	520
Church of Ireland Social and Family Welfare Society	1,165
Blind Centre for Northern Ireland	29,700
Motability	17,250
Multiple Sclerosis Action Group	13,874
Soldiers, Sailors and Airmens Families Association (SSAFA)	730
Physically Handicapped and Able-Bodied (PHAB)	12,400
Family Planning Association (Northern Ireland Region)	3,500
Council on Alcohol Related Problems	22,202
Crossroads Care Attendant Scheme	13,867
Multiple Sclerosis Society (NI) Branch	3,276
Ambulance Services	3,198
Northern Ireland Council for the Handicapped	74,500
National Health Service Retirement Fellowship	580
PRAXIS	22,600
Disabled Drivers' Association	1,100
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	15,924
National Rubella Campaign	800
Home Insulation Schemes	73,000
Belfast Law Centre	61,264
Arthritis Care	1,000
Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust	20,000
British Red Cross Society	400
Simon Community Northern Ireland	5,000
Northern Ireland Pre-School Playgroups Association	84,493
Extern	59,514
Parents Advice Centre	3,892
Northern Ireland Intermediate Treatment Association	1,555
Down and Connor Catholic Family Welfare Society	58,921
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders	3,616
Northern Ireland Childminders Association	5,865
Dr. Barnardo's	46,270
Northern Ireland Foster Care Association	2,847
Belfast Voluntary Welfare Society—Home Start Scheme	5,242
Community Service Volunteers—Give and Take Scheme	23,000
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children	41,169
Newtownabbey Auto Project	10,750
Garnerville/Knocknagoney Project	4,153
Toy Libraries Association (Playmatters)	2,000
Derry Diocesan Child Welfare Society	6,383
St. Joseph's Children's Home	4,222
BVWS Parent/Child Support Unit	5,000
Orana Children's Home	2,254
Childhaven Children's Home	2,250

Department of Education

	£
Arts Council for Northern Ireland	3,217,500
Linen Hall Library	45,000

	£
NI Library and Information Services Council	460
Forum for Community Work Education	47,000
Protestant and Catholic Encounter	9,700
Corrymeela	79,200
Harmony Community Trust	29,450
Irish Council of Churches/Irish Commission for Justice and Peace—Peace Education Programme	16,080
Children's Community Relations Holiday Scheme	101,270
Churches' Central Committee for Community Work	25,820
Citizen's Advice Bureaux Headquarters	111,400
Voluntary Sports Organisations	759,600
Ulster Peoples College	27,210
Methodist College Inter-Schools Project	2,335
Youth Clubs and Youth Organisations	1,637,272
Ulster American Folk Park	437,000
NI UNESCO Committee	22,118
Workers Educational Association	130,267
Educational Guidance Services for Adults	36,921
Retirement Association of NI	3,000
NI Council for Educational Research	173,886
Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research	3,000
British Association for the Advancement of Science	3,345
Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges	56,095
League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers	7,497
Council for Education in World Citizenship	860
Ulster College of Music	6,970
Ulster Society for Irish Historical Studies	1,340
Christian Education Movement	320
Community of the Peace People	17,900
Community Relations in Schools—(East Belfast) Project	22,745
Federation of Women's Institutes (NI)	1,000
Children's Project NI	8,970
Farset Youth & Community Development Ltd	8,500
East Belfast Community Council Carol Service of Reconciliation	205
Irish School of Ecumenics	1,310
Children's Holiday Scheme NI	8,895

Department of Agriculture

	£
Down Royal Corporation of Horse Breeders	35,000
Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster	41,140
Various Show Societies	1,838
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents	125

Department of Economic Development

	£
The Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions	87,200
Action for Community Employment (funded 1,040 projects in private and voluntary sector organisations)	14,270,000
Community Volunteering Scheme (funded 24 voluntary sector organisations)	635,000
Youth Community Projects	637,636
Community Workshops	13,356,506
Youthhelp	551,468
Incorporated Cripples Institutes and Holiday Homes	38,546
Thomas Doran Training Centre	279,514
Glencraig Village Community	64,376
Mourne Grange Village Community	128,411
Clanabogan Village Community	19,000
Royal National Institute for the Blind	7,009
Automation Centre (Queen's University Belfast)	48,600
Wolfson Signal Unit (Queen's University Belfast)	6,000
The Lambeg Industrial Research Association	89,000
University of Ulster (CAD Engineer) R & D Purposes	15,851
National Trust	106,297
The Scottish-Irish Trust of Ulster	79,992
The Northern Ireland Co-operative Development Agency	24,622

Department of the Environment

	£
British Trust for Ornithology	3,000
North Down Ringing Group	510
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	15,077
Ulster Trust for Nature Conservation	16,108
National Trust	343,472
Conservation Volunteers (NI)	124,954
Road Safety Council	75,000
ROSPA	39,412
St. Oliver Plunkett Environmental Committee	66,063
Belfast Voluntary Welfare Society	37,242
Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations	80,000
National Federation of Housing Associations	200
Registered Housing Associations	39,501,813
Unregistered Housing Associations	66,329
Belfast Housing Aid Society	27,000
Tenants Participation Advisory Service	32,000
Community Technical Aid	20,000
Alliance Avenue Community Group	15,571
Ligoniel Environmental Association	12,073
Ulster Architectural Heritage Society	26,721
Charles Shiels Institution	22,059
Church of Ireland, Richhill	5,300
1st Presbyterian Church, Greyabbey	1,656
Carlisle Memorial Church	7,911
Enniskillen Methodist Church	3,300
St. Mary's Dominican Convent	1,636
The Select Vestry Desertmartin Rectory	62
The Select Vestry Queen Street Rectory, Ballymoney	3,500
First Cookstown Church Committee	1,250
Kilwarlin Moravian Church	220
Newtownards Masonic Hall	1,680
Portaferry Masonic Lodge	3,050
Ballymoney Masonic Hall	4,630
Drapers Charity—The Old Courthouse, Moneymore	960
Belfast Central Mission	318
Belfast Development Agency	258,589
Ulster Provident Housing Association	82,876
Northern Ireland Council on Alcohol	7,200
Young Men's Christian Association	12,500
Ardoyne Industrial Development Limited	110,560
Hare Knishna Movement	7,800
Divis Playgroup	2,964
National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children	4,580
Trustees of the Masonic Hall, Londonderry	5,546
Derry Catholic Club	2,574
Trustees of the Waterside Community Council	4,922
Ebenezer Gospel Hall	9,600

Department	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £
Northern Ireland Office	729,846	863,337	1,006,478
Department of Finance and Personnel	867,147	930,932	1,066,721
Department of Economic Development	22,600,619	24,991,210	30,445,028
Department of Agriculture (NI)	198,130	281,934	78,103
Department of Education (NI)	6,341,308	6,950,373	7,060,461

Department	1983-84 £	1984-85 £	1985-86 £
Department of Health and Social Services	1,741,421	1,496,416	1,650,896
Department of the Environment (NI)	36,879,173	42,320,444	41,069,788
Totals	69,357,644	77,834,646	82,377,475

All expenditure on Government grant aid to voluntary bodies and organisations in Northern Ireland is subject to careful scrutiny to ensure that it is used for the genuine purpose of improving social, environmental or economic conditions in areas of need. There are special circumstances in Northern Ireland requiring particular care in administering grant aid and where it is considered that payment of grant would not be in the public interest, no grant is paid.

TRANSPORT

Rail Services

12 **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet British rail unions to discuss rail services.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend would be pleased to meet the railway unions if they ask to see him on matters concerning Government policy affecting the railways.

Road Hump Regulations

13. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the opportunities for speed-reducing measures in the revised road hump regulations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Road humps are one of a number of measures which can reduce road casualties in built-up areas. The new regulations — which come into force today — will make it significantly easier for local authorities to install humps. Humps, and particularly humps on zebra crossings, offer special benefits to pedestrians.

Shipping Industry

14. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to arrest the decline in Great Britain's shipping industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government are closely monitoring the situation of the British shipping industry. A large part of the apparent decline can be attributed to the transfer of vessels within British ownership to other registries, very often under the British flag, rather than to a withdrawal from shipping.

London Regional Transport

15. **Mr. Maples** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on revenue subsidies for London Regional Transport.

Mr. Moore: LRT's accounts for 1985-86 show that it reduced its need for revenue support to £97·4 million, so virtually achieving in one year the target reduction to £95 million for which we had allowed three years. Increased efficiency has not been won by cutting services, which are being maintained or expanded, but it has allowed more money to be spent on investment in improving the system, so that LRT has planned to increase investment from £234 million last year to £261 million during 1986-87. The overall result for London ratepayers is also satisfactory since, despite increased investment, we have been able to reduce the levy in support of LRT from 10·80p in the pound last year to 9·79p in the pound for 1986-87.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of London Regional Transport to discuss the quality of services.

Mr. Moore: I would expect this to be included among the many issues which I discuss with Dr. Bright from time to time.

Highway Code

16. **Mr. Lewis Stevens** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish the revised highway code.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I expect to publish the revised highway code before the end of January. Details of the changes have already been widely publicised. A press notice will be issued when the revised code is published.

Road Safety

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the relative performance of the United Kingdom on road safety compared with that of other European countries.

Mr. Moore: The United Kingdom has the lowest road death rate in the European Community. In 1984, the rate was 10·2 per 100,000 population — 30 per cent. lower than the Community average. Rates for Norway and Sweden are lower still.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

18. **Mrs. Dunwoody** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss British Rail Engineering and the reorganisation of Rail House, Crewe.

Mr. David Mitchell: We discuss a range of issues at our regular meetings with the British Rail chairman, but details of management organisation are matters for the board.

Settle-Carlisle Line

20. **Mr. Waller** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report of the transport users' consultative committees on the application by British Rail for the closure of the Settle to Carlisle line.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that the transport users' consultative committees for north-eastern and north-western England expect to be able to submit a joint report before the end of this year.

Buses (Deregulation)

21. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the progress to date of his deregulation programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I am very satisfied with the first results of deregulation, including the new minibus services which have been introduced, and the subsidy savings which have been made. I look forward to further benefits from the continuing effects of competition.

27. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress to date in bus deregulation in the north-west; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am generally very pleased with the first results of deregulation. In some places in the north-west there have been problems, but I know that all concerned locally are working hard to make improvements. I am particularly encouraged by the way in which competitive tendering for subsidy contracts has helped Lancashire county council make savings equivalent to over £5 million in a full year, whilst maintaining service levels; this should make it possible for the county council to make additional funds available if it sees a need. I am also pleased to read that a new operator plans to start a substantial new minibus operation in Greater Manchester.

33. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to future levels of subsidy for local bus services following deregulation.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is for local authorities to decide what levels of subsidy is needed for local bus services, bearing in mind the interests of both travellers and ratepayers. The introduction of competitive tendering for subsidy contracts has helped to secure better value for money, and many local authorities will need to spend less to maintain a similar level of service as a result of this requirement in the 1985 Transport Act.

42. **Sir Fergus Montgomery** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress of deregulation in the bus industry.

Mr. David Mitchell: Across the country as a whole, broadly the same level of service is being provided. Teething problems, as staff and passengers have become familiar with new routes and timetables, are being resolved. A few areas continue to experience difficulties, but bus operators and local authorities are working hard to secure improvements. Substantial savings of up to 70 per cent. have been achieved in ratepayers' subsidy to bus operators as a result of competitive tendering. A notable feature is the appearance of improved services in a significant number of places, often involving minibuses.

Severn Barrage

22. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what conditions as regards the inclusion of a lock for ships his Department has laid down for plans for a Severn barrage.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None, Sir. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has initiated a further study to establish criteria for a Severn barrage, including the lock or locks necessary for ships. The study team will consult fully with interested parties.

Airports (Noise)

23. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce the results of the reviews of noise management around United Kingdom airports.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Good progress is being made on the current reviews. On night noise at Gatwick and Heathrow, for example, I hope to be able to make an announcement early next year. I will, of course, consult those concerned on any proposed changes.

Aviation Industry

24. **Mr. Wood** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has about the effects on consumers on domestic air routes of liberalisation of the airline industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There is clear evidence that the introduction of competition on domestic routes has benefited consumers through improved levels of service and a wider range of fares. Furthermore, traffic on the Edinburgh and Glasgow trunk routes from London, for example, has grown faster since the introduction of competing services at Heathrow than might have been expected by comparison with growth on other major domestic routes.

28. **Mr. Squire** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he expects at the next Council of Transport Ministers towards liberalisation of aviation in Europe.

Mr. Michael Spicer: At the last Transport Council, six member states opposed our proposals for allowing the introduction of cheaper air fares. We are now trying to persuade these countries to change their minds and in the light of these bilateral discussions we will decide how best to take work forward at the December Council and in whatever ways are appropriate thereafter.

40. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the contribution of the United Kingdom's air transport industry to the national economy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: As I said in my reply to my hon. Friend the member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) on 3 November 1986 at column 348, civil aviation directly provides about 80,0000 jobs in the United Kingdom. In 1985 British airlines contributed some £650 million to the balance of payments. About £29 billion of our visible trade last year passed through United Kingdom airports.

Motor Vehicles (Child Restraints)

25. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the use of child restraints in motor vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received representations from a number of hon. Members, including my hon. Friend, and from a range of organisations and individuals.

We have had over 10,000 calls to our road safety hotline (0800 234888) asking for advice. The Department will continue to press home to parents the message that the use of restraints saves children's lives.

The summer sales of child restraints was about 20,000 per week. We are working closely with the Child Accident Prevention Trust on loan schemes for child car seats.

Basildon (Ministerial Visit)

26. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Minister of State's visit to Basildon in November.

Mr. David Mitchell: On 17 November I addressed a seminar arranged by the Essex Taxi Federation and sponsored by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon. This enabled me to describe the opportunities made available to the taxi trade by the Transport Act 1985, and the benefit to the public of lower cost taxi journeys made under the shared taxi provisions in the Act. This will lead to more business for taxi operators, as the market grows. I also described the new opportunity for enterprising taxi operators to initiate pre-booked shared taxi journeys.

Trunk Roads (Crash Barriers)

29. **Mr. Lord** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to review the criteria governing the erection of crash barriers on major trunk roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. A major study into safety fence criteria for all-purpose dual carriageway roads has been completed. The implications of the study are now being actively considered by the Department.

Airports (Security)

30. **Mr. Silvester** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of security at United Kingdom airports in comparison with those in other countries.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We do not try to make direct comparisons. Circumstances vary from airport to airport and country to country. The Department regularly discusses security standards and practices with other countries and gives active support to British airlines in ensuring that the security they are afforded in foreign airports is satisfactory. My own contacts with other national aviation security authorities, and those of officials in my Department, lead me to believe that security at United Kingdom airports is among the most effective in the world. This is confirmed by our excellent security record. Our aim is to ensure that this record is maintained in the future.

M40-M42

31. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he estimates the M40 will be completed from London to its junction with the M42.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Subject to satisfactory progress through the statutory processes, the whole of the M40 extension may be open to traffic by the end of 1990.

Humber Bridge

34. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the level of debt and future toll arrangements for the Humber bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The outstanding debt on the Humber bridge at the end of the 1985-86 financial year was £256·1 million. The debt continues to rise as annual deficits are capitalised. The Government accepted in their response to the Transport Committee's report on tolled crossings that the Humber bridge is a special case. Officials of the Humber bridge board and my Department are evaluating ways of putting the finances of the bridge on a sound footing. I hope this will help the board when it presents its preferred solution for consideration.

Tree Planting

34. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will report the progress of his Department's tree-planting programmes for motorways and trunk roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am happy to announce in what is National Tree Week that during the current season the Department will plant about 1·3 million trees and shrubs alongside its roads. This will be the 16th successive year that the 1 million figure has been exceeded. Since 1963 a total of around 30 million trees and shrubs will have been planted alongside national roads in England and Wales.

Continuing maintenance is just as important as planting. We will be undertaking, in addition to new planting, a full programme of maintenance in relation to trees planted in earlier years.

Road Casualties

36. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the number of road deaths and serious injuries, respectively, in each of the years 1983, 1984, 1985 and to the latest available date of 1986.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following is the information:

Road casualties in Great Britain: 1983 to 1986

	Deaths	*Serious injuries*
1983	5,445	71,000
1984	5,599	73,000
1985	5,165	71,000
[1]1986	2,407	31,000

[1] First half, provisional.

Rail Services (Scotland)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss the future of rail services in Scotland.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman of British Rail frequently to discuss matters of mutual interest.

M3 (Bar End-Chilworth)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to announce his decision upon the line of route of the M3 motorway from Bar End to Chilworth.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friends are considering the inspector's report of last year's public inquiry. There are a number of detailed and complex issues to be considered before decisions are taken. We will make an announcement as soon as possible.

London (Lorry Ban)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to meet the chairman of the London residuary body to discuss the operation of London's night-time and weekend lorry ban.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Such a meeting is not appropriate. The lorry ban is the responsibility of the London boroughs for whom the London residuary body is acting temporarily as agent.

Rail Services

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those rail services eligible for public service grants; and what changes he proposes to make thereto.

Mr. David Mitchell: The public service obligation grant is at present laid down towards the cost of all the passenger services of the British Railways Board. It is not paid for specific routes or areas of expenditure. As my right hon. Friend explained in his letter of 21 October to the chairman of the board, he will be redefining the public service obligation later this year. This will confirm the Government's commitment to supporting with grant the railway services in Network SouthEast and the provincial sectors, and will provide for a final payment of grant towards inter-city services in 1987-88 before the sector ceases to be eligible for grant from 31 March 1988.

Road Safety

43. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to increase the resources available to enable traffic commissioners to implement the safety implications of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Traffic Commissioners ask for an increase in their resources if it is necessary and have already been given an extra 24 vehicle inspectors to check vehicles.

Bypasses

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the programme of road bypasses around towns and villages.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: An increase in trunk road capital spending as announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement. This additional provision will enable us to maintain the present momentum of the trunk road construction programme, comprising nearly 300 schemes. More than half are bypasses or relief roads.

My hon. Friend will also wish to refer to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 3 November at columns 342-343.

Motorways (Speed Limit)

45. **Mr. Higgins** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place signs on motorways indicating that the maximum legal speed limit is 70 mph.

Mr. Moore: National speed limits are not generally signed numerically on any roads, including motorways. The current motorway sign, placed only at the entrances to motorways, denotes that the motorway regulations apply; these include the 70 miles per hour limit unless there are specific signs showing a lower limit is in force.

47. **Mr. Harvey** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to raise the 70 miles per hour limit on motorway traffic.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No.

British Rail (Franchise Income)

46. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the value of franchise income to British Rail for each year since 1978; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The only franchise operation with which BR is directly associated is the "Serviceman" scheme for car servicing centres at stations. This is still in its early stages, and no detailed financial results are available.

BR also obtains income from licences for the use of its technology. The sums involved in recent years were:

Year	*£(000)*
1978-79	43
1979-80	115
1980-81	17
1981-82	174
1982-83	41
1983-84	33
1984-85	149
[1]1985-86	343

[1] To June.

Air Traffic Control

48. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the recent discussions between his Department and the Civil Aviation Authority on air traffic controller adminstration at Heathrow and other major United Kingdom airports.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There have been no recent discussions with the CAA on administrative matters concerned with air traffic control. My right hon. Friend wrote however on 24 July to the incoming chairman of the authority setting objectives for his term of office. A copy of the letter was placed at the time in the Library of the House.

M25 (Service Area)

49. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his proposals for the construction of a motorway service area at Iver on the M25.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I expect to make an announcement early in the new year.

MV Derbyshire

50. **Mr. Key** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of the loss of the MV Kowloon Bridge, he will now hold a full inquiry into the loss of her sister ship the MV Derbyshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in the light of the loss at sea of MV Kowloon Bridge, he will now institute an inquiry into the loss of MV Derbyshire.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer my hon. Friends to the statement that I made to the House on 25 November.

Merchant Seafarers

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the number of British merchant seafarers no longer serving at sea who would be available for such service in time of emergency; and what estimate he has made of the number likely to be available in the 1990s.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Urgent consideration is being given to the question of the availability of British seafarers, both currently serving and also no longer at sea, in the context of planning for the use of the merchant fleet in emergency or war.

Public Transport

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Transport what changes he proposes to make for the regulation of public transport in the light of his recent visit to Leeds.

Mr. David Mitchell: None. Deregulation was bound to produce adjustment problems in some areas. The overall policy has been very successful.

"Operation Pride" (Expenditure)

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 25 November, of the £13·4 million earmarked by Network South-East on Operation Pride in 1986-87, if he will itemise expenditure on the following *(a)* more capacity to relieve overcrowding, *(b)* more frequent train cleaning, *(c)* better services at telephone inquiry bureaux, *(d)* the painting of rolling stock and *(e)* modernisation of stations.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand from British Rail that the expenditure on "Operation Pride" in 1986-87 can be itemised as:

	£ million
More capacity	2
Train cleaning	1
Better inquiry bureaux service	1
Painting of rolling stock	1
Station renovation/cleaning	4
Other	4

This expenditure is additional to the very much larger sums that are spent by NSE on a continuing basis which will improve the quality of service, by replacing rolling stock, modernising stations and signalling, and improving passenger information systems.

M40 Extension (Service Area)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many possible alternative sites for a motorway service area his Department has considered between Stokenchurch and Barn Hill on the proposed M40 extension.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In searching for a site for a motorway service area on the M40 between Stokenchurch and Barn Hill, the possibilities were reduced to a shortlist of six sites. Ardley was selected.

Public Service Vehicles (Test)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what was the number of vehicles that failed the annual public service vehicle test in 1985-86, in Wales, by operator group;

(2) what was the number of vehicles that failed the annual public service vehicle test in 1985-86, in Great Britain, by operator group;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report*, by operator group for 1985-86, separately distinguishing between Great Britain and Wales, the number and percentage of tests which resulted in immediate prohibition of annual public service vehicle tests;

(4) if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for 1985-86, separately distinguishing between Great Britain and Wales, the results of spot checking of public service vehicles and the immediate prohibition rates;

(5) if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the South Wales traffic area for 1985-86 the number of vehicle examiners employed by his Department, together with the number of public service vehicles and goods vehicles for which they are responsible;

(6) if he will publish in the *Official Report*, by operator group, the numbers of public service vehicles which *(a)* failed the annual test for each traffic area in Great Britain for 1985-86, and *(b)* failed the annual test for each traffic area in Great Britain after rectification of minor faults for 1985-86;

(7) if he will publish in the *Official Report*, by operator group, the numbers of public service vehicles which failed the annual test for the South Wales traffic area in 1985-86.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am having the information gathered and will answer these questions as soon as possible.

Vehicle Examiners

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* the vehicle examiner staff in post figures for May 1986, by traffic area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following reorganisation, the vehicle inspectorate is now based on a region and district structure. The district staff in post figures can be amalgamated to give figures which equate broadly to traffic areas, but in some cases the boundaries do not correspond.

The difference in boundaries coupled with changes in the professional and technology grading structure and in the spread of duties undertaken by the vehicle examiners in the inspectorate mean the 1986 figures are not directly comparable with statistics produced for previous years.

Vehicle Inspectorate PTO staff (vehicle examiners)

Vehicle Inspectorate Region	*Vehicle Inspectorate Districts roughly equivalent to Traffic Areas*	*Vehicle examiners in post May 1986*
North	North Eastern	67
	North Western	63

Vehicle Inspectorate Region	Vehicle Inspectorate Districts roughly equivalent to Traffic Areas	Vehicle examiners in post May 1986
South Wales and West	Western	44
	West Midlands	45
	South Wales	24
South East	Eastern	78
	South Eastern	40
	Metropolitan	57
Scottish	Scottish	52
Total		470

School Buses (Accidents)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department holds on the incidence of injuries and deaths to children being conveyed on vehicles taking them to or from school.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Deaths and injuries to children aged 16 or under on vehicles taking them to or from school, by type of vehicle:

Great Britain: 1985

	Deaths	Injuries
Pedal Cycles	9	1,855
Motorcycles	—	163
Cars	5	922
Other vehicles	—	568
All vehicles	14	3,508

There were in addition 60 deaths and 6,959 injuries to child pedestrians on their way to or from school.

Motorways (Contra-flow Systems)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will set out in tabular form the days and nights in each of the years since 1980 on which it was possible for a motorist to drive from junction 1 on the M1 motorway to Leicester, or in the opposite direction from Leicester to London, without encountering lane closures or contra-flow systems; and when he next anticipates a similar free flow of traffic in either direction.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Lane closures on motorways are necessary not only for major roadworks but also for routine maintenance and other minor operations. Short duration lane closures for such minor works are not recorded, so I cannot give dates for when it was last possible or when it will next be possible to drive between junction 1 and Leicester on the M1 without encountering a lane closure. Details of planned works for the remainder of 1986-87 were given in reply to a question by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) on 27 October at columns 35 and 36.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will list those days during 1986 when any single motorway in England was entirely free from lane closure or contra-flow systems; and which were the motorways concerned.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Lane closures on motorways are necessary not only for major roadworks but also for routine maintenance and other minor operations. Short duration lane closures for such minor works are not recorded. I cannot give dates for when during 1986 any motorway was entirely free from lane closure or contra-flow systems.

Roads (Repairs)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will set out in tabular form the road works delaying motorists on motorways which he required to be removed before the 1986 August bank holiday weekend; and what arrangements he has made for the forthcoming Christmas and New Year holidays.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table shows the major roadworks which were removed over the 1986 August bank holiday weekend. In addition, the Department's agent authorities were urged to limit as far as practicable closures for smaller items of work. For Christmas and New Year, agent authorities will again be urged to keep to the minimum practicable level closures for either major or minor works. There are few major works at this time of the year because of the weather conditions.

Motorway	Location	Comment
M1	J7-9 Hertfordshire	Closure partially lifted to allow 3 lanes in both directions
M1	J11 Bedfordshire	Closure lifted
M1	J14-15 Buckinghamshire	Closure lifted
M1	J15-16 Northamptonshire	Closure lifted
M1	J20-21 Leicestershire	Closure lifted 23 August to 25 August 1986
M1	J27-28 Nottinghamshire	Commencement planned to avoid Bank Holiday period
M1	J35-36 South Yorkshire	Closure lifted
M2	J5-6 Kent	Closure partially lifted to allow 2 lanes in both directions on this 2 lane motorway
M18	J1-2 South Yorkshire	Closure partially lifted
M20	J7-8 Kent	Closure lifted 25 July to 31 August 1986
M25	J19 Hertfordshire	Closure lifted
M25-M40 interchange	J16 Buckinghamshire	Overnight closures lifted
M40	J6 Oxfordshire	Closure partially lifted
A1M	Cassop Grange Bridge, Durham	Closure delayed until after Bank Holiday

M1 (Traffic Jam)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the reasons for the traffic jam on the north-bound carriageway of the M1 between junctions 12 and 13 on 20 November between 23.15 hours and midnight; and what steps were taken to minimise the inconvenience to road users.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Lane closures were in force to allow improvements to the motorway signalling. Although evening working was deliberately chosen to minimise disruption, the onset of heavy rain and several vehicle breakdowns unfortunately combined to cause the tailback.

British Airways

Mr. Denis Howell asked the Secretary of State for Transport why Her Majesty's Government has rejected the proposal to ensure that the work force of British

Airways shall be allocated at least 25 per cent. holding in the company upon privatisation; and what are the objections which have led Her Majesty's Government to oppose the establishment of a trust to administer such a holding.

Mr. Moore: My objectives in this flotation are both to foster the commitment of the employees of British Airways to the company's future, and to give the public, including British Airways' many customers, an adequate opportunity to participate. Because I cannot forecast the level of demand, I wish to retain flexibility in the allocation arrangements for the public in the event of heavy oversubscription. It would severely limit that flexibility if I were to reserve 25 per cent. of the shares on offer to employees, and I have therefore decided that their legitimate aspirations are best satisfied by the generous terms I announced on 21 October.

If employees wish to place shares in a trust when they have acquired them, that is entirely a matter for them. But the investment decision is one which each employee should take individually when the terms of the offer are known.

Mr. Denis Howell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the basis upon which any share offer will be made to the directors and executive management of British Airways upon privatisation of the company, the numbers of such staff in each category who will benefit from the receipt of an allocation and the total percentage of the company's shareholding that is likely to be allocated in these categories.

Mr. Moore: I refer the right hon. Member to my answer on 21 October at column 102. Directors and executive management eligible to apply for free, matching and priority shares at the time of the initial public offering will be given exactly the same opportunity to subscribe for shares as all other eligible staff of British Airways. I cannot forecast how large an allocation senior staff will receive, but it is likely to be small, as a percentage of the company's total market capitalisation.

Aircraft Noise (Gatwick)

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to complete his review of night noise disturbances from Gatwick; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer today to the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander).

Pelican Crossing, Bradford

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking following the recommendations made by the local police in Bradford and supported by the city coroner for the installation of traffic lights, with a pelican crossing for pedestrians, at the junction of Thornton road with Chat Hill road and School green, Bradford, together with the lowering of the speed limit on Thornton road to 30 miles per hour and enlargement of the pedestrian refuge in Thornton road, are implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: These are local roads under the control of Bradford city council as the highway authority.

Shipping (Lights and Navigational Aids)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information he has for each member country of the European Communities about the main sources of finance for lights and navigational aids to shipping;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a tabular statement of such information as he has about the methods used in each member country of the European Communities to finance the provision of lights and other navigational aids to shipping around their coasts, indicating, in particular, whether the costs are borne by the users of the aids or are met from national or local taxation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Light dues are levied on shipping in ports in the Republic of Ireland in the same way as in the United Kingdom; the charges, which are in Irish pounds, apply to the same categories of shipping and—subject to exchange rate variations—are broadly similar to those in the United Kingdom; in addition, the Irish Government have undertaken to make supplementary payments to the general lighthouse fund in accordance with a cost-sharing formula agreed in 1985. I understand that light dues are also levied in Greece, but I have no detailed information on the arrangements; in the other member states of the European Community, I understand, in broad terms, that the cost of navigational aids to shipping is met from general taxation, although the aids provided by harbour authorities may be financed from port dues in whole or in part.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport what categories of users of United Kingdom ports do not contribute, by way of light dues, to the cost of aids to navigation around the United Kingdom coast; what estimate he has made of the value of such aids to those exempted categories; and whether he has any proposals to seek an appropriate contribution from the exempted categories to the costs involved.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The categories of vessels at present exempt from light dues in United Kingdom ports are set out in part III of the schedule to the Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) Regulations 1981: I am sending a copy to my hon. Friend.

I have made no estimate of the value to these vessels of the aids that are at present financed from light dues, nor do I think it would be practicable to do so. But as my right hon. Friend told the House on 7 November, subject to parliamentary approval of the prerequisite orders, the cost of the United Kingdom transmitters of the Racal-Decca Navigator system will be borne by the general lighthouse fund from 1 January next. The system is an important marine navigational aid, and of particular value to a large part of the fishing industry. With that in mind, I am examining the feasibility of extending light dues' liability to fishing vessels and of making some minor changes to the present structure of light dues.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the gross expenditure of each of the general lighthouse authorities in the most recent accounting period; what income was derived from light dues in the area of each authority in the same period; and what was the net cost of light and navigation aids in the Irish Republic, borne by users of United Kingdom ports.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The general lighthouse fund accounts for 1985-86 have not yet been completed, but provisional figures are as follows:

£ Million

	Gross Expenditure	*Light dues collected*
Trinity House	31·3	32·1
Northern Lighthouse Board	11·6	8·5
Commissioners of Irish Lights	IR13·4	IR1·5 and 0·4

Under an agreement reached in 1985 for sharing certain costs deemed to be incurred in the republic by the commissioners, the Irish Government have undertaken to make a supplementary annual payment to the general lighthouse fund. The expenditure within the scope of this agreement excludes certain items. The expenditure incurred in the republic by the commissioners is not separately identified in the accounts, but solely for the purposes of the cost-sharing agreement is deemed to be 70 per cent. of the commissioners' total relevant expenditure. In 1985-86, after deducting from this relevant expenditure the income from light dues collected in the republic (£IR1·5 million) and the expected contribution (£IR1·3 million) from the Irish Government, the general lighthouse fund met the remaining costs of £IR6·7 million deemed to have been incurred in the republic.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the light dues paid by merchant shipping using United Kingdom ports is devoted to the provision of lights and other aids to the navigation of ships in the Irish Republic; and what information he has as to whether similar subsidy arrangements for navigational aids exist with or between any other member countries of the European Communities.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I will answer this question shortly.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to merge, or to arrange for the joint operation of, the navigational services provided by Trinity House, the Northern Lighthouse Board and the Commissioners of the Irish Lights; and what financial savings he estimates would be achieved by such merger or joint operation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The three general lighthouse authorities are required to undertake the superintendence an management of lighthouses, buoys and beacons, and certain duties in relation to wrecks, within their areas of responsibility. For these purposes, each authority uses its own tender vessels, some of which are nearing the end of their useful life and would be costly to replace. We have therefore commissioned Arthur Young and Co., the consultant accountants, to undertake a study of these requirements, including the possibility of a unified tender service. But no estimate has yet been made of the savings, if any, that might result.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the prerequisite order, and to contractual arrangements that are being negotiated, the authorities propose jointly to undertake the superintendence and management of the United Kingdom transmitters of the Racal-Decca Navigator system, from 1 January next.

Merchant Shipping (Assistance)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the aids to merchant shipping on both capital and current account now available in each of the member countries of the European Communities.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I cannot add to the information given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) in his replies on 30 June and 2 July 1986 at columns 443-44 and 548-50.

M25 (EC Finance)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the European Economic Community financial contribution to the building of the M25 orbital motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The European Community contributed £5·8 million of transport infrastructure grant under EC regulation 3620/84 on specific measures in the field of transport infrastructure. In addition, £79·9 million was allocated in respect of schemes on the M25 under EC regulation 1889/84 introducing special measures of Community interest relating to transport infrastructure.

Local Authorities (Accident Investigation and Prevention)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Offical Report* those local authorities in England and Wales which have accident investigations and prevention teams.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is for local highway authorities to determine the arrangements they need to fulfil their obligations for road safety under section 8 of the 1974 Road Traffic Act. They are not required to tell the Department whether they have accident investigation and prevention teams; it is not therefore possible to list authorities with such teams, but I think two thirds do.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to amend the regulations governing the use of heavy goods vehicles on public roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are consulting on proposals to raise the weight limit for two-axled heavy goods vehicles from 16,260 kg to 17,000 kg, in line with two-axled buses. I am sending my hon. Friend a copy of the official consultation letter. This is also to be found in the Library of the House.

ENVIRONMENT

Cockroaches

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions his Department has had with Stockport metropolitan borough council over the last five years concerning the presence of cockroaches in flats at Lancashire Hill; and what reasons have been given to his Department by the council as to why eradication has not yet been achieved.

Mr. Tracey: The Department has not had discussions with Stockport metropolitan borough council about cockroach infestation in the Lancashire Hill flats.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have consulted his Department about problems of cockroach infestation; in how many cases eradication programmes have been successful; and which insecticides have been used.

Mr. Tracey: Some local authorities have drawn the Department's attention to the problem of cockroach infestation. However, responsibility for disinfestation rests entirely with the authority.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken to ensure the adequacy of the human health and safety aspects of the methods of treating cockroach infestations being recommended by his Department to local authorities.

Mr. Tracey: The Department has not issued guidance to local authorities on the treatment of cockroach infestations. It is entirely a matter for each local authority to satisfy itself as to the safety of the products and methods used.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what he proposes as the amount of housing investment programme allocation to be withheld from local authorities in 1987-88 for distribution by his Department's urban housing renewal unit; what urban programme resources will be available for distribution by the urban housing renewal unit; and what will be the amount available for distribution by the urban housing renewal unit for community refurbishment schemes.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend has not withheld any housing investment programme allocation from local authorities in 1987-88 for distribution by the urban housing renewal unit (estate action). He has proposed that an additional £75 million should be made available, on top of local authorities' main allocations. This will be available for local authorities to spend through their housing investment programmes, through the urban programme or on community refurbishment schemes and other environmental projects on estates. At this stage, it is not possible to predict the proportion of such expenditures in schemes to be approved next.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his estimate of expenditure in the full financial year 1986-87 in relation to *(a)* targeted housing investment programme allocation, *(b)* targeted urban programme resources and *(c)* community refurbishment schemes approved by his Department's urban housing renewal unit;

(2) what is his estimate of spending by local authorities so far in 1986-87 in relation to targeted housing investment programme allocations approved by his Department's urban housing renewal unit.

Mr. John Patten: According to information supplied by local authorities, it is estimated that targeted expenditure on urban housing renewal unit (estate action) schemes which involve combinations of housing investment programme, urban programme and community refurbishment schemes, will be some £50 million in 1986-87. It is not possible at this stage to categorise this expenditure precisely, nor to say exactly how far each authority has got with each project.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount of housing investment programme allocation available for distribution by his Department's urban housing renewal unit in 1986-87; and what is the total amount approved so far by the urban housing renewal unit as *(a)* targeted housing investment programme allocation, *(b)* targeted urban programme resources and *(c)* community refurbishment schemes.

Mr. John Patten: In 1986-87, the total of resources available for allocation to schemes approved by the urban housing renewal unit (estate action) is £50 million. For the 86 schemes so far approved, the resources already committed for expenditure this year are:

	£ million
(a) Housing investment programme	37
(b) Urban programme for community refurbishment schemes	1·8
(c) Other urban programme projects	2·5

More approvals will be announced shortly.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how he will treat expenditure by local authorities with respect to spending authorisations under the housing investment programme distributed by the urban housing renewal unit for 1986-87 if that expenditure falls in 1987-88; and if, in that event, expenditure will count against the amount he proposes to withhold from local authorities for distribution by the urban housing renewal unit in 1987-88;

(2) if approvals for the total amount of housing investment programme he proposes to withhold from local authorities for distribution by the urban housing renewal unit in 1987-88 will exclude any approvals originally made in relation to expenditure in 1986-87; and what arrangements he has made to ensure that the total amount withheld from local authorities is spent during 1987-88.

Mr. John Patten: The additional resources being made available to local authorities in 1986-87 relate to expenditure to be carried out within the current financial year. My Department is allocating resources on the basis of local authorities' contract tender information, and on councils' advice on the spending profile of their particular schemes. Similar arrangements will apply in 1987-88. Where schemes are planned to continue in future years, we shall take account of their needs in allocating any extra resources available in those years.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what special arrangements have been made for London authorities in 1986-87 for housing investment programme allocations available for distribution by the urban housing renewal unit; and what special arrangements will be made for 1987-88.

Mr. John Patten: No special arrangements have been made for local authorities in London and none are planned for next year. They will be invited to submit applications for additional resources in the same way as other authorities.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what will be the criteria for the approval by the urban housing renewal unit of schemes in relation to targeted housing investment programme allocations in 1987-88;

(2) what are the criteria for the approval of schemes by his Department's urban housing renewal unit for targeted housing investment programme allocations; and if those criteria have changed during the financial year 1986-87.

Mr. John Patten: The urban housing renewal unit (Estate Action) has been promoting a wide range of innovatory approaches to revitalising rundown council housing estates. These are described in detail in the unit's annual report, which I have placed in the Library.

Estate Action takes a flexible approach, and each application for additional resources is considered on its merits. In general it gives priority to schemes which offer the residents greater choice and control over their lives and environment, and which take full advantage of any opportunities for combining public and private sector skills and resources. In July we launched the UHRU homelessness initiative to give local authorities additional resources to help bring vacant dwellings back into use to benefit homeless people.

We propose to apply the same general priorities in 1987-88.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if works to provide central heating and modern kitchens and bathrooms are eligible for approval by his Department's urban housing renewal unit for targeted housing investment programme allocation for local authorities.

Mr. John Patten: Any capital works needed to tackle specific problems identified on council housing estates can benefit from Estate Action's additional resources — provided they form part of a coherent package of measures which give value for money, and which offer long-term and sustainable benefits.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he or his Department have received concerning the withholding from local authorities of housing investment programme authorisations for distribution by his Department's urban housing renewal unit in 1987-88.

Mr. John Patten: We have not withheld resources from allocation through local authorities' housing investment programmes in 1987-88, although we have received representations based on this misconception. In fact, we are proposing to give councils additional allocations for important, urgent, well-thought-out schemes they choose to bring to the attention of my Department's urban housing renewal unit (Estate Action).

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many schemes approved by his Department's urban housing renewal unit for targeted housing investment programme allocation in 1986-87 include any element of private sector involvement *(a)* in Greater London and *(b)* in England; and what proportion they represent respectively of total approvals.

Mr. John Patten: Nearly all the 86 schemes so far approved involve private contractors in carrying out refurbishment and improvement works. Twenty schemes involve disposals of land or housing for refurbishment and resale. Two of these are in London and 18 in authorities in the rest of England. These represent 23·25 per cent. of total approvals.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been *(a)* the shortest, *(b)* the average and *(c)* the longest period between the submission by a local authority of a bid for targeted housing investment programme allocation for 1986-87 to his Department's urban renewal unit, and its approval by the urban housing renewal unit.

Mr. John Patten: There is no simple approval/rejection process in the work of allocating extra resources to local authorities through the urban housing renewal unit. Estate Action schemes are developed collaboratively between the Department's regional office, the unit, and the council concerned. The number and length of the discussions needed depend crucially on the complexity of the problem, the readiness of the authority to consider novel solutions and the ability of the authority to marshal the relevant information. Once agreement has been reached, and a final proposal prepared and submitted, approval follows within days.

Improvement Grants

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the 1983 survey of improvement grants referred to in the Green Paper "Home Improvement: A New Approach" (Cmnd. 9513).

Mr. Tracey: A summary of the main findings of the distribution of grant inquiry was published in May 1985 as an annex to the Green Paper on home improvement policy. A final report will be published as soon as possible.

Housing Deprivation

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what indicators he has to show where *(a)* the constituency of Leyton or *(b)* the London borough of Waltham Forest ranks in terms of housing deprivation, (i) in London and (ii) nationally.

Mr. Tracey: Waltham Forest council's housing deprivation is measured most directly by housing z scores; the borough ranks 14 in London and 17 nationally. The generalised needs index provides a further measure; figures for 1986 are not available, but in 1985 the borough ranked 17 in London and 32 nationally.

Refuse Collection and Waste Disposal

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was allocated in grant-related expenditure allocation for *(a)* Waltham Forest and *(b)* nationally, in respect of refuse collection and waste disposal in each year since 1981-82.

Mr. Chope: Following is the information:

£ million

	Rufuse collection		*Waste disposal*	
	Waltham Forest	*England*	*Waltham Forest*	*England*
1981-82	2·343	435·442	[1]	159·455
1982-83	2·227	409·800	[1]	182·800
1983-84	2·338	428·100	[1]	170·200

	Refuse collection		Waste disposal	
	Waltham Forest	England	Waltham Forest	England
1984-85	2·287	420·200	[1]	197·300
1985-86	2·336	429·300	[1]	213·200
1986-87	2·114	408·500	1·975	224·400

[1]Prior to 1 April 1986, GRE in respect of waste disposal services went to GLC as the authority carrying out those services in London.

Housing (Expenditure)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was allocated in grant-related expenditure allocation for *(a)* Waltham Forest and *(b)* nationally, in respect of housing in each year since 1981-82.

Mr. Chope: Following is the information in respect of HRA housing and non-HRA housing services combined.

£ million

	Waltham Forest	England
1981-82[1]	[1]5·979	[1]508·988
1982-83	5·073	509·877
1983-84	4·898	443·188
1984-85	4·006	362·019
1985-86	2·450	461·383
1986-87[2]	5·187	635·995

[1]Figures for 1981-82 include GRE assessments for rent rebates and rent allowances which are not separately detailed in that year.
[2]Following abolition of GLC, Waltham Forest inherited a portion of GLC's GRE in respect of housing services.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has any plans to visit the radioactive waste disposal facilities at Forsmark, Sweden, Asse in West Germany and Cherbourg in France; and if he intends to meet the disposal authorities from these countries;

(2) if he intends to hold discussions with the Environment Minister of Sweden regarding the safe disposal of radioactive waste in the United Kingdom and Sweden;

(3) if he has held discussions with the Environment Minister of Sweden on the safe disposal of radioactive waste in the United Kingdom and Sweden.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend and I have separately visited Centre de la Manche near Cherbourg in France. I have also visited Forsmark. Officials of the Department have visited Asse. Members of the respective waste disposal authorities were present on these occasions. My right hon. Friend has not met, and has no current plans to meet, the Swedish Environment Minister. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy and I met the Environment Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany in July and discussed, among other matters, radioactive waste management.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next intends to meet members of the county councils opposed to the shallow trench disposal of radioactive waste to discuss the NIREX plans.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have no current plans for further meetings with the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he intends to discuss with his fellow European Economic Commission Ministers the safe disposal of radioactive waste within the United Kingdom and the rest of the Community;

(2) if he has held discussions with his fellow European Economic Community Ministers regarding safe disposal of radioactive waste within the United Kingdom and the rest of the Community.

Mr. Waldegrave: The most recent discussion between Environment Ministers of the European Community relating to nuclear issues was at the Council held on 24 November 1986. I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made on 27 November at columns 318-20 in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle), in which reference is made to that discussion and the prospect of further discussions.

Pollution

Sir George Young asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what initiatives Her Majesty's Government have taken to reduce emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides in the European Community.

Mr. Waldegrave: In its presidency role within the European Community, the United Kingdom tabled proposals with the aim of making progress on the draft Community directive on reducing emissions from large combustion plants. If accepted, these proposals would set Europe an ultimate goal of at least a 60 per cent. reduction in sulphur emissions. Regrettably, a number of countries found these proposals too onerous, and it was not possible to agree conclusion at the Council of Environment Ministers on 24 November. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom will continue to pursue throughout the presidency all prospects for progress on this important proposed directive.

Rivers (South-West England)

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received from the South-West water authority as to the causes of the substantial quality deterioration in the Rivers Axe, Otter, Exe, Tavy, Tamar, Torridge and Taw; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I receive regular reports from all water authorities on the qualities of their rivers. I am aware of the particular problems in the South-West water authority area. The authority is preparing for the Department an action plan setting out proposals for dealing with these problems.

Right to Repair

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority tenants in England and Wales availed themselves of the right to repair scheme introduced under the Housing and Building Control Act 1984 in the first six months of the current year; and what was the total cost of such repairs carried out under the scheme, and the average cost of each claim.

Mr. Tracey: Current estimates, based on incomplete returns from local authorities for the first six months of 1986, show that 450 local authority tenants in England

submitted applications to exercise the right to repair. Thirty-five were accepted and, of these, 15 claims had been paid during the period, at a total cost of £1,550. In about 160 of the cases, the landlord elected to carry out the repair within 28 days of being served with the application. The remaining applications were rejected, mainly on the grounds that the proposals were outside the scope of the scheme.

Estimates of figures and costs for the right to repair scheme in Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the total cost to his Department and to local authorities in England and Wales incurred as a result of the introduction of the right to repair scheme under the Housing and Building Control Act 1984 in terms of administration, training and publicity, excluding the cost of any payments made to tenants under this scheme.

Mr. Tracey: The Department has spent £35,817·80 on publicity for the right-to-repair scheme and incurred costs of £3,750 on training for tenants. The Department's administrative costs for this scheme cannot be identified separately. Information on local authorities' costs, other than on meeting claims, is not collected by this Department.

Information about the costs to local authorities in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Home Improvement

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to make a statement on the responses to the Green Paper "Home Improvement — A New Approach", published in May 1985, before 31 December.

Mr. Tracey: I will answer this question shortly.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide in the *Official Report* a list of those organisations in England that have responded to the May 1985 Green Paper, "Home Improvement — A New Approach."

Mr. Tracey: There were over 400 responses to the Green Paper. I have placed a full list of those who responded in the Library.

Estuaries

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the environmental quality standards which have been drawn up by Her Majesty's Government to protect the existing uses of the *(a)* Thames estuary, *(b)* Humber estuary, *(c)* Tees estuary, *(d)* Tyne estuary, *(e)* Forth estuary, *(f)* Clyde estuary, *(g)* Mersey estuary and *(h)* Severn estuary.

Mr. Waldegrave: The application of environmental quality standards is in the first instance for the relevant water authorities (in England and Wales) and for the relevant river purification authorities (in Scotland). In so doing, they take account of relevant EEC directives and of Government policy. I am seeking the information the hon. Member requests about the application of environment quality standards and will write to him shortly.

On 2 September 1985, my Department and the Welsh Office issued a joint circular—18/85 (Department of the Environment) and 37/85 (Welsh Office)—which set out the Community environmental quality standards for mercury, cadmium and hexachlorocyclohexane, and established national standards for the following list II metals: lead, chromium, zinc, copper, nickel and arsenic.

Housing Defects

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each of the designated houses in the Housing Defects Act the progress made in obtaining an approval and warranty scheme for repair methods.

Mr. John Patten: The National Housebuilding Council's subsidiary, PRC Homes Ltd., has now approved 23 repair systems, covering the Airey, Cornish Unit, Orlit, Parkinson, Unity, Wates and Woolaway house types. Details of progress on the approval of repair systems are as follows, for all designated types. I have arranged for PRC Homes Ltd's progress reports to be placed in the Library as they become available.

House type	*Number notified but not yet submitted*	*Number submitted but not yet approved*	*Number approved*
Airey	—	9	4
Boot	—	1	—
Cornish Unit	—	1	8
Dorran	—	1	—
Dyke	—	—	—
Gregory	—	—	—
Myton	—	1	—
Newland	—	1	—
Orlit	—	1	1
Parkinson	—	2	1
Reema Hollow Panel	—	2	—
Schindler and Hawkesley SGS	2	—	—
Smith	1	1	—
Stent	—	2	—
Stonecrete	—	—	—
Tarran	—	1	—
Underdown	—	—	—
Unity and Butterley	1	2	5
Waller	—	—	—
Wates	—	3	2
Wessex	—	—	—
Winget	—	—	—
Woolaway	—	3	2
Totals	4	31	23

North Sea Coastline

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's Government will draw up a national water quality plan for the coastline bordering the North sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The control of coastal water quality is for the water authorities (in England and Wales) and for the river purification authorities (in Scotland). They discharge this function having regard to local circumstances, and to Government policy and the United Kingdom's international obligations. It is not necessary to

have a formal national plan, although the performances of the individual water authorities and river purification authorities are reviewed regularly by the Government.

Local Authority Services

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the cost per client served of the provision of each appropriate local authority service for each shire county.

Mr. Chope: Information on costs per client, by service for individual local authorities, is not available in the Department. I understand, however, that it is published in "Local Government Comparative Statistics, 1986" by the statistical information service of CIPFA.

Amphibians and Reptiles

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to improve the protection of amphibians and reptiles, especially the common lizard, slow worm, grass snake and adder; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on 27 November, at column *318*. We will consider this matter in the light of the representations and comments invited.

Gas Flaring

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what controls he exercises over the emission in gas flaring of carcinogens and other substances inimical to human health.

Mr. Waldegrave: Works operating land-based flaring systems on processing plant to dispose of hydrocarbon gases are required, under section 5 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, to render the flares harmless and inoffensive when emitted into the atmosphere. These works come under the direct control of Her Majesty's industrial air pollution inspectorate in England and Wales and of Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate in Scotland, with whom they must be registered annually.

Pollution Inspectorate (Director)

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the appointment of a director for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution; what technical qualifications he proposes to require of the new director; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The matter is under consideration and I expect to make an announcement shortly.

Radioactivity

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide estimates of the input of radioactive isotopes, hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxide into the atmosphere in Britain; and how this compares with other European Economic Community countries on a consistent basis.

Mr. Waldegrave: Estimates of radioactive atmospheric discharges from major establishments using radioactive materials in the United Kingdom are published annually in the Department's "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Statistics on the emissions of nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons are also included in this publication. Estimates of emissions of hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides for all EEC countries are not available on a consistent basis. Some comparisons were made in the OECD's second state of the environment report and showed that United Kingdom emissions of nitrogen oxides in 1980 were lower than emissions in West Germany and of the same order as those in France. Data on the discharge of radioactive effluents from 1976-80 in EEC countries were published by the European Commission in 1983 in "Radioactive Effluents from Nuclear Power Stations and Nuclear Fuel Processing Plants in the European Community".

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide estimates of the input of radioactive isotopes, hydrocarbons and atmospheric nitrogen into the sea by Britain; and how this compares with other European Economic Community countries on a consistent basis.

Mr. Waldegrave: Comprehensive up-to-date information of the kind requested is not available at present. However, this information is currently being assembled by the Department in its role as secretariat for next year's North sea conference.

Departmental Offices (Coatbridge)

Mr. John Corrie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether funds are to be made available for the proposed new Department of Health and Social Security/Department of Employment offices at Coatbridge.

Mr. Chope: I have authorised the Property Services Agency to proceed with the Department of Health and Social Security/Department of Employment offices at Coatbridge. The building is scheduled for completion by March 1988.

SOCIAL SERVICES

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the additional resources made available to the National Health Service in the Chancellor's "Autumn Statement" will be devoted to publicising, preventing and researching acquired immune deficiency syndrome and caring and counselling for those infected.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend has announced that £20 million will be spent over the next 12 months on public education on AIDS. Additional resources will also be allocated for costs of treatment, counselling and training; we shall make an announcement on this shortly.

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those hospitals and clinics in Avon which have in-patient facilities for treatment of acquired immune deficiency syndrome sufferers.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 20 November at column *323*.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the level of current expenditure, and in each of the last four years, on, respectively, research into an AIDS cure or vaccine; screening of persons for AIDS antibodies; advice and counselling for AIDS victims; national publicity for a public health education programme, regional publicity, support for voluntary bodies combating AIDS, clinical care (including hospices) for AIDS victims; and how much is now planned for each of the next three years.

Mr. Fowler [*pursuant to the reply*, 27 November, c. *352*]: I refer the hon. Member to my speech on 21 November, when I reported to the House that there were no known cases of AIDS before 1981; that the first case of transmission by blood transfusion was reported in the United States of America in 1983; and that a reliable test for routine screening for blood donations was developed in 1985.

Research in the United Kingdom is being co-ordinated by the Medical Research Council (MRC) which receives its grant-in-aid through the science budget of the Department of Education and Science. The MRC has awarded 15 special project grants for research on AIDS and immunodeficiency viruses totalling about £1·5 million. Included in the total is an annual special allocation of up to £300,000 from 1986-87 by the health Departments for epidemiological studies of AIDS and support of the United Kingdom centre for co-ordinating epidemiological research on AIDS. Additionally the Department is supporting directly AIDS-related research projects costing £50,000 this year, and £80,000 in 1987-88, and will consider proposals for further directly supported research. Over and above this, a number of major pharmaceutical companies in this country are devoting increasing resources to research relevant to AIDS.

The following information sets out the allocations made by the Department in England in 1986-87:

An effective screening test for the presence of AIDS antibodies suitable for routine use only became available last year. The Blood Transfusion Service is spending some £2 million to £3 million per annum on tesing all blood donations. The Department has specifically allocated nearly £¾ million in 1986-87 to the Public Health Laboratory Service Board to do tests for other parts of the National Health Service. In addition the Public Health Laboratory Service Board is spending another £500,000 in 1986-87 on other AIDS related work.

The Department has also made available in 1986-87 £270,000 to the haemophilia reference centres for the provision of advice, testing and counselling services for haemophiliacs. Similar services have also been provided in genito-urinary medicine clinics for those who fear they have been infected by the virus, but comprehensive data are not available on its cost.

As I announced to the House on 21 November, the Government will be making available £20 million over the next twelve months for a national public education campaign. In addition, regional and district health authorities are mounting AIDS public education campaigns from within their own resources.

The Department provides financial support for a number of voluntary bodies providing advice, counselling and care for AIDS patients. In 1986-87, £204,000 was allocated for this purpose.

So far as the cost of clinical care is concerned, the Government made available a total of £2·5 million in 1986-87 to the three regions coping with the largest number of cases. The total cost of clinical care will of course depend on how many cases occur; treatment costs can also vary considerably between cases. On the basis of the numbers of cases notified total expenditure in 1986-87 could be of the order of £3 million to £5 million nationally.

Allocations to health authorities and other bodies for 1987-88 in respect of AIDS are currently under consideration.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average weekly level of housing benefit paid weekly in respect of supplementary benefit recipients in the latest period for which figures are available; and what breakdown of this information is available for different types of supplementary benefit recipients, classified according to number of dependants.

Mr. Lyell: The latest available information is for December 1985 and is given in the following table. Information is not collected on different types of supplementary benefit recipients, classified by number of dependants.

Average weekly level of certificated housing benefit (Great Britain)

	December 1985 £
All supplementary pensioners	15·05
All supplementary allowances	17·99
All beneficiaries	16·74

Health Education Council

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on what the Health Education Council is spending in the current, and planning to spend in the next, financial year on *(a)* smoking, *(b)* alcohol, *(c)* diet and *(d)* AIDS; and whether he is satisfied with the Council's current order of priorities.

Mr. Newton: As my hon. Friend will be aware, my right hon. Friend has announced that the Health Education Council is to be reconstituted as a special health authority with effect from 1 April 1987. It is envisaged that it will in due course assume responsibility for public education on AIDS, which is currently being conducted primarily by the Government themselves, and for which up to £20 million is available in the next twelve months. However, following are the figures for expenditure planned by the present Health Education Council in this financial year and the next:

	1986-87 £	*1987-88* £
Smoking	1,769,000	1,504,000
Alcohol	478,000	437,000
Diet	1,000,000	2,000,000
AIDS	98,000	80,000

Asthma

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate, for the past 10 years up to the most recent year for which figures are available, and broken down by region *(a)* the number of patients suffering from asthma, *(b)* the number of deaths from asthma and *(c)* the number of inhalers prescribed by type.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that I cannot give the hon. Member all the information in the form requested.

It has been estimated that around 2 million people in the United Kingdom suffer from asthma. Further information is provided in the following tables.

An article in *The Lancet* of 9 August 1986 discussed the evidence that the death rate from asthma had been rising in the last decade, after falling in the late 1960s. The reason was not known. The article pointed to the apparent paradox that while under-treatment was suggested as one cause, this coincided with rising sales of all forms of treatment for asthma. The problem is not confined to this country.

TABLE 1
Deaths from asthma (ICD No. 493) by region of usual place of residence, England, 1975-85

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
England	1,087	955	1,005	1,042	1,370	1,372	1,477	1,467	1,518	1,655	1,839
Northern	88	66	84	90	110	119	100	109	87	128	119
Yorkshire	54	64	82	77	84	117	83	96	108	132	128
Trent	85	83	80	80	139	119	134	148	124	147	196
East Anglian	46	35	37	49	63	64	67	86	93	81	86
North West Thames	92	68	75	69	113	73	98	103	130	101	119
North East Thames	75	74	83	72	78	102	126	106	124	120	147
South East Thames	97	82	87	80	97	105	143	107	139	130	140
South West Thames	75	74	56	70	91	94	109	97	81	99	131
Wessex	76	71	66	74	79	88	90	88	87	92	108
Oxford	49	54	50	44	76	50	69	54	58	76	99
South Western	84	58	74	72	109	98	96	111	102	130	120
West Midlands	108	96	104	108	146	161	169	175	175	199	200
Mersey	56	33	53	51	68	56	80	70	72	82	92
North Western	102	97	74	106	117	126	113	117	138	138	154

Source: Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys.

Table 2
Estimated number of prescriptions for inhalations, metered dose aerosols, solid inhalers and vitrellae dispensed for the treatment of asthma in England

Number of prescriptions

	Millions
1976	2·81
1977	3·19
1978	3·78
1979	4·40
1980	5·00
1981	5·98
1982	6·92
1983	7·99
1984	8·90
1985	10·06

National Insurance

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the latest available figures for those class 2 national insurance contributors who are also class 1 secondary national insurance contributors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information requested by the hon. Member cannot be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost.

Single Payment Allowances

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when his Department will deal with *(a)* the application for single payment allowance by Georgina McKoy, made to 6 Camberwell New Road, S.E.5 about 3 November, *(b)* the application for severe disablement allowance and supplementary benefit by Julian Wall made on 27 August to 6 Camberwell New Road, S.E.5 and *(c)* the letter from Brixton Law Centre to the regional office complaints section at 29 Brighton Road, Sutton about Noel Phillips dated 4 September;

(2) when the following letters and applications will be dealt with, namely *(a)* a claim by Mrs. Fatima Alani for a single payment on moving home made to his Department's Oval office in May, *(b)* an application by Eric Barclay of 28 Westgate Court, London S.W.9 for a lump sum payment and a special heating grant raised in a letter from the hon. Member for Norwood to the Oval office on 27 October, *(c)* a letter sent by the hon. Member for Norwood to the Oval office on 20 May in respect of Mr. S. E. Brown of flat 8, 258 Coldharbour Lane, London S.W.9 and *(d)* a letter sent by the hon. Member for Norwood to the Oval office about late payments to David Kress of 37 Adelaide Walk, Moorlands estate, Brixton, London S.W.9;

(3) when the following letters and applications will be dealt with: *(a)* a letter sent by the hon. Member for Norwood to the Oval office on 27 October about Mrs. Kate Leigh of 11 Canterbury Crescent, London S.W.9; *(b)* a letter sent by the hon. Member for Norwood to the Oval office on 19 September about Ms. M. McKenna of flat 1, 25 Eastlake road, London S.E.5; *(c)* a letter sent by the hon. Member for Norwood to the Oval office on 11 March about Mr. G. S. Ravatte of 39 Swinford gardens, Barrington road, London S.W.9 in respect of assistance to return to Mauritius; and *(d)* a letter sent by the hon. Member for Norwood to the Oval office about Jean F. Slatter of 7 Leicester house, Loughborough estate, Loughborough road, London S.W.9;

(4) when the following letters and applications will be dealt with: *(a)* a letter sent by the hon. Member for

Norwood to the Oval office on 17 September about Miss Sonia Stewart of 2 Enfield house, Stockwell gardens, London S.W.9; *(b)* a letter sent by the hon. Member for Norwood to the Oval office on 30 October about Mrs. J. E. Turner of 3 Secker house, Loughborough estate, Brixton, London S.W.9; and *(c)* an application for single payment for bedding made by Edna G. Victor in August to the Oval office.

Mr. Lyell: I have instigated inquiries to ensure that all these cases are handled as a matter of urgency. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single payments in respect of additional heating expenditure incurred during last winter's exceptionally cold weather were made *(a)* in Great Britain, *(b)* in the Greater London area, *(c)* in the constituency of Fulham and *(d)* in the constituency of Hammersmith; and what was the total cost and average value of such payments.

Mr. Lyell: Full returns have not yet been received on the number of payments made in Great Britain and the Greater London area. Information is however available in respect of the local offices covering the parliamentary constituencies of Fulham and Hammersmith, as follows:

Parliamentary constituency and local offices[1]	*Total number of payments*	*Total amount paid*	*Average payment*
		£	£
Fulham: Chelsea, Kensington	454	10,415	22·94
Hammersmith: Acton, Chelsea, Kensington, Notting Hill	797	16,854	21·15

[1] The boundaries of the parliamentary constituencies and local offices are not coterminus. The local offices quoted are those which are wholly or partly within the relevant constituencies.

Supplementary Benefits

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pending legislation, he will authorise the extra-statutory concession, corresponding with Northern Ireland circular 522/86 and providing continuity of supplementary benefit at the long-term rate for beneficiaries who have removed from Northern Ireland to Great Britain.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend has already authorised extra-statutory payments. I refer the right hon. Member to circular S22/86, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Kilmarnock and Loudoun are now claiming supplementary benefit; if he will break these figures down into claimant groups such as pensioners, one-parent families and the unemployed; and how these figures compare with May 1979.

Mr. Lyell: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. The constituency of Kilmarnock and Loudoun is covered by the Department's office at Kilmarnock but their boundaries are not coterminous. The number of people receiving supplementary benefit from that office on 13 August 1986, the latest available figures, and on 15 May 1979 were:

	May 1979	*August 1986*
Unemployed	1,379	3,717
Over pension age	2,648	2,777
Others (including one parent families)	1,101	2,681
Total	5,128	9,175

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Pensioners (Earnings)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, for each year since 1978, the maximum weekly permitted earnings of a married pensioner aged between 65 and 70 years before commencement of clawback of the pension.

Mr. Major: The earnings limit applying to all male pensioners between 65 and 69 in the uprating month in each year is given in the table.

	£
November 1978	45
November 1979	52
November 1980	52
November 1981	52
November 1982	57
November 1983	65
November 1984	70
November 1985	75
July 1986	75

Female pensioners are subject to these earnings limits between ages 60 and 64, but no earnings limit applies to pensioners of either sex from five years after minimum pension age.

Equipment (Prescriptions)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will decide whether to make blood glucose monitoring equipment and disposable syringes available on a general practitioner's prescription.

Mrs. Currie: As I said in the House on 23 October, at c.1434, the provision on general practitioner prescription of blood glucose testing strips will have a high priority if and when resources become available, but disposable syringes are not likely to be available on general practitioner prescription at present.

Service Pensions

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many widows of servicemen who took part in the nuclear tests have applied for service widows' pensions on the grounds that their husbands' deaths resulted from the nuclear tests.

Mr. Lyell: I assume that the right hon. Member is referring to claims for war widows pensions. Since mid-1983, about 50 such claims have been recorded.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many service veterans of the nuclear tests have applied for a service invalidity pension; how many applications have been accepted; and what percentage this represents of the total applications.

Mr. Major: Since mid-1983 it is known that about 110 claims to war disablement pension have been made on the grounds that disablement was caused by exposure to radiation from atomic bomb tests. None has been accepted on those grounds. In one case only however, a pension was awarded on appeal by the independent pensions appeal tribunal on the grounds of reasonable doubt.

Mental Nurses

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many state registered mental nurses and state enrolled mental nurses are unemployed at present and from which regional health authorities.

Mr. Newton: The Department of Employment is the source of statistical information on the unemployed, but I understand that information by occupation has not been available since the introduction of the voluntary registration procedure in October 1982.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he proposes to take to deal with the acute shortage of qualified mental handicap nurses.

Mr. Newton: I regret that information about shortages of staff is not collected centrally. However I am aware of the results of a survey of a sample of health authorities conducted for the review body for nursing staff, midwives and health visitors which showed that at 31 March 1985 in England 3 per cent. of all whole-time equivalent funded posts for mental handicap nursing staff remained vacant for at least three months, compared with the average of 2·5 per cent. of all nursing and midwifery staff.

Responsibility for recruiting nursing staff to meet local needs and priorities must rest with individual health authorities. Only they have the detailed local knowledge necessary to make these judgments. Their performance is, of course, monitored and reviewed through the accountability review process.

About 80 per cent. of the Department's national recruitment publicity is directed towards mental illness and mental handicap nursing.

Patients (Waiting Lists)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what response he has had from health authorities to his request for plans to reduce patient waiting lists and patient waiting time; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he proposes to issue a list of measures all health authorities can take to reduce waiting lists and waiting time; if further resources will be made available to enable the measures to be implemented; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if health authorities will be left to implement individual strategies to reduce patient waiting lists and waiting time; if extra resources will be made available to enable the strategies to be implemented; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he has received a report from the North-East Thames regional health authority concerning methods of reducing waiting lists and waiting times for patients; what plans he has to put their recommendations into effect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Thames Health Authorities (Resources)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the findings of the inquiry into the application of the resources allocation working party in the Thames health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Hearing Therapists

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of training hearing aid therapists and the number trained in the seven years when it was centrally funded; how many regional health authorities are now providing training; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: During the period from 1978 to 1985 when central funding was provided, 64 students completed the course at the City Literary Institute. The cost of training in 1984-85 was around £5,000 for each student hearing therapist. There are 12 students, sponsored by their district health authorities, on the current course.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what financial support he proposes to give to the British Society of Hearing Therapists for the year 1987-88.

Mrs. Currie: The Department keeps in touch with the society in regard to the development of this new profession, but it is not our practice to grant aid to professional bodies.

Breast Cancer Screening

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when he received the final report of the Forrest working group on breast cancer screening;

(2) when he will publish the final report of the Forrest working group on breast cancer screening.

Mrs. Currie: The report was received on 28 November. It has been sent for printing. We expect the report to be published within the next three weeks. I shall arrange for copies to be placed in the Library as soon as they are available. The Government are now considering their response to the report.

Blood Products Laboratory, Elstree

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much was committed in each year since its inception to the blood products laboratory at Elstree;

(2) what reductions have been made in the funds originally estimated to be provided for the blood products laboratory at Elstree;

(3) if he will make a statement on the progress of the project to build the blood products laboratory at Elstree;

(4) when it was originally proposed that the United Kingdom should become self-sufficient in the blood product Factor VIII;

(5) when Her Majesty's Government were first committed to the blood products laboratory at Elstree; and what was the original estimate of its cost and of its likely completion date;

(6) when the production of Factor VIII was estimated to come on stream at Elstree; and when it actually came on stream.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Doctors (Computerised Practices)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the expenses incurred by general medical practitioners to computerise their practices is re-imbursed; if his Department keeps records of the number of computerised practices and the present proportion of all practices now computerised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: All expenses incurred in providing general medical services are reimbursed. About half, including expenditure on computers is returned indirectly on an average basis through fees and allowances. The Department does not have a record of the number of computerised practices; this is a matter for general practitioners themselves as independent contractors and is not subject to any central control or return. It is estimated, however, that some 800-1,000 practices, or a little under 10 per cent. of the total, now have computers.

Preventive Medicine

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures showing the proportion of total National Health Service resources devoted to disease prevention and health promotion in the years 1975, 1980 and 1985.

Mrs. Currie: Aspects of disease prevention and health promotion form part of the work of many National Health Service staff, and it would not be practicable to attempt an assessment of the total resources devoted to these matters.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of medical research funds contributed by his Department was devoted to prevention of disease and the promotion of health in the last full year to a convenient date.

Mrs. Currie: Much of the research funded directly by the Department is intended to improve health and prevent disease. Research projects aimed specifically at the prevention of disease, the misuse of drugs and alcohol, or the promotion of health account for about 10 per cent. of the Department's programme of centrally funded research in the field of health and personal social services. In addition, research in the prevention of disease and promotion of health is supported by the Health Education Council and other centrally funded bodies sponsored by the Department.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing the numbers of patients taken on to treatment for renal dialysis according to regions in England, and the number of patients accepted per million of the population in European Community countries.

Mrs. Currie: According to data supplied by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association for the year 1985, the information is as follows:

	Number of patients	*Rate per million population*
National Health Service regions in England		
Northern	140	45·2
Yorkshire	134	37·2
Trent	210	45·7
East Anglian	100	52·6
North West Thames	140	40·0
North East Thames	244	66·0
South East Thames	208	57·8
South West Thames	65	21·7
Wessex	69	24·6
Oxford	105	43·8
South Western	132	42·6
West Midlands	194	37·3
Mersey	82	34·2
North Western	170	42·5
European Community Countries		
Belgium	610	61·9
Denmark	221	43·2
France	2,366	42·9
Germany (Federal Republic)	3,635	59·4
Greece	573	57·9
Ireland	170	48·1
Italy	2,670	46·8
Luxembourg	19	52·1
Netherlands	711	49·3
Portugal	497	48·7
Spain	1,734	45·0
United Kingdom	2,427	43·1

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received seeking the inclusion of Mucodyne within the limited drug list; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have received many letters and other representations about the drug Mucodyne and other oral mucolytics. The Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs has considered these drugs on a number of occasions and following its advice oral mucolytics have been made available under the National Health Service only for patients with specified conditions. Following further representations from the manufacturers the advisory committee has again reviewed the position of Mucodyne and we are presently considering the committee's recommendations.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons, and of which grades, are employed in his Department on monitoring and surveying his agreement with the tobacco industry on advertising.

Mrs. Currie: The new voluntary agreement on cigarette advertising, concluded earlier this year with the Tobacco Advisory Council, provided for a new committee with responsibility for monitoring the agreement to be set up under an independent chairman. On 4 November my right hon. Friend announced the appointment of Sir Peter Lazarus to chair the new body, which plans to start work before the end of the year. The committee is drawn equally from the industry and the five Government Departments mainly concerned. The three officials representing this Department are in grades 2, 3 and 5 respectively; other officials provide administrative support.

Income Support

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state his estimate of the numbers likely to be eligible for the additional premium on income support for the severely disabled.

Mr. Major: We are re-examining our estimate in the light of comments made by organisations representing disabled people. I shall write to the hon. Member when this work is complete.

Restart Scheme

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to answer the letter from the hon. Member for Birkenhead of 19 November concerning the Government's restart scheme.

Mr. Major: I replied to the letter on 28 November.

Benefits

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to ensure that information concerning benefits is circulated amongst senior citizens.

Mr. Lyell: The Department has adopted a wide range of measures designed to ensure that all claimants, including senior citizens, receive information about the benefits to which they may be entitled. These include the display of leaflets in local offices and Post Offices and the operation of DHSS freephone which provides free advice and information, nationwide.

As far as pensioners are concerned, a supplementary benefit leaflet and claim form is sent to all new recipients of retirement and widows benefits and all retirement pension order books include information about supplementary pensioners.

Individual local offices have mounted many initiatives to provide more advice and information to the communities they serve. In 1985-86, a quarter of all the Department's offices mounted special exercises geared specifically to providing more advice and information to elderly people.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the numbers who claim *(a)* unemployment benefit and *(b)* supplementary benefit as unemployed claimants; what are the total numbers who are dependent on these claimants; what are the total yearly amounts paid in unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit for the unemployed; and if he will publish these figures also on a regional basis.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the numbers of departmental staff, and the proportion of staff time, involved in the administration of *(a)* benefits for the unemployed and *(b)* benefits for pensioners.

Mr. Lyell: The numbers of staff in the Department employed on administering benefits to the unemployed and pensioners, expressed in whole time equivalents, are estimated to be 17,000 and 13,500 respectively.

These totals represent 20 per cent. and 16 per cent. of all departmental staff engaged on social security work.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list those areas in the north-east and Cumbria which have experienced weekly average temperatures below −1·5°C. in 1985-86; if he will list the number of weeks such temperatures were experienced; and what estimate he has made of the amount of money involved in severe weather payments to these areas: *(a)* under his present system of exceptionally severe weather payments and *(b)* under his proposed system;

(2) if he will list those areas in Scotland which have experienced weekly average temperatures below −1·5°C. in 1985-86; if he will list the number of weeks such temperatures were experienced; and what is his estimate of the amount of money involved in severe weather payments to these areas *(a)* under the present system of exceptionally severe weather payments and *(b)* under his proposed system.

Mr. Major: Details of the areas in which exceptionally cold weather payments would have been made under the proposed new criteria last winter are contained in annex C to the report published by the Social Security Advisory Committee on these proposals (Cm. 18), and annex B to the Secretary of State's statement published with that report.

Payments actually made by the Department's local offices in the north-east of England and Cumbria last winter totalled approximately £2 million. Final figures are awaited from some local offices in Scotland, but the provisional total for local offices for which returns have so far been received is approximately £1·9 million. It is not possible to make a reliable estimate of what expenditure would have been under the proposed new rules last winter since this would depend on claimants' capital holdings and take-up in the areas concerned.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the average annual expenditure over a five-year period on the proposed cold weather payments.

Mr. Major: It is not sensible to make projections for the future since the crucial factor—the weather—cannot be predicted. Nor is it possible to make valid retrospective assessment, since amounts paid would depend on claimants' capital holdings and take-up in the attached areas. However, our intention and expectation is that, over the years, the new system implies help on broadly the same scale as has operated in the years since 1980.

Pensions, Prices and Earnings

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each year since 1978, the percentage increase in the retirement pension, the retail price index increase and the increase in national average earnings; and by how much the pension, prices and average earnings have increased between May 1979 and October 1986.

Mr. Major: The percentage increases applying in the uprating month in each year since 1978 are given in the following table.

November	Percentage increase since previous uprating: Retirement pension-single pension	Retail price index	National average earnings
1978	11·4	8·1	13·3
1979	19·5	17·4	19·1
1980	16·5	15·3	17·9
1981	9·0	12·0	11·5
1982	11·0	6·3	8·3
1983	3·7	4·8	7·3
1984	5·1	4·9	6·5
1985	7·0	5·5	8·6
1986 (July)	1·0	1·7	5·9

Meaningful comparisons over a period of time can only be made between uprating dates. The percentage increases applying between November 1978 and July 1986 are:

	Percentage increases
Retirement pension	98·5
Retail price index	90·0
National average earnings	123·0

Housing Benefit

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce legislation to ensure that all local authorities disregard war pensions and war widows' pensions when calculating housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: Legislation currently provides for all authorities to disregard a statutory amount and gives authorities discretion to disregard any additional amounts if they wish. These provisions will remain the same under the reformed scheme to be introduced in April 1988. The Social Security Act 1986 contains the power for authorities to disregard discretionary additional amounts. The proposals on statutory disregards will be included in regulations to be made under the Act next year.

Sick Pay

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Servies how many representations the Government have received complaining of the complexity of the three rate system of statutory sick pay; and from what individuals or organisations they were received.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986 c. *145*]: There have been no complaints specifically about the structure of three rates for statutory sick pay, but some employers' representatives have instanced the three rates when pressing generally for simplification of the scheme.

Baby Units

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details by health region of the number of cots available in special care baby units *(a)* as a percentage of all cots and *(b)* as a percentage of live births for 1985.

Mrs. Currie: [*pursuant to her reply*, 27 November 1986, c. *356*]: I regret I cannot provide the hon. Member with all the information he seeks. Information on the total number of cots is not separately recorded. The available figures are given in the table.

NHS hospitals 1985 England

Regional Health Authority	Average daily number of available cots in special care baby units	Cots available per 10,000 live births during year
Northern	288·7	71·0
Yorkshire	303·8	64·3
Trent	341·3	61·8
East Anglian	144·7	60·4
North West Thames	292·7	75·7
North East Thames	317·7	61·3
South East Thames	281·0	59·7
South West Thames	186·5	59·9
Wessex	192·6	56·1
Oxford	195·6	61·6
South Western	207·7	56·3
West Midlands	433·7	61·0
Mersey	188·3	58·8
North Western	341·4	60·3
All RHAs	3,715·7	62·1

Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a list in the *Official Report* of expenditure undertaken by each of the regional health authorities on *(a)* smoking, *(b)* alcohol, *(c)* diet and *(d)* acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1986, c. *359*]: This information is not collected centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to enquire of the individual health authorities. Information on spending on AIDS generally is included in my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) today.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 2 December 1986

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Procurator Fiscal, Hamilton

Mr. George Robertson asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what plans he has to remedy the accommodation problems of the procurator fiscal's office in Hamilton.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The most recent option considered for the rehousing of the procurator fiscal was the development proposed by Hamilton district council on the vacant site in Almada street. As the letter from my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) dated 22 July 1986 to the hon. Gentleman intimated, none of the tenders received was acceptable to the Property Services Agency, but it advised the council that it would be prepared to consider a revised scheme.

To date the district council has not come forward with further proposals. Discussions are continuing between the PSA and my officials and a meeting has been arranged for Monday 15 December to discuss possible alternatives. Until the outcome of these discussions is known, I am unable to comment further.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Ministerial Actions (Advice)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Attorney-General if he will now make it his policy to answer parliamentary questions about advice sought from or given by him concerning the lawfulness of actions taken by Ministers in relation to nationalised industries; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: There is a well established convention that advice given by the Law Officers to Ministers is confidential and is disclosed only in exceptional circumstances. I do not propose to depart from that practice.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Attorney-General whether all advice given by him concerning the lawfulness or legal implications of ministerial actions or proposed actions is treated as being covered by the Official Secrets Acts; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The application of the Official Secrets Acts to advice concerning the lawfulness or legal implications of ministerial actions or proposed actions will depend on the facts of an individual case.

PRIME MINISTER

Bristol

Q57. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Bristol.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

State Security

Q145. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister why Sir Robert Armstrong in approaching the United Kingdom publishers of the book by Mr. Chapman Pincher "Their Trade is Treachery", seeking page proofs of the book, failed to disclose that the security services had been in possession of page proofs of the book for over a month; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It would be inappropriate for me to comment on matters which may arise in the proceedings concerning the Peter Wright case in Australia while those proceedings continue. I also intend to follow the precedent set by previous Prime Ministers of not commenting on security matters.

EC (Subsidised Exports)

Q155. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the implications for the 4 December 1984 agreement of the Council on budgetary control of the subsidised export of food and wine to eastern Europe; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I shall continue to use every suitable opportunity to emphasise the need for decisions on common agricultural policy reform. Bringing surpluses and their associated budgetary costs under better control will reduce the need for subsidised exports.

MI6

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether there *(a)* has been and *(b)* is now an organisation called MI6; and whether she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I intend to follow the precedent set by previous Prime Ministers of not commenting on security matters.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if any consideration was given to bringing into the public domain the letter of 7 January from the Solicitor-General to the then Secretary of State for Defence, immediately after a copy of the letter was received in her office; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 17 November, at columns 49-50.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 December.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 December.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Departmental Staff (Investigative Duties)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Prime Minister if she will list the number of staff in each Government Department or public body who are regularly employed on investigative duties.

The Prime Minister: There are no central records of the numbers of all such staff.

Hoover (Relocation)

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister on what basis grant is to be paid to Hoover to relocate from Perivale to Merthyr Tydfil.

The Prime Minister: The company is eligible to claim regional development grant in respect of the creation of new jobs in a development area.

Merchant Fleet

Sir Edward du Cann asked the Prime Minister whether the statement by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Transport, Lord Brabazon of Tara, on 24 November at Chelmsford to the effect that he could offer no hope that the Government would take action to halt the decline in the United Kingdom merchant fleet represents Government policy; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government monitor the size of the merchant fleet closely and will continue to keep the position under review.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Northern Ireland (Terrorism)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the British ambassador in Dublin made any representations to the Government of the Republic of Ireland following the attack by terrorists from the Irish Republic on the Fane Valley co-operative building at Newtownhamilton on the border between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom on Tuesday 25 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No such representations were made, nor were they necessary. The Royal Ulster Constabulary is able to obtain the assistance of the Garda Siochana in investigating incidents of this kind.

Hong Kong

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether moneys of the Hong Kong Foreign Exchange reserve form part of the security for the loan arrangements concluded on 23 September in Peking for the Daya Bay nuclear power project.

Mr. Renton: No.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what responsibilities Her Majesty's Government exercise towards the safety of the people of Hong Kong; and how these responsibilities are carried out.

Mr. Renton: We exercise full responsibility for the welfare and wellbeing of the people of Hong Kong. This responsibility is carried out in close consultation with the Governor and Executive Council of Hong Kong.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has received *(a)* opposing and *(b)* favouring the building of the Daya Bay nuclear power plant.

Mr. Renton: *(a)* One, *(b)* None.

European Economic and Social Committee

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the full membership of the European Social and Economic Committee, with dates of appointment of members.

Mrs. Chalker: Copies of a list of the 189 members of the Economic and Social Committee, giving dates of appointment, are being placed in the Library of the House.

South Korea

Mr. Parry askd the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of South Korea concerning that Government's record on human rights.

Mr. Renton: Contacts with the Government of the Republic of Korea ensure that they remain well aware of the views of Her Majesty's Government and organisations in the United Kingdom on human rights matters.

Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Sumberg asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to obtain from the Swedish Government as much information as is in their possession about the case of Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The Swedish Government have always been ready to make information available in this case. A copy of a document which they produced was placed in the Library of the House last year, bringing together the main evidence then available. We remain in close touch with them.

Disarmament

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards disarmament in the light of the statement of Soviet Foreign Minister Mr. Shevardnadze on 27 February that, if United States medium-range missiles in Europe were liquidated, there would no longer be any need to keep Soviet operating tactical missiles where they have been deployed.

Mr. Renton: In the event of an agreement limiting and reducing longer-range INF warheads in Europe, we would expect the Soviet SS22 launchers, forward deployed to the GDR and Czechoslavakia as so-called "counter-measures" to United States LRINF deployments in 1983, to be moved back to Soviet territory.

Nuclear Forces

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will list the proposals the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies have received from either the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or its allies since January 1981 on constraining short and medium-range European nuclear forces in Europe;

(2) if he will list the proposals made by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies to the Warsaw Pact allies since January 1981 on constraining short and medium-range nuclear forces in Europe.

Mr. Renton: The progress report published in December 1983 by NATO's special consultative group on INF arms control gave full details of the first United States-Soviet INF talks between 1981-83. A copy is available in the Library of the House.

Both sides have agreed to respect the confidentiality of the current Geneva nuclear and space talks. However, the US and Soviet Union have each given detailed accounts of the six rounds of the negotiations that have so far taken place, and of the terms of the INF agreement discussed at Reykjavik. This would provide for zero LRINF warheads in Europe; 100 LRINF warheads each outside Europe on United States territory and Soviet Asia respectively; constraints on shorter range INF with subsequent negotiations about reductions to begin within six months; and measures for effective verification including on-site inspection.

RAF Fylingdales

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will list the parameters under which he has determined the legal status of the planned radar modernisation at RAF Fylingdales;

(2) what assessment he has made of the compatibility of the planned modernisation of radar facilities at RAF Fylingdales with the anti-ballistic missile treaty.

Mr. Renton: As we have already made clear, we have no doubts that the modernisation of RAF Fylingdales will be fully in accordance with United States obligations under the ABM treaty. There was a ballistic missile early warning system installation at Fylingdales before the treaty was signed in 1972. The treaty does not prohibit modernisation of ballistic missile early warning system radars already in existence when the treaty provisions came into force.

EC (Youth Exchange)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial support the Government are giving to the proposed new youth exchange scheme in the EEC; and how much money will be distributed.

Mr. Eggar: Discussions on the proposed EC youth exchange programme are still at an early stage, with the size, scope and cost yet to be determined. It is therefore not possible to say what the size of any contribution from us might be, or how money for the programme would be distributed.

ENERGY

Mines and Quarries Act

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library correspondence between himself and the chairman of the National Coal Board in connection with any proposed changes in the Mines and Quarries Act.

Mr. David Hunt: Any such changes are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

European Parliament (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his recent visit to the European Parliament and his meeting there with the Committee on Energy Research and Technology; and if he will detail the issues raised at that meeting.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have not made such a visit. Arrangements have been made for my right hon. Friend the Minister of State to meet the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology on 15 December.

Nuclear Power Research

Mr. McGuire asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total amount of Government funding for all forms of nuclear power research in the last 12 months.

Mr. Goodlad: The 1986-87 provision for expenditure by the Department of Energy on nuclear R and D is set out in section D of the Supply Estimates 1986-87, class VI,2. This totals £180·5 million.

The Estimates (section C3 of class X.5) also contain provision for expenditure of £11·5 million by the Department of the Environment for research into radioactive waste management.

Power Stations

Mr. McGuire asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list in the *Official Report* the top 10 power stations which produce the cheapest electricity on a cost per unit basis, giving in each case the type of fuel used, the date the station was commissioned, the original estimated cost, and the real cost when completed, the original estimated building time and the actual building time, the original planned life of the station and the current planned life of each station.

Mr. Goodlad: Following are the top 10 power stations in the Central Electricity Generating Board merit order, based on efficiency of plant and cost of fuel used:

	(1) Date of synchronisation	(2)	(3) Cost (£ million) original	(4) now	(5) Building (months) original	(6) now
Hinkley Point B	February 1976	1966	117	142	52	98
Wylfa	January 1971	1963	140	136	53	81
Oldbury	November 1967	1961	74	72	47	64
Dungeness A	September 1965	1959	77	68	44	58
Hartlepool*	August 1983	1967	117	257	57	175
Hinkley Point B	February 1965	1957	76	86	57	89
Dungeness B*	April 1983	1965	111	267	49	204
Sizewell A	January 1966	1960	70	66	47	56
Heysham 1*	July 1983	1969	168	282	52	147
Trawsfynydd	January 1965	1959	77	80	50	66

Notes:
Column 1: Date power first supplied to the grid.
Column 2: Scheme base date.
Column 3: Original cost estimate (including risk margin and initial fuel) in constant scheme base date prices.
Column 4: Cost to completion in constant scheme base date prices (including estimated future costs at stations marked * which are not yet fully commissioned).
Column 5: Estimated construction time from start on site to the date of first power supply to the grid.
Column 6: Actual construction time defined as in column 5.

All the stations are nuclear. The originally planned nominal life of all the stations was 25 years with the exception of Wylfa, 20 years. The currently assumed nominal life remains 25 years for AGR stations (those marked * and Hinkley Point B). All the others, including Wylfa, now have an assumed nominal life of 30 years.

Electricity in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much plutonium has been created at the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Winfrith steam generating heavy water reactor nuclear station since it was commissioned; what quantity of this plutonium has been reprocessed and to what purpose any reprocessed plutonium thus arising has been put.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1986, c. *352*]: Since May 1979 the discharge of irradiated fuel from the SGHWR, operated by the UKAEA at its establishment at Winfrith, has contained an estimated 170kg plutonium. None of this has been reprocessed.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

South Africa

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will release the latest figures and calculations of the University of South Africa that provide the current guidelines for the European Community code of conduct in South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: I am placing in the Library of the House the table published by the University of South Africa of supplemented living level requirements for August 1985 and February 1986. These are the figures relevant to the latest completed reporting period for which companies are now submitting their returns under the EC code of conduct for companies with interest in South Africa. The code requires that pay based on the SLL for an average sized family must be considered the absolute minimum. Further explanatory guidance to British companies is contained in Cmnd. 9860.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what he is doing to ensure that companies failing to report on their holdings in South Africa for the 12 months ended 30 June 1985 comply with the European Community code of conduct.

Mr. Alan Clark: The EC code of conduct remains voluntary, but I and my officials take every opportunity to urge all the British companies concerned to comply fully with it and submit full reports. Of the 138 companies whose interests were known or believed to warrant a full report under the code, only three declined to submit returns for the 1984-85 reporting period, and two of these offered certain general assurances about the conditions of employment of their black South African employees.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the minimum living levels and the supplemented living levels for South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: The supplemented and minimum living levels are calculations by the bureau of market research of the University of South Africa. The supplemented living level makes provision at current local prices for items considered by researchers to be essential to human needs in South Africa, additional to those costed in minimum living level, which is regarded as the minimun subsistence level in African conditions. Separate calculations are made for individual districts and household sizes and are expressed in rands per months. The calculations are revised every six months in February and August.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information is provided by his Department to companies with interests in South Africa on levels of wages relevant to the European Community code of conduct.

Mr. Alan Clark: Guidance on the level of minimum wages advocated by the code for black African employees is contained in the explanatory guidance published in Cmnd. 9860. Companies are referred to the statistics published by the bureau of market research, University of South Africa.

Consultation Documents (Responses)

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to make public the

responses received to future consultation documents issued by his Department, unless respondents have specifically asked for their comments to be confidential; and if he will make clear arrangements for publication of responses when such documents are issued.

Mr. Butcher: No. Frank expression of views could be inhibited if there were a presumption in favour of publication, but I continue to be ready to do so in appropriate cases and when the respondent has explicitly agreed to publication.

Privatisation (Golden Shares)

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what communication he has received from the European Commission concerning limits on golden shares in privatised British companies.

Mr. Butcher: None.

British Aerospace

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what communications he has received from the European Commission regarding foreign ownership shareholding restrictions in British Aerospace; and what account he has given.

Mr. Butcher: None.

Rolls-Royce plc

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what advice has been received from the European Commission regarding foreign shareholding restrictions in the proposed privatisation of Rolls-Royce.

Mr. Butcher: None.

Iraq (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the Minister for Trade's visit to Iraq on 10 November; and what discussions he held with Iraqi leaders regarding the progress of the war with Iran.

Mr. Alan Clark: I visited Iraq on 10-11 November as co-chairman of the United Kingdom-Iraq Joint Commission to review the development of bilateral trade and the prospects for the coming year. The joint commission approved the extension of the financial protocol providing credit facilities for United Kingdom exports until the end of 1987. Iraqi Ministers confirmed their intention of meeting Iraq's current payments obligations to the United Kingdom. With Iraqi Ministers I discussed the economic implications for Iraq of the fall in oil prices and the war with Iran. Iraq continues to face a period of severe economic stringency; nevertheless, our exports to this market show a welcome increase of almost 9 per cent. in the first 10 months of 1986. I also visited the United Kingdom pavilion at the Baghdad international fair, where 70 British companies were exhibiting. My hosts commented favourably on the large British presence.

Relocation Grants

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what grants are available to companies to relocate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My Department does not provide grants specifically to help companies with relocation expenses. However, firms which relocate in the assisted areas may qualify for regional assistance in respect of projects which provide new assets and create or safeguard jobs in those areas.

Nightwear

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the definition of the term nightwear to which his Department was working when it published its guidelines "Nightwear and Fire" recently;

(2) on what date it was decided to include in the Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985 babies garments other than nightwear; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Regulation 3(1) of the Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985 provides that the meaning of "nightwear" extends also to other garments such as bath robes and includes babies garments. The regulations define "baby's garment" to mean any garment with a chest measurement not exceeding 53 cm which would normally be worn only by a child under the age of 3 months.

The decision to include babies garments was taken after considering the response to consultations on proposals for regulations in the period November 1984 to January 1985. The definition includes all babies garments (with a chest measurement) since it is not possible to distinguish between garments worn by a young baby during the day or night.

The draft regulations, which were laid before Parliament in November 1985 and approved by a resolution of each House, provided that all such babies garments should carry a label showing whether or not they are capable of meeting the new flammability standard. The regulations were made on 20 December 1985 and come into effect on 1 March 1987, which allowed a 15-month period for the trade to make the necessary adjustments.

The Department's "Nightwear and Fire" guide to the regulations, which was published on 25 September, has been widely distributed to the trade. Copies of the guide have been placed in the Library.

Company Law

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a list of all those who commented on the Prentice report on the ultra vires rule in company law; and if he will indicate his intentions now that the date for representations has passed.

Mr. Howard: As at noon yesterday, 32 responses to the consultative document had been received. I expect to receive more in the course of the next few days. All responses will be considered fully before decisions on future policy are taken. The list of respondents so far is as follows:

The Institute of Directors
The Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
The Institute of Cost and Management Accountants
Association of Independent Businesses
Union of Independent Companies
The Electrical Contractors' Association
Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce
The Association of Corporate Trustees
Association of British Insurers

Finance Houses Association
Law Services Association
Industrial Common Ownership Movement
Legislation Monitoring Service for Charities
Rio-Tinto Zinc Corporation plc
BOC Group plc
Vauxhall Motors Ltd
Reichmann & Wing Ltd
Ernst & Whinney
Hodgson Impey & Co
Speechly Bircham & Co
Dr. L. S. Sealey
Dr. W. W. McBryde
H. W. Higginson, Esq
N. E. Furey, Esq
F. A. G. Kay, Esq
A. Clark, Esq
I. Swinney, Esq
M. Stamp, Esq
Dr. S. N. Frommel
B. Mordsley, Esq
Ladas & Perry

Internal Market Council

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Internal Market Council on 1 December.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Internal Market Council which I chaired agreed 12 measures in the United Kingdom presidency's internal market action programme. These were a regulation on controlling the circulation of counterfeit goods within the Community; and package of five measures on procedures governing the marketing and testing of human and veterinary medicines; directives on the introduction of good laboratory practices for chemical and other products, on standards for roll-over protection structures on narrow track agriculture and forestry tractors, on legal protection of the original designs for the internal layout of semiconductor products, and on the labelling of noise of domestic appliances; a recommendation on measures to improve the safety of hotels against fire; and a regulation on the abolition of customs formalities on exit from one member state to another. The Council also made excellent progress on a number of other internal market items so that it should be possible to agree further measures before the end of the presidency, including on information technology, telecommunications standards, and amendment to the Public Procurement (Supplies) Directive.

The Commission also adopted a directive on the approximation of member states' laws, regulations and administrative provisions on consumer credit.

Exports (Statitics)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the percentage of British-made goods leaving the United Kingdom for export and which have been carried on British-registered ships in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.

In 1985, United Kingdom registered vessels carried 35 per cent. of the value (23 per cent. of the weight) of United Kingdom exports. Information is not available separately for exports which were British-made.

EC (Regional Fund)

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will produce a table in the *Official Report* showing the regional distribution of the European Economic Community's regional fund's project aid and showing the percentage allocation to Wales, Scotland, the west midlands, the east midlands, the north-west, Northern Ireland, Yorkshire and Humberside, the north and the south-west for each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 December 1986, c. *434*]: Commitments to the United Kingdom under the European regional development fund quota arrangements, analysed by region, for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985 are shown in the table. Commitments from the fund in respect of a particular region are likely to be affected by the volume of eligible applications made.

Analysis of ERDF quota commitments to the United Kingdom 1983, 1984 and 1985 (mecu)

	1983		*1984*		*1985*	
	Mecu	*Percentage*	*Mecu*	*Percentage*	*Mecu*	*Percentage*
North	57·4	12·5	65·2	10·5	42·6	7·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	27·3	5·9	86·2	13·9	36·3	6·2
East Midlands	7·4	1·6	7·3	1·2	30·1	5·2
South West	19·8	4·3	47·6	7·7	17·7	3·0
West Midlands	6·7	1·5	30·0	4·8	78·5	13·4
North West	73·5	16·1	95·8	15·5	126·3	21·6
Wales	82·4	18·0	96·2	15·5	96·6	16·5
Scotland	145·5	31·7	155·0	25·0	117·8	20·1
Northern Ireland	38·4	8·4	34·7	5·6	39·4	6·7
Multi Regional	—		1·8	0·3	—	
Total	458·4	100	619·8	100	585·3	100

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Higher Education

10. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what number of students are currently in full-time higher education in England and Wales; and what was the figure in 1978-79.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In 1986 there were 457,000 home students in full-time higher education in England and Wales. This compares with 384,000 in 1979—this is an increase of 19 per cent.

12. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what figures he has on the percentage of disabled students in higher education.

36. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what figures he has on the percentage of disabled students in higher education.

47. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what figures he has on the percentage of disabled students in higher education.

77. **Mr. Redmond** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what figures he has on the percentage of disabled students in higher education.

Mr. Walden: As explained in my reply on 18 November to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) information on disabled students in higher education is not available routinely. However, in 1985 a DES funded survey estimated that there were some 600 students in public sector higher education who had special educational needs which required additional support or equipment.

The Open University had just over 2,000 disabled students in the undergraduate programme at the start of 1986. Information is not available about other universities.

16. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what funds will be available in 1987-88 for public sector higher education capital expenditure.

Mr. Walden: The total available for capital allocations to local authorities for higher education has yet to be determined. Subject to parliamentary approval, £3·3 million will be available for capital allocations to voluntary and direct grant colleges.

20. **Mr. Leighton** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what figures he has on the percentage of students in higher education who are of Asian or Afro-Caribbean parentage.

48. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what figures he has on the percentage of students in higher education who are of Asian and Afro-Caribbean parentage.

50. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what figures he has on the percentage of students in higher education who are of Asian and Afro-Caribbean parentage.

Mr. Walden: This information is not collected centrally. Discussions are in progress within the Department about means of collecting such data for the future.

24. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the levels of academic salaries in higher education.

68. **Mr. Bell** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the levels of academic salaries in higher education.

72. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the levels of academic salaries in higher education.

73. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the levels of academic salaries in higher education.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Association of University Teachers have made proposals for a restructuring of academic pay. Those have been discussed with my Department, most recently on 19 November, against the background of my right hon. Friend's willingness to provide additional resources for a satisfactory outcome. I very much hope that such a result can be achieved.

61. **Mr. Hancock** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future of higher education.

Mr. Walden: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 6 November, at columns 487-91 about the the Government's expenditure plans and to that which he gave to the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) on 20 November, at columns 281-82, about projections of future demand for higher education.

74. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the levels of pay of non-academic and ancillary staff in higher education.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Members for Preston (Mr. Thorne), for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) and for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) earlier today.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the chairman of the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend last met the National Advisory Body committee, including its chairman and the chairman of the NAB board who is a member, on 9 July when the main subject was resources for 1987-88.

Burnham Committee

13. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his plans to replace the Burnham negotiating machinery.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Bill which I introduced on 28 November makes provision for the repeal of the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965, and will thereby scrap the Burnham committee. The employers and unions are agreed that Burnham must go.

School Meals

17. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in the past three months on the provision and nutritional quality of school dinners.

80. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in the past three months on the provision and nutritional quality of school dinners.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received two letters on this subject from members of the public in the last three months.

38. **Mr. Dobson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what priority Her Majesty's Government attach in the allocation of overall resources to education to the provision of school meals.

Mr. Dunn: The Government have made increased provision for expenditure on school meals next year, but they continue to regard school meals as one of the services, along with caretaking, cleaning and administration, where it is open to many LEAs to emulate the practice of the best and achieve substantial savings in their net costs by introducing more efficient methods of working.

Teachers (Pay)

21. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to meet the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers to discuss teachers' pay and conditions.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend would welcome an approach from the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, and any of the other teachers' unions, to discuss teachers' pay and conditions of service.

26. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the latest position regarding negotiations with the teaching unions and the teachers' employers.

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on teachers' pay and conditions.

31. **Mr. Barnett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on teachers' pay and conditions.

33. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on teachers' pay and conditions.

34. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current position on the teachers' pay negotiations.

35. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on teachers' pay and conditions.

39. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on teachers' pay and conditions.

40. **Mr. Squire** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current position regarding teachers' pay and conditions of service.

44. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on teachers' pay and conditions.

51. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the pay and conditions of teachers.

52. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the most recent developments in the teachers' pay dispute.

58. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teachers' dispute about pay and conditions.

69. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on teachers' pay and conditions.

89. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement regarding the teachers' pay dispute.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South East, (Mr. Hicks).

53. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in respect of the Government's intention to repeal the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has not as yet received any formal representations in response to the proposals in the Bill which he introduced on 28 November to repeal the Remuneration of Teachers Act and make new arrangements for determining school teachers' pay. Reaction to the announcement in the Queen's Speech that the RTA was to be repealed was generally favourable.

86. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the settlement on teachers' pay and conditions negotiated between the teachers' unions and employers.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend indicated the Government's position in relation to the negotiations between the teacher unions and the local authority employers in a statement to the House on 27 November.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state which are the paragraphs of the Main report in the remuneration of teachers in Scotland on which he bases his requirements for differentials in his proposed pay scales for teachers in England and Wales.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend's proposals for a pay structure for teachers in England and Wales drew on careful consideration of chapters 10 to 12 of the Main report. I refer in particular to paragraphs 10.5-6, 10.11, 11.9-10, 12.24 and 12.27.

Text Books

22. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in the past three months from teachers' unions about the provision of text books in schools.

41. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for ducation and Science what representations he has ceived in the past three months from teachers' unions out the provision of text books in schools.

56. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of State for ducation and Science what representations he has ceived in the past three months from teachers' unions out the provision of text books in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: Recent meetings and correspondence th teachers' unions have considered resources for GCSE general, but not text books in particular.

Primary Schools

23. **Mrs. Dunwoody** asked the Secretary of State for ducation and Science how many rural primary schools ere closed in 1985-86: and which were in rural velopment areas.

Mr. Dunn: In the period 1 April 1985 to 31 March 1986, rural primary schools were approved for closure, of hich six were in rural development areas.

Student Grants

25. **Mr. Gordon Brown** asked the Secretary of State for ducation and Science when he last met with the National nion of Students to discuss student financial support.

32. **Mr. Torney** asked the Secretary of State for ducation and Science when he last met the National nion of Students to discuss student financial support.

75. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for ducation and Science when he last met the National nion of Students to discuss student financial support.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend met representatives the National Union of Students on 30 September 1986, hen a range of issues, including financial support for udents, were discussed. In addition, officials met presentatives of the National Union of Students on 21 ovember 1986 to discuss the subject.

30. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State r Education and Science what representations he has ceived in the past three months on the level of student nancial support.

71. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of ate for Education and Science what representations he s received in the past three months on the level of udent financial support.

Mr. Walden: I refer the hon. Members to the reply hich I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for ackburn (Mr. Straw), for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller), for oventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) and for Wigan (Mr. ott).

Passive Solar Techniques (Buildings)

27. **Mr. Freeson** asked the Secretary of State for ducation and Science if his Department issues any design idance and requirements to local authorities and others r new school and other educational buildings and novation work to encourage them to use passive solar chniques and technology; and if he will make a atement.

Mr. Dunn: My Department does not issue design idance or requirements specifically on passive solar techniques. It is for local authorities to decide whether such techniques would be cost-effective in individual cases. We are reviewing the need for more research in this area.

Conductive Education

28. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations and requests for financial support he has received regarding the development in the United Kingdom of conductive education; and what response he has made.

81. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has carried out any research on the value of conductive education.

Mr. Dunn: Over the past two years representations have been received from a number of parents and others about the development of conductive education in this country and the need for it to be given financial support. It has been explained that the Government need more information before deciding whether the method should be supported and encouraged. The Department is currently considering in conjunction with the DHSS the possibility of funding some independent investigations, which would include a study of current provision and an evaluation of the educational and other implications of any wider development here.

Lower Attaining Pupils

37. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the lower attaining pupils programme.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am sending my hon. Friend a copy of the speech which my right hon. Friend made on the programme at Warwick university on 1 July, together with a copy of the recently published report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate on the first two years. Briefly, the main impact of the programme so far has been on the motivation of pupils and their attitude to school. The challenge for the future is to exploit this to raise the educational attainment of the pupils concerned. A formal evaluation is in hand.

Education Act 1986

42. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will be publishing guidelines to accompany the Education Act 1986.

78. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to bring into force the provisions of the Education Act 1986 regarding school governing bodies.

Mr. Dunn: It is proposed that the school government provisions of what has become the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 should, in general, apply to any new school from 1 September 1987, to county and maintained special schools by not later than 1 September 1988 and to voluntary schools by not later than 1 September 1989. In advance of that, all schools would, from 7 January 1987, be subject to the requirement for governors annual report and parents meeting and, from 1 September 1987, benefit from the new arrangements for financial information and

delegation. Guidance on the Act's provisions for early implementation will be issued shortly. Guidance on the remaining provisions is planned for early April.

School Buildings

43. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in the past three months on the state of repair of school buildings.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Park) and for Burnley (Mr. Pike).

Health Education Council

45. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy not to approve distribution of the Health Education Council's amended resources list called "Relationships and Sexuality"; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend will be considering carefully the revised resource list on "Relationships and Sexuality", recently submitted to this Department by the Health Education Council, both against the originally agreed criteria for its revision and also in the light of the new legislative provisions for sex education in schools. This consideration will necessarily take a little time and I cannot at this stage anticipate the conclusions he will reach.

School Attendance

46. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the levels of truancy in inner cities.

60. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the percentage rate of truancy amongst 15-year-old pupils on the most recent date for which figures are available; what was the comparable figure for five years previously; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is not available. However, research and local surveys show some deterioration in the attendance of 14 and 15-year-olds, in inner city schools and elsewhere. It is clear that unjustified absence occurs too often in some schools and that valuable educational opportunities are being missed. In February 1986 my right hon. Friend issued guidance to local education authorities on how to use their education welfare services to tackle more effectively non-attendance at school. In addition, the Government are taking major initiatives to improve the quality of teaching, the school curriculum and examinations, all of which should beneficially affect school attendance.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many education authorities responded by 31 May to the request in his circular on school attendance and educational welfare services issued on 10 February, that a review be undertaken of their educational welfare structure and organisation; whether he was satisfied with the nature of the responses; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Forty-five responses were received by 31 May. Replies are still outstanding from seven authorities. The responses are currently being analysed.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many educational welfare officers were employed by education authorities in England and Wales on the most recent date for which figures are available; what were comparable figures two and five years previously; and if he will provide separate figures on this basis for the Essex county council.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department has not collected such information in the past in relation to local education authorities in England, but it will be available when the responses to circular 2/86 on "School Attendance and Education Welfare Services" have been analysed. The figure for the Essex county council is 77. Information about Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what was the statistical basis for his statement in his circular of 10 February regarding school attendance rates in general and attendance rates for pupils in the 14-16 year age group; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will take steps to require local education authorities to make periodic returns of school attendance rates in the various age ranges to his Department; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what information he has received from local education authorities and Her Majesty's inspectorate about changes in the patterns of school attendance over the past two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Although the Department does not collect national statistics on attendance, it has received information from a small number of local education authorities. The statement in question was based on this information supplemented by reports by Her Majesty's inspectorate and independent surveys. There are widely differing views on what constitutes unjustified absence and difficulties in applying any such definition in individual cases. Before embarking on the collection of national statistics we should need to be satisfied that the problems of definition could be overcome and that the value of such statistics, justified the cost of collection.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing the number of prosecutions which have been initiated by local education authorities in respect of non-attendance at school under the Education Act in each year of the most recent five-year period for which figures are available; and if he will publish a separate table showing the number of supervision orders initiated by education authorities in co-operation with social services departments under the Children and Young Persons Act for the same offence in each of these years.

Mrs. Rumbold: Numbers of prosecutions in England and Wales under the Education Acts in the years 1981 to 1985, the most recent five years for which figures are available, are as follows. It is not possible to distinguish between different offences under the Acts, but most are believed to relate to failure to attend school regularly.

	Prosecutions under Education Acts
1981	3,287
1982	3,214
1983	2,757
1984	2,970
1985	3,158

Statistics of supervision orders on grounds of failure to attend school regularly do not distinguish between those initiated by local education authorities and by other agencies. The total numbers of such orders made in the same five-year period are as follows:

	Supervision orders related to School Attendance
1981	427
1982	551
1983	456
1984	361
1985	445

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what decision he has made on the recommendation of the interdepartmental working party, published in October 1985, on the use of child care law in relation to non-attendance of pupils at school; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: As announced on 1 May, at column 472, by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, proposals will be published shortly as the basis for legislation.

Review Body Pay Awards

49. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals concerning increases in costs arising from review body pay awards.

Mr. Walden: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 24 November at column 33, to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

Children (Special Education Needs)

54. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his policy towards the provision of resources for children with special education needs.

Mr. Dunn: The Government's recently announced plans for local authority spending on education for 1987-88 represent a cash increase of 18·8 per cent. over the figure for 1986-87. The increase should enable authorities to pursue their policy priorities, including those for special education.

Class Sizes

55. **Mr. Madel** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent discussions he has had with local education authorities about future policy on class sizes: and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has had no recent discussions with the local education authorities on this subject.

Police Officers (School Visits)

57. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance his Department is giving to education authorities on school visits by police officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: On 28 April the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Society of Education Officers published a discussion document "Liaison between police and schools". The document, which was prepared in association with the Home Office and the Department of Education and Science, was welcomed by my right hon. Friend for its comments on the relationship between the police, schools and the community and its recommendations. Copies were distributed to all local education authorities and schools in England. My right hon. Friend attaches great importance to constructive co-operation between schools and the police who have a valuable contribution to make in educating children about crime prevention and many other aspects of law and order, drugs and road safety.

City Technology Colleges

59. **Mr. Allan Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on his plans for the establishment of city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has invited sponsors to work in partnership with the Government on this initiative. A large number of organisations and companies have responded constructively, many wish to explore the practicalities with the Department and others have indicated that they will support the proposals in other ways.

French Language Teaching

62. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the amount of French language teaching in secondary schools; and if he plans to make any changes.

Mrs. Rumbold: The draft statement of policy, issued by my right hon. Friends in June, called for more pupils to study foreign languages throughout their secondary schooling, and for a wider choice of alternative first and of second foreign languages. The effects of these changes on French would depend upon local decisions about the range and duration of language provision within the available curricular time. Following consultations on the draft, a final version of the policy statement will be issued.

Vocational and Academic Assessment

63. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the proposed integration of vocational and academic assessment.

64. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about his plans to integrate vocational and academic assessment.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government attach considerable importance to the need both to build bridges between GCSE and A-levels on the one hand and vocational qualifications on the other, and to ensure that opportunities exist for entry into, and progression within, higher education and higher level professional qualifications. We have made it clear that the recently established National Council for Vocational Qualifications would be expected to work in collaboration both with the Secondary Examinations Council and with those responsible for higher level qualifications to establish linkages with the NVQ framework so as to ensure the minimum of barriers to access, progression and interchange. I am aware that several commentators on the report of the review group on vocational qualifications have called for a more radical integration of qualifications systems; the Government believe, however, that a more appropriate and feasible way forward is to develop qualifications from existing bases, ensuring that possible linkages and equivalences are fully exploited. Only if an effective national system of vocational qualifications is established, with pathways commanding the respect and status to draw in the ablest young people, will the unhelpful divide that exists between the so-called "academic" and "vocational" routes of learning be bridged.

Unemployed Persons

65. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans for an increase of educational opportunities for the unemployed.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Newcastle under Lyme (Mrs. Golding).

School Hours

66. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to empower school governors to opt for continental school hours.

Mr. Dunn: No. Local education authorities and school governing bodies already have considerable discretion in determining the structure of the school day.

Universities (Scientific Research)

67. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the funding of scientific research in British universities.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend endorses the University Grants Committee's policy of selectivity in the allocation of research funding and its plans for the development of that policy in conjunction with the research councils as described in a letter from the chairman of the committee, which has been published in the *Official Report* for 6 November, at columns *494-6*. Research in universities will benefit from the additional funding for the universities and research councils announced by my right hon. Friend on 6 November, at columns 487-91.

Education Maintenance Allowances

70. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his plans for education maintenance allowances.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no plans to change the system under which local education authorities may, at their discretion, pay grants and allowances to 16 to 19-year-olds in full-time education.

Further Education

76. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many full-time students are registered at institutions of further education in the north-east; and what was the figure in 1979.

Mr. Walden: There were 32,300 full-time and sandwich students in further education establishments situated in the counties of Northumberland, Durham, Tyne and Wear and Cleveland in November 1985 and 24,300 in November 1979.

Careers Advice

79. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to review the provision of careers advice in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the White Paper "Working Together — Education and Training" which stated the Government's view that it is essential that every authority should formulate a policy for educational and vocational guidance and careers education and that the policy should set out the responsibilities of each professional group and the ways in which they can work together to ensure that policies are put into practice. Officials are now considering the next steps in conjunction with officials from the Department of Employment, and will consult as necessary with educational interests, employers and others.

Chatsmore High School, Worthing

82. **Mr. Higgins** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will pay an official visit to the Chatsmore high school in Worthing.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Dual-purpose Buildings

83. **Mr. Lord** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the construction of special dual-purpose buildings designed to serve both education and the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations.

Technology Teaching

84. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of plans to improve the teaching of technology in East Anglia; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The place of technology in primary and secondary education is one of the aspects of national policy set out in the White Paper, "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469). However, local responsibility for curriculum policy and for the organisation and delivery of the curriculum rests in East Anglia, as elsewhere, with each local education authority, its governing bodies and head-teachers. The introduction of the technical and vocational education initiative in the region, and its extension as a national scheme from September 1987, is enhancing the place of technology in the curriculum. The proposed city technology college in Norwich will build on good practice in the maintained sector and will further strengthen the development of technology teaching in the area.

In the further and higher education sectors, colleges and universities in the area have benefited from a range of Government initiatives intended to improve the teaching arrangements in technological disciplines.

Microcomputers

85. **Mr. Haselhurst** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has carried out a study of the use of microcomputers in primary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: A survey of the use of microcomputers in primary and secondary schools has been undertaken, and a "Statistical Bulletin" has been produced. I am placing a pre-publication copy of the bulletin in the Library.

School Sport (Competitiveness)

87. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the outcome of the seminar on 26 November on the competitiveness of school sport.

Mrs. Rumbold: Some 90 individuals representing sports and education organisations attended this seminar about sport in schools, which was chaired by my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport.

Following wide-ranging discussions in groups and plenary sessions it was agreed that the Department of Education and Science and the Department of the Environment would commission a study of the place sport has in the school curriculum. In addition, a group will be set up, led by the Sports Council, to provide a forum for continuing discussion of the issues raised at the seminar. The group will be assisted in its work by the results of the jointly commissioned study, will be based on the council's physical education advisory panel and will include representatives of the Central Council for Physical Recreation, local authority associations and education bodies.

Universities (Pay Restructuring)

88. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to announce further additional funding in respect of pay restructuring for universities.

Mr. Walden: I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 21 of the answer given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 6 November. The discussions envisaged in that answer have now begun.

Bishop's Hatfield Girls School

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received any representations from pupils or parents regarding the future of Bishop's Hatfield girls school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Hertfordshire county council is currently undertaking public consultations about the reorganisation of secondary education in the county. Correspondents to the Secretary of State have been advised of their right under section 12 of the Education Act 1980 to lodge statutory objections in the event of formal proposals being published by the local authority.

Disease Prevention

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures showing the proportion of Medical Research Council and Economic and Social Research Council funds devoted to prevention of disease and promotion of health in the last full year to a convenient date.

Mr. Dunn: It is not possible to give exact figures. The approximate figures for 1985-86 are:

	£ million
Medical Research Council	
1. Total gross expenditure	[1]129·0
2. Funds spent on research devoted to prevention of disease and promotion of health	[1]121·1
3. Line 2 as percentage of line 1	94 per cent.
Economic and Social Research Council	
1. Total gross expenditure	[1]23·8
2. Funds spent on research devoted to prevention of disease and promotion of health	[2]0·4
3. Line 2 as percentage of line 1	2 per cent.

[1] Provisional outturn.
[2] From Economic and Research Council.

Essex Institute of Higher Education

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take into account the economic and social implications for the East Anglian region of the designation of a further centre of high quality advanced education and research when considering the application by the Essex institute of higher education for polytechnical status.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend will take all relevant factors into account in considering further polytechnic designations on which he awaits advice from the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education.

Fine Arts

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the future of fine arts courses at universities; what has been his response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has not received any recent representations on the future of fine arts courses at universities.

Medical Students

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the annual cost to the taxpayer of tuition fees payable to a recognized university in respect of a student reading medicine; and what was the total cost in respect of all such home students for the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Walden: The maximum tuition fee payable per annum by a local education authority in pursuance of a mandatory award is currently £536, irrespective of the student's subject of study. Local education authorities are reimbursed by the Department of Education and Science for 90 per cent. of this expenditure. It is not possible to identify separately the cost of tuition fees in respect of home students of medicine.

"Jenny Lives With Eric and Martin"

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations Her Majesty's inspectorate have received about the use by the Inner London education authority of the book, "Jenny lives with Eric and Martin"; what action they are taking as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Her Majesty's inspectorate has received no direct representations. My right hon. Friend has made clear to the ILEA his view that this book, which the authority acknowledges is unbalanced, has no place in any school whatever the circumstances, and that there can be no justification for retaining it in the authority's central loan collection.

WALES

Sheep Annual Premium

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what evidence he has of applications for sheep annual premium being lost or submitted late; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: For the 1986 marketing year 164 claim forms were received in Wales after the closing date of 10 April 1986. There were also three cases where forms were not received from farmers who claimed that they had posted them in time. The rules of the European Commission are very strict in the matter of claims not submitted by the closing date and we are not able to deal with such claims, except in the case of force majeure.

Lamb (Movement Ban)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state how many farmers in Wales have now received compensation payments arising from the radioactive lamb movement ban; and how much money, in total, has been paid out in respect of these cases.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: As at 21 November 1986, £680,355 had been paid out on 998 claims under the sheepmeat compensation schemes in Wales.

Transport (Expenditure)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a breakdown of the capital expenditure on transport in Wales for 1987-88, analysed between capital expenditure on *(a)* trunk roads, *(b)* other roads, *(c)* ports, *(d)* railways, *(e)* buses and *(f)* other items, comparing for each category, respectively, the capital expenditure in 1984-85, and 1985-86 actuals, and the 1986-87 expected turnout, with the 1987-88 capital allocation.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Capital expenditure on ports and railways and by the National Bus Company is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. No decisions on Transport expenditure in Wales for 1987-88 have been announced except those for local authority allocations. Decisions on provisions for remaining elements will be published in due course.

Provision for local authority transport expenditure in 1987-88 totals £70·2 million, about 13 per cent. higher than the forecast outturn for 1986-87. Expenditure in 1984-85 was £59 million, the provisional outturn for 1985-86 is £70 million and the forecast outturn for 1986-87 is £61 million.

Fire Escapes (Grants)

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of notices served by all local housing authorities in Wales under section 147 and Schedule 24 to the Housing Act 1980 (now sections 366 and 368 Housing Act 1985) in respect of means of escape from fire for each of the following years: 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985; and what was the total amount of special grants made by all local housing authorities in Wales towards the costs of means of escape from fire, including both mandatory and discretionary grants made, for each of the above years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information is not collected on the number of notices served under sections 366 and 368 of the Housing Act 1985. The total amount of special grants paid on completed grants towards the costs of means of escape from fire is only available for 1984 and 1985. The amounts are £122,000 and £194,000 respectively.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the state of the fishing industry in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The common fisheries policy has since its introduction in 1983 brought about a period of greater security and stability for Welsh fishermen. Measures for conserving fish stocks and strengthening control arrangements throughout the European Community which have recently been improved under the United Kingdom presidency will further help the industry in Wales to face the future with more optimism. I welcome the recent announcement of an enlargement of the Milford fishing fleet.

Harbours

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales what applications from harbour authorities he is currently considering for the restoration and rebuilding of harbours in west Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: There are no applications before me at present.

Chernobyl Accident

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of farmers who have suffered financial losses following the Chernobyl disaster, but who are outside the Government's compensation scheme, have been brought to his attention by the farming unions and others; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I am aware of some cases where producers feel they are in this position. The Government's compensation schemes were welcomed by the farming unions, who were fully involved in consultations about them. I believe that the three elements of compensation which we have announced represent a fair and balanced package in response to the needs of sheep producers in north Wales affected by the movement and slaughter restrictions.

Primary Health Care

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many consultation meetings have been held in Wales on the Green Paper entitled "Primary Health Care — Agenda for Discussion"; at which locations these were held; and on what dates.

Mr. Mark Robinson: There have been no separate consultation meetings in Wales. However, our officials who have had regular and formal contact with all the health groups and professions either directly or indirectly affected by this document and have ensured that this matter has been an agenda item at joint meetings so that the views of these groups in Wales can be taken into account. The views of the public at large have been sought

through the wide circulation of the document in Wales. Also, the Association of community health councils, which represents England and Wales, has frequently given evidence to the public meetings arranged in England at which officials of the Department have in most cases been present.

Hearing-impaired Children (Teachers)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to increase the funding available to enable local education authorities to second teachers for specialist training in the teaching of hearing-impaired children in 1987-88.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Under the new in-service teacher training arrangements to be introduced from April 1987 £202,000 has been earmarked for special needs training for school teachers in 1987-88. This money will be available for local education authorities to spend on special needs training, including training in the teaching of hearing-impaired children, which has been identified as a national priority. The Welsh Office will provide 70 per cent. of the £202,000 by means of specific grant and the local education authorities will fund the remaining 30 per cent. from their own resources. It will be open to authorities to apply further resources from their locally determined priority categories for this purpose. Expenditure on locally determined in-service teacher training priorities will attract specific grant of 50 per cent. from the Department.

SCOTLAND

Salmon Act

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the terms of reference of the advisory committee to be set up under the Salmon Act.

Mr. John MacKay: The Salmon Advisory Committee will have the following terms of reference:

"To examine and report on those matters relating to the conservation and development of salmon fisheries in Great Britain which are referred to it by Fisheries Ministers."

In the early stages, the committee will be asked to examine:

1. Particular aspects of the availability of information on the status of salmon stocks in Great Britain; and
2. The influences on the level of those stocks, including the effects of predators and of fishing at low water levels.

The Salmon Advisory Committee is a non-statutory body and is not established under the Salmon Act 1986.

Drinking and Driving

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the percentage of police time spent on *(a)* traffic regulation enforcement and *(b)* drink-driving regulation enforcement.

Mr. Lang: Table 4 of the 1985 "Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland" (Cmnd. 9838) indicates that, on average, 8 per cent. of the regular police and 11 per cent. of the police civilian establishments, in addition to traffic wardens, were in that year deployed in the traffic departments of forces. These figures, however, should not be taken as representing the percentages of time spent on the specific activities mentioned by the hon. Member: the information required to make the estimates requested is not available centrally.

Buses

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will obtain details from the Central regional council of the savings which have been made and the additional routes established as a result of bus deregulation.

Mr. Ancram: Information about the financial effects of deregulation is being collected by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities but is not yet complete. Details of additional routes established are not available centrally.

Drug Addicts (Needles and Syringes)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is yet in a position to make a statement on the implementation of the McCellan committee recommendation to issue needles and syringes to drug addicts in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: No.

Parole

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will authorise the disclosure to prisoners in certain cases of the criteria on which their parole applications have been rejected.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 November 1986, *c.410*]: The practice of not giving reasons for refusal to grant early release on parole licence is long-standing. As the Parole Board for Scotland indicated in its annual report for 1983, this policy has operated since the parole scheme was introduced and the alternative of operating parole as a right to be claimed with refusal subject to legal challenge. Parole is a privilege, not an entitlement, and I do not propose to change the current practice.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Statistics

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offenders currently serving custodial sentences were convicted of offences not involving violence.

Mr. Mellor: The information held centrally about prisoners does not identify all prisoners serving sentences for violent offences as defined in schedule 1 to the Criminal Justice Act 1982. It is estimated that on 30 September 1986 about 23,500 prisoners were serving sentences for offences other than violence against the person, rape, buggery and gross indecency, aggravated burglary and robbery.

Firearms

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of serious offences in which firearms were used between 1965 to 1970, 1970 to 1980 and 1980 to 1985 in the United Kingdom as a whole and in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland, separately; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The available information for England and Wales relates to notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used and is

published by police force area in table S3.1(A) of "Criminal statistics, England and Wales, 1985, Supplementary tables Volume 3", and in similar tables in earlier volumes. Area information before 1977 is not available centrally. The available information for Scotland is for the period 1978 to 1983 and was published in Scottish Home and Health Department "Statistical Bulletin" issue 4/1985. Information on offences involving firearms in Northern Ireland is not available.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proposals are before the Council of Ministers about the mutual recognition of firearms licences within the European Economic Community; what position Her Majesty's Government take on such proposals; and if the proposals in question fall to be considered by unanimity or by majority vote;

(2) if the proposals by the Commission on the mutual recognition of firearms licensing would permit nationals of one member state to obtain firearms licences in other states.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no such proposals at present before the Council of Ministers. I understand that in accordance with its White Paper entitled "Completing the Internal Market" the Commission of the European Communities expects to issue a proposal for a Council directive

"on the approximation of weapons legislation and the abolition of controls on weapons at internal Community Frontiers"

by the end of this year.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the basic features of firearms licensing in the various European Economic Community nations, showing the main features which are different from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No such information is currently held.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer in the *Official Report*, 18 November, column *90*, how many police national computer inquiries were made by the Metropolitan police over the last two months; and how many were made in each of the nine categories mentioned in his previous answer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the latest figures available are for August 1986, when the total number of accesses (inquiries plus update transactions) to the police national computer by his force was 3,980. More recent information is not readily available because a sample is taken periodically.

All the inquiries fall into the nine categories listed in my reply to the hon. Member of 18 November and individual accesses can be traced in the event of a subsequent query. No statistics are kept of the number of accesses in particular categories.

Drinking and Driving

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking during the current year to deter the drinking driver and to reduce his risk of involvement in alcohol-related road traffic accidents.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As this year's Christmas drinking and driving publicity campaign points out, people who drink and drive are a menace to society. The process of educating those who may be tempted to drink and drive about the dangers to which they expose themselves and others is a continuous one in which both the Government and society at large have parts to play. I am satisfied that the police have the necessary powers for the enforcement of the law in relation to drunken driving, and that they appreciate the importance of effective enforcement in this area.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the percentage of police time spent on *(a)* traffic regulation enforcement and *(b)* drink-driving regulation enforcement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The allocation of manpower resources is a matter for individual chief officers of police. The information requested is not available centrally.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the approved staffing levels in W division of the Metropolitan police force; and what was the existing number of police officers on 1 November in this division.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested for the three divisions which comprised the former W district is set out in the table:

Division	*Uniformed officers (sergeants and above) and all CID officers*		*Uniformed police constables only*[1]	
	Total establishment	*Actual strength*	*Target strength*	*Actual strength*
Tooting	71	65	197	191
Battersea	54	70	188	198
Wandsworth	44	55	173	184
Total	169	190	558	573

[1] The system of fixing establishments for uniformed constables on divisions is no longer used. Instead, the Metropolitan police have developed a manpower allocation formula which ensures that each area gets an equitable share of the total uniformed constable manpower available. Responsibility for allocating area manpower between divisions rests with each area deputy assistant commissioner, who determines a "target strength" for each division.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the total numbers of vehicles involved and the total cost of hiring of vehicles by the Metropolitan police in 1984, 1985 and 1986 to date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following information has been provided by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Hired vehicles

	Number of vehicles	*Cost £ million*
1984-85	[1]2,425	[2]1·7
1985-86	5,458	0·7
1986-87 (to date)	3,278	0·7

[1]Does not include vehicles hired in connection with the miners' dispute, and figures for April to June 1984 are not readily available for some categories of vehicles.

[2]Includes vehicles hired in connection with the miners' dispute a proportion of the cost being recovered from other forces.

Magistrates' Courts (Access)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department has taken to provide access to magistrates' courts for the disabled or blind.

Mr. Mellor: Home Office guidance on the design of new magistrates' courts includes advice on access for disabled people. Local authorities, which in consultation with magistrates' courts committees are responsible for magistrates' courts accommodation, also have to comply with the appropriate building regulations; and it is a matter for them to decide to what extent they are able to make modifications to existing courthouses.

Police (Graduates)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many graduates were recruited to the police service in England and Wales in each of the last five years; and what proportion of total police manpower they form.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of graduates recruited by police forces in England and Wales, including the Metropolitan police was:

		Percentage of total recruits in that year
1981	489	6·6
1982	626	9·5
1983	748	13·7
1984	563	12·1
1985	605	11·4

The number of graduates serving on 31 August 1986 was 5,482—4·5 per cent. of the total police strength.

Stop and Search

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the stop-and-search figures and subsequent arrests and charging for September 1983, September 1984, September 1985 and September 1986 for the Highway Vale, Holloway, Upper street, City road and King's Cross areas of Islington, north division of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I shall reply as soon as possible.

School Crossings

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the hours of overtime worked in each Metropolitan police district on school crossing patrol work.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the total number of school crossing patrols in the Metropolitan police for January 1983, January 1984, January 1985 and the latest figure available; and what is the comparative figure for the requests from schools for school crossing patrols.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of school crossing patrols on these dates was as follows:

	Number
31 January 1983	1,291
31 January 1984	1,254
31 January 1985	1,197
30 November 1986	1,128

Records of the requests made by schools for crossing patrols are not kept centrally.

I understand from the Commissioner that the decrease in the number of school crossing patrols is largely attributable to problems with recruitment and retention.

News International Plant, Wapping

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many properties have been used, and at what rent, for surveillance work for the police at the News International plant at Wapping during the currency of the present dispute.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner informs me that no properties are currently being used by the police for this purpose. Earlier in the dispute cameras were used in two premises adjacent to the News International plant at Wapping to assist in policing demonstrations there. No rent was charged for the use of the premises.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost of helicopter surveillance of the picket line of the News International plant at Wapping.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that it is not possible to provide precise information on the cost of the specific task, as surveillance has been carried out only once in the course of a flight which included a number of different tasks.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the total additional cost of the police presence (i) outside Wapping works and (ii) on The Highway, E1, away from the News International plant;

(2) what additional hours of overtime have been worked by police officers at the Wapping plant of News International since the dispute started.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mental Health Review Tribunals

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what practice he follows in commenting on cases of restricted patients, where a mental health review tribunal is imminent.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Other than in exceptional circumstances, it is my right hon. Friend's practice, following discussions with the Council on Tribunals, not to make any substantive comment during the four weeks preceding the hearing. This is to avoid any risk of prejudicing, or of appearing to prejudice, the hearing. We shall continue to keep this policy under review, in consultation with the council as appropriate.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Energy Conservation

Mr. Rathbone asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will report on his achievements in encouraging energy conservation in the Province.

Mr. Viggers: Northern Ireland is playing its full part in Energy Efficiency Year 1986 through intensive advertising campaigns, seminars, exhibitions, domestic competitions, presentations to school children and energy saving demonstrations for both the domestic and industrial consumer. Response to the campaign has been very encouraging. The Department of Economic Development has issued some 4,000 domestic, industrial and schools information packs. In the industrial sector, interest in the energy conservation scheme remains high with annual savings estimated at £3·6 million. Grant approvals under the homes insulation scheme indicate a 14 per cent. increase in the first three quarters of 1986 compared to the same period last year. Six voluntary insulation projects have insulated and/or draught proofed 27,000 houses. A special primary schools presentation has been seen by almost 20,000 children.

EMPLOYMENT

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

90. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Paymaster General when he expects all secondary schools to be able to offer technical and vocational education initiative courses.

Mr. Trippier: The phasing arrangements for the extension of TVEI offer a range of possibilities for the timing of entry of secondary schools into the initiative, but we expect all schools which enter the initiative to have done so by autumn 1992 at the latest.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Paymaster General if resources will be made available for all schools to carry out technical and vocational education initiative courses from September 1987.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 December 1986, c. *424*]: No. Resources are available to allow for a phased entry of schools to the initiative over a period of up to five years from autumn 1987. Individual education authorities will be able to enter the extension only after they have had a minimum of three years' experience operating a TVEI pilot project.

Compliance Cost Assessments

Mr. Alan Howarth asked the Paymaster General (1) how many compliance cost assessments have been submitted by other Government Departments to his Department;

(2) if it is his intention to publish the compliance cost assessments submitted by other Government Departments by his Department; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will state the terms of reference and composition of the enterprise and deregulation unit of his Department.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Manpower Services Commission

Mr. Speller asked the Paymaster General if he will seek power to allow rural Manpower Services Commission agencies to receive a higher operating cost allowance than urban based agencies.

Mr. Lee: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Speller asked the Paymaster General if he will seek powers to allow the Manpower Services Commission wage structure to move automatically in line with the appropriate trade unions settlement.

Mr. Lee: No. On the assumption that my hon. Friend is concerned with the community programme, participants already receive the local agreed hourly rate for the job. The MSC reimburses sponsors and agents for wages up to an average of £67 per week per participant.

Mr. Speller asked the Paymaster General if he will seek power to allow Manpower Services Commission assets acquired for any particular project to be written off over the effective life of the asset rather than the life of the project.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is not necessary for me to seek the power suggested, as the Manpower Services Commission presently operates a policy of writing off assets it has acquired over their estimated effective life.

For assets purchased with MSC funds for use on a project, the Manpower Services Commission satisfies itself as to the propriety of the accounting policies adopted by the project organisers. Such policies can include writing off an asset over its effective life.

Mr. Speller asked the Paymaster General if he will seek powers to separate Manpower Services Commission funding between training costs and those of operating and wages.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is not necessary for me to seek the powers suggested as the Manpower Services Commission presently operates on this basis. Training programme costs are identified separately from the cost of their administration.

Restart Scheme

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General how many people have left the employment register through the restart programme in *(a)* Burnley, *(b)* Pendle and *(c)* Hyndburn travel-to-work areas.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On the basis that the hon. Member is referring to the unemployment benefit count,

it is impossible to estimate what proportion of those long-term unemployed people who have ceased to claim benefit in recent months have done so because of the restart programme. People are constantly ceasing to claim benefit because they have returned to work, started work, started training or for a variety of other reasons.

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General how many long term unemployed people there were in the Huddersfield travel-to-work area before the introduction of the restart scheme; and how many have now been interviewed as part of the restart scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 December 1986, c. *421*]: There were 4,107 long term unemployed people in the Huddersfield travel-to-work area in July 1986. Figures for those interviewed under the restart scheme for people who have been unemployed for 12 months or more since its introduction nationally in July 1986 are not available for that precise area. However, in the area covered by the Huddersfield restart team—which is similar to the travel-to-work area—619 such people have since been interviewed.

Huddersfield is also one of the pilot areas where we tested the restart scheme prior to its national introduction. Between 6 January 1986 and 11 July, 3,244 people in the area who had been unemployed for 12 months or more were interviewed and since then, as part of this continuing programme of experiments with this new approach to help long term unemployed people, a further 1,333 people who have been unemployed for six months or more have been interviewed.

Passive Smoking

Mr. Foulkes asked the Paymaster General whether the Health and Safety Executive has reviewed the existing data linking passive smoking with ischaemic heart disease and angina; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The independent scientific committee on smoking and health has examined a comprehensive review of the health effects of passive smoking and is due to report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services next year. While the Health and Safety Executive has received a certain amount of data, it does not propose to make a separate appraisal of the evidence.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Paymaster General (1) if the Health and Safety Executive proposes to issue a warning about the possible links between passive smoking and cancer other than lung cancer, in addition to the reference to lung cancer in its circular "The Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974, Application to Passive Smoking at Work";

(2) on what date the Health and Safety Executive's circular "The Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974, Application to Passive Smoking at Work" was last revised; and when it will next be reviewed.

Mr. Trippier: The Health and Safety Executive issued this circular to factory inspectors in June 1979. It will be reviewed in the light of the findings of the independent scientific committee on smoking and health which is due to report on passive smoking to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Equity (YTS)

Sir John Farr asked the Paymaster General what co-operation his Department has received from the actors' trade union, Equity, in the operation of the YTS.

Mr. Trippier: No problems regarding co-operation as far as Equity is concerned have come to my attention. If my hon. Friend knows of any specific instances, I should be pleased to investigate.

Tooting

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Paymaster General what has been the number of long-term unemployed claimants living in the Tooting constituency who have been asked to take part in the new Manpower Services Commission's funded job training programme.

Mr. Trippier: The new job training scheme has been introduced on a pilot basis in the nine areas where the restart programme for the six-month unemployed is also being piloted. It is not currently available in Tooting.

Benefits (Work Test)

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General how many people have been refused benefit in the availability for work test pilot areas; how many have had their benefit restored by the independent adjudicators; and if he will give the figures for each of the pilot areas concerned.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: During the experiment a total of 549 claimants were disallowed benefit by the independent adjudication authorities on grounds of availability. A total of 27 subsequently had their claims allowed following appeal, with a further 20 appeals still under consideration. The figures for each experimental office are as follows:

	Number of cases disallowed by the Adjudication Authorities	*Numbers allowed on appeal by the Adjudication Authorities*
Office		
Cardiff B	56	1
Alloa	25	—
St. Austell	55	3
Hereford	57	2
Tooting B	44	2
Southend B	132	4
Newcastle 3	35	3
Nottingham B	32	6
Ramsgate	53	5
Brentwood	25	—
Crewe	20	—
Halifax	15	1
TOTAL	549	27

Skillcentres

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General how many female instructors were engaged in skillcentres in each year from 1979 to 1986, inclusive *(a)* in the Greater London area and *(b)* in the Deptford skillcentre.

Mr. Trippier: There are presently eight female instructors employed in skillcentres in the Greater London area, and of these three are employed at Deptford skillcentre. Details for the years 1979 to 1985 are shown in the table.

	Greater London Total	Deptford Skillcentre
At 31st December 1985	3	1
At 31st December 1984	2	1
At 31st December 1983	—	—
At 31st December 1982	—	—
At 31st December 1981	1	—
At 31st December 1980	1	—

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General if he will provide a table in the *Official Report* showing the numbers of training places available in each skillcentre in the Greater London area and the number of trainees undergoing courses in each skillcentre for each year from 1979 to 1986.

Mr. Trippier: Statistics on skillcentre training volumes are kept in terms of training weeks provided rather than places available. Details for each skillcentre in the Greater London area, from 1984-85 to the latest available date are contained in the table. I regret that comparable figures are not available before that date.

	1984-85		1985-86		1986-87 Six months to 30 September	
	Training weeks available	Weeks occupied	Training weeks available	Weeks occupied	Training weeks available	Weeks occupied
Barking	7,257	5,896	8,234	6,965	4,173	3,301
Deptford	10,313	6,216	10,602	9,471	7,235	5,880
Enfield	11,684	8,840	10,066	8,269	5,136	4,732
Lambeth	3,467	1,367	2,715	1,520	2,972	2,261
Perivale	7,305	5,237	7,750	5,717	3,062	2,401
Twickenham	7,422	6,048	9,133	7,176	4,722	3,772
Hounslow Annexe	1,634	1,411	(Closed March 1985)		—	—
Waddon	3,691	2,816	1,158	750	(Closed October 1985)	
Sydenham Annexe	5,715	4,180	3,065	1,995	(Closed March 1986)	
					27,300 (6 month total)	22,347 (6 month total)
Greater London Total	58,688	42,011	52,723	41,863	[1]54,600	[1]44,694

[1] Estimate.

Methylene Chloride

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General (1) what action the Health and Safety Executive took following the February 1986 meeting of the Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances to obtain the necessary data for an Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances review of the present occupational exposure limit for methylene chloride;

(2) whether the Health and Safety Executive has obtained the necessary data for the Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances to carry out a full review of the present occupational exposure limit for methylene chloride;

(3) when the Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances review of the occupational exposure limit for methylene chloride will be completed.

Mr. Trippier: At the February 1986 meeting the Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances (ACTS) asked the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to obtain the necessary data for a review of the occupational exposure limit (OEL) for methylene chloride. The HSE has obtained relevant data on its toxicity. These are data published since the initial review by ACTS in May 1985 when it recommended the present OEL. These new data are now being assessed and a report will be made to the next meeting of ACTS. It will be open to the committee to consider the OEL at that time.

In order to complete its full review ACTS also requires details and comprehensive information on the costs and practicability of control measures. The HSE has begun this assessment and plans to make it available to ACTS for its meeting next November.

Mrs. M. Curry

Mr. Steen asked the Paymaster General when he hopes to pay Mrs. M. Curry, the proprietor of Pot Pourri, 23 Fore street, Salcombe, Devon, the first 13-week contribution of £195 under the new workers scheme, due on 10 October for the teenager she has employed since 10 July; why it took nearly two months for her to receive notification that the teenager had been accepted on to the scheme; and if he will explain the delay in payment.

Mr. Lee: I am investigating this matter urgently and will write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Work Test

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General (1) what is his estimate of the numbers who will be asked to complete form UB671 at York A and York B unemployment benefit offices;

(2) when he expects to introduce UB671 availability for work testing in York A and York B offices;

(3) what arrangements he proposes for independent advice for those filling in UB671; and if, without loss of benefit, claimants may fill in the form outside the unemployment benefit office.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The improved procedures for applying the long-established legal rules on entitlement to benefit were introduced in York A and B unemployment benefit offices on 24 November 1986. All new claimants will be required to complete form UB671, but I cannot forecast how many this will be in a given period.

It is not our normal practice to suggest to claimants that they seek independent advice about their entitlement to benefit, and I have no plans to change this policy. Claim forms are normally completed at the benefit office, but

claimants may take form UB671 away with them. There is no loss of benefit provided the form is returned within three days and the answers to the questions demonstrate that the claimant is available for work.

The form is clear and straightforward, and I find it difficult to see why independent advice should be needed in the usual case to answer the simple questions. Any advice should stress that the answers should be truthful and give an accurate description of the claimant's circumstances. I disapprove of some published advice purporting to give standard answers to ensure the receipt of benefit. The social security system has always required people to demonstrate their entitlement to benefit and unemployed claimants must show that they are genuinely available for work.

Community Transport Schemes

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Paymaster General what problems his Department has found with using Manpower Services Commission placements in community transport schemes.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1986, c. *325*]: Several community transport schemes operate successfully under the community programme. Some local difficulties have occurred and Manpower Services Commission officials are ready to help sponsors to try and resolve these wherever this is possible within the programme rules.

Printing Industry, London

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General what information he has about the extent of skill shortages in the London printing industry; and what steps are being taken to remedy them.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 December 1986, c. *42*]: The Government are aware of the demand in the general printing industry in London for those with skills in keyboarding, litho machine printing and planner platemaking, and are helping to meet this demand through the Manpower Services Commission's support for relevant adult training courses in the London area. In addition, considerable support is being given under two-year YTS for schemes which include an element of printing skills. Total support for both adult and youth training in the London area for courses and schemes offering printing skill is over £500,000 in this financial year alone.

ENVIRONMENT

Football Matches (Visiting Supporters)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the banning of visiting supporters at home grounds where Football League matches are held.

Mr. Tracey: I am encouraging football authorities and clubs to work closely with the police in taking every reasonable step to deter trouble-makers from travelling to or entering football grounds. Membership schemes can play an important part in this process.

We have welcomed Luton Town football club's initiative as an interesting and carefully planned experiment tailored to the particular needs of that club from which other clubs may learn valuable lessons when addressing their own problems. I am discussing with the football authorities a range of measures, including effective membership schemes, which will retain and encourage genuine support by excluding troublemakers.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions have been held with NIREX on the alternative methods to shallow trench disposal of radioactive waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: During the study of best practicable environmental options for the management of low and intermediate level radioactive wastes, the report of which was published in March this year, the Government and NIREX discussed alternative methods to near-surface disposal for low level wastes. The study concluded inter alia that near-surface disposal was the best practicable environmental option for most low level wastes. It therefore remains the Government's policy that new near-surface facilities for such wastes should be developed as soon as possible. Other methods of radioactive waste management, which were considered in the study, are discussed with NIREX as necessary.

Housing (Compulsory Purchase)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tenanted houses were compulsorily purchased during the last 12 months for which figures are available; and how many of these were purchased at site value being classified as unfit.

Mr. Tracey: Information about houses purchased is not available. However, there were 2,970 houses, of which 2,680 were unfit, in compulsory purchase orders confirmed in England from October 1985 to September 1986 under the provisions of Part IX of the 1985 Housing Act. The numbers of tenanted houses are not available. All unfit houses are purchased at site value, but there may be compensatory payments to the occupier whether owner or tenant.

Football Grounds (Safety)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will allocate resources for the improvement of facilities and safety at football grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: This issue was considered by the working group set up by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, in May 1985, following the decision to extend designation under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 to Football League grounds in Division 3 and 4. The Group, which I later chaired, included representatives from the Football Association, the Football League, the Football Trust and the Football Grounds Improvement Trust.

At its last meeting on 18 February, the group concluded that the clubs, together with FGIT, would be able to fund the cost of the necessary safety work over a five-year period without assistance from public funds. The Football Trust has made funds available to help meet the cost of safety improvements at those non-League grounds that have since also been designated under the Act.

The Sports Council has allocated £480,000 to assist the Football Association meet its share of the cost of

improvement work at Wembley stadium. The council's contribution is in recognition of Wembley's role as the national stadium for association football.

Marine Pollution

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all research projects commissioned or completed during the last three years into the development of environmentally sound technologies, products and substitutes to prevent or reduce hazardous wastes and pollutants in waste water.

Mr. Waldegrave: Within the last three years the following research contracts have been commissioned by the land wastes division of my Department either to reduce the environmental hazards of difficult wastes or to reduce pollutants in waste water.

—Stablisation of organic wastes in clay/cement mixes using quarternary ammonium compounds.
—Microbiological systems for the treatment or removal of heavy metals and persistent organic materials.
—Treatment of landfill leachate bilogically with anaerobic pre-treatment.
—Treatment of leachate by spray irrigation onto woodland.
—Treatment of ammonia-rich landfill leachate.
— Treatment of low-strength leachate aerobically from landfills in areas of high rainfall.
—Determination of performance characteristics of various types of solidification processes for toxic wastes.

Of these, the last two have been completed.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the national grid references for all the chemical waste dump sites used on a regular or irregular basis around the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall write to the hon. Member for clarification of the information he has requested.

Leicester (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the recent visit to Leicester by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey).

Mr. Tracey: I shall answer this question shortly.

Imported Building Materials

Mr. Rooker: asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by value the major 25 imported building materials in 1985, stating the import as a percentage of the United Kingdom market and show how this compares by value and import penetration with the position five years ago.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1986, c. 234]: The products and groups of products given in the table include only those major building materials and components for which there is a reasonable correspondence between the classification of products used within the United Kingdom and that used for imports and exports.

Major Imported Building Materials

	Value £ million		*Penetration Per cent.*	
	1980	*1985*	*1980*	*1985*
Softwood, raw	259	670	90	92
Plywood, chipboard, etc.	255	507	44	64
Lamps and lighting	148	182	23	21
Nuts, bolts, screws, etc.	80	148	20	26
Structural steelwork	54	127	7	10
Paint	41	108	5	9
Air conditioning components	42	97	13	21
Central heating components	38	85	10	13
Flat glass and its products	45	72	23	22
Taps, metal sanitary ware, etc.	88	72	57	13
Tiles, wall and floor	28	60	28	36
Metal fittings	51	58	5	10
Doors and window frames, wood	18	54	4	9
Floor covering, plastic	23	38	23	32
Insulation materials, thermal and acoustic	20	37	22	23
Doors and window frames, metal	9	31	2	4
Other building components of wood	12	28	3	7
Cement	4	24	1	3
Sanitary ware, plastic	9	21	13	25
Fibre-cement products	10	19	11	15
Bituminous and asphalt products	3	14	3	6
Plasterboard	3	9	2	5
Sanitary ware, ceramic	2	9	2	7
Slate and slate products	1	8	9	32
Plaster	2	4	4	7

TRANSPORT

Okehampton Bypass

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the environmental implication for the A30 of the southern route of the Okehampton bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A careful assessment was made by the Department's professional landscape architects of the impact of the southern route on the environment before it was chosen. This followed public consultation in which the southern route was favoured by the district and county councils, and by the public, in preference to a northern route, which would have caused serious environmental damage, including a 90 ft high viaduct at Knowle.

The independent landscape advisory committee made several visits to Okehampton to consider possible routes. Its unwavering advice was that in landscape terms the southern route was the best.

The Department made great efforts in the selection of the route and design of the road to ensure that it would fit well into the landscape. It follows the natural contours of the land, much of it running close to the existing railway. In contrast to proposed northern routes, the chosen southern route will not be visible from the heights of Dartmoor to the south of Okehampton. There can be no doubt that the chosen route is, in environmental terms, the best one available for this vital bypass.

The new A30 will bring considerable improvement to the environment of Okehampton by removing traffic from the town centre. It will also remove nearly four miles of trunk road from the national park to the east.

Pedestrian Crossings

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what are the criteria his Department uses when deciding where pedestrian crossings should be located;

(2) what consideration his Department gives when deciding where pedestrian crossings should be located to *(a)* the proximity of children's playgrounds or schools, and *(b)* the proximity of sheltered accommodation for elderly or handicapped people; and what consideration his Department gives when deciding how much time is made available for pedestrians to cross the road at light-controlled pedestrian crossings to the numbers of elderly or handicapped people likely to use a crossing.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's advice to highway authorities on the siting of pedestrian crossings is contained in Departmental Advice Note TA10/80 "Design Considerations for Pelican and Zebra Crossings", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. The advice is that justification for providing a crossing should normally be based on the number of pedestrians and vehicles at the site; where these numerical criteria are not met pedestrian crossings may still be provided where there is a special need, for example, near schools and homes for elderly people.

Current guidance on the time to be provided for pedestrians at "Pelican" light-controlled pedestrian crossings is given in Departmental Standard TD4/79 "Pelican Crossings: Pelican Crossing Operation", a copy of which is also available in the Library of the House. The recommended timings are related to road width and do not include specific reference to elderly or people with disabilities. Revised advice is now in preparation and it is intended that this will recommend provision of additional time in special circumstances, such as those the hon. Member has in mind.

Local highway authorities have discretion to vary this advice to suit local circumstances.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the chairman of London Regional Transport about the contracting out of London Regional Transport services and the implications for the numbers of staff employed by London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend and I discuss various aspects of the performance of London Regional Transport with the chairman from time to time. London Regional Transport has a general duty under the London Regional Transport Act 1984 to invite competitive tenders for such activities as it may determine to be appropriate. The effect competitive tendering may have on the number of staff employed by LRT will depend upon the cost effectiveness and efficiency of its businesses and its ability to quote for work at competitive prices.

British Airways

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the European Commission concerning the purchase of shares in British Airways by European Economic Community nationals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have informed the Commission of my proposals, and will make a statement in due course.

Helicopter Rescue Service, Stornoway

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the outcome of the United Kingdom Search and Rescue Services Committee's discussions on 1 December concerning the possibility of locating a helicopter rescue service at Stornoway, Isle of Lewis.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend is in receipt of the report of the helicopter coverage working group which was endorsed by its parent body, the United Kingdom Search and Rescue Committee on 1 December, which he is considering urgently.

Greater Manchester PTA

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Minister of State's meeting with representatives of the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority.

Mr. David Mitchell: I met representatives of the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority on 24 November. They explained to me the reasons why they considered it necessary to redetermine the expenditure level for 1987-88, and answered a number of questions on their policies. I undertook to consider their representations and arguments, and to ensure they would be fully taken into account in my right hon. Friend's decision on the authority's application.

London Docklands Railway

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning the capital funding of the works listed in the London Docklands Light Railway (Beckton) Bill.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have been given an assurance by the London Docklands Development Corporation that in its view the project could go ahead with no expectation of Government contribution to London Regional Transport's capital or running costs. We shall want to see, before the Bill proceeds to Second Reading, the specific arrangements which the LDDC can make to secure that there would be no significant risk that any of the costs would fall as a burden on LRT.

Level Crossing, Criccieth

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the Criccieth area of Gwynedd concerning the dangers arising from the automatic crossing installed on the railway line at Y Maes, Criccieth; what consultations he has had with British Rail on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received a number of letters and a petition from Criccieth town council about this automatic open crossing locally monitored, complaining that the equipment which warns of an approaching train is not reliable and asking for barriers to be provided. The AOCL meets the Department's published requirements and I have no power to require or influence British Rail to provide a different form of protection. I have therefore had no consultations with British Rail since the crossing was modernised, although it is aware of the representations which have been made. The crossing has been

inspected by an inspecting officer of railways, who is satisfied that it conforms with the statutory order which authorised its conversion. In view of the complaints which have been made about unreliability, British Rail have fitted devices to monitor the performance of the equipment. no malfunction has been reported to date.

Seafarers (Statistics)

Sir Edward du Cann asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest available figures for each of the main categories of British merchant seafarers as set out in table 1.4 of volume 2 of the "Statement on Defence Estimates 1986" (Cmnd. 9763-II).

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that at 5 November last the figures for each of the main categories were:

	Number	
Officers	11,637	(15,023)
Ratings	15,225	(18,595)
Miscellaneous and seasonal	719	(404)
Cadets	668	(1,016)

The figures in brackets are those shown for 1985 in defence Estimates 1986.

East London Road Assessment Study

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the east London road assessment study will be published; and what period there will be for consultation on its contents before ministerial decision.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I hope to publish the assessment studies soon. Local authorities and the public will have ample opportunity to comment.

Merchant Fleet (Defence Requirements)

Sir Edward du Cann asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to establish a Government-owned reserve fleet of merchant vessels for defence purposes along the lines of that maintained by the Government of the United States of America.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to establish a Government-owned reserve fleet of merchant vessels.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Beef

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about the amount of home-grown beef that is consumed by the fast food restaurant industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department does not collect information on the quantity of home grown beef consumed by the fast food restaurant industry and I am not aware of any precise information from trade sources. There is no doubt, however, that the fast food sector is growing and offers an important outlet for British beef.

Dame Jill Knight asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest cost of storing the beef surplus.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on Tuesday 25 November at column 182, to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart).

Hormone Growth Promoters

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the Government intend to proceed with their case in the European Court challenging European Communities directive 85/649 prohibiting the use in livestock farming of certain substances having a hormonal action.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Yes. The Government's application to the European Court of Justice to annul directive 85/649/EEC will continue to be pursued.

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations he had with the animal health industry between the adoption of European Communities directive 85/649 and his announcement on 18 August that he intended to lay regulations banning the use of animal growth-promoting hormones from 1 December.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Close contact with the product licence holders of products containing hormone growth promoters has been maintained over a long period on this contentious issue.

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria he uses in assessing scientific evidence on what constitutes a potential danger to consumers; how these criteria were operated in respect of the Medicines (Hormone Growth Promoters) (Prohibition of Use) Regulations 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The criteria to be used by Agriculture and Health Ministers in licensing medicinal products are laid down in the Medicines Act 1968. They require Agriculture and Health Ministers to be satisfied as to the safety, quality and efficacy of any product before it is licensed. We have repeatedly argued in Brussels that the information available on safety, including the safety of consumers, fully justified licensing products containing the five hormone growth promoters. As my hon. Friend knows, our views did not prevail. The regulations which have now been made to implement the ban on these substances have been made under the European Communities Act and not the Medicines Act.

Fishing Boats (Decommissioning Grants)

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what checks are made by his Department to ensure that fishing boats which are the subject of a decommissioning grant paid by his Department remain decommissioned and are not subsequently used following the transfer of a licence from another vessel to the decommissioned vessel; if any changes to the procedures are being considered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Monetary Coefficients (Food Sales)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is the purpose of applying

monetary coefficients to sales of food from European Economic Community stockpiles; and if he will make a statement explaining the manner in which these coefficients are calculated and applied;

(2) what are the current levels of monetary coefficients applied in respect of sales of beef under regulation 2670/86 and sales of butter under regulation 765/86, expressed in terms of pence per pound.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Intervention Stores

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* the current contents of each European Economic Community intervention foodstore in Britain; and if he will indicate the total annual cost to the taxpayer of the operation of such foodstores.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1986, c. *340*]: As at 30 September 1986 the stocks held at each location were:

Intervention butter stores as at 30 September 1986

Location	*Tonnes*
England	
Avonmouth	4,400
Aylesford	239
Bloxwich	1,888
Buxton	1,043
Bristol	17,745
Cambourne	528
Cannock	3,182
Chard	474
Cheltenham	274
Chester	1,062
Colnbrook	5,902
Cullompton	11,163
Dagenham	2,748
Derby	1,505
Doncaster	6,221
Droitwich	1,991
Dronfield	1,022
Eastleigh	660
Exeter	4,602
Fleetwood	2,701
Frome	1,573
Gateshead	1,026
Gillingham	1,708
Goole	459
Grantham	5,737
Great Harwood	603
Grimsby	5,569
Haywood	111
Hereford	1,142
Hull	4,213
Kings Lynn	2,374
Leeds	2,408
Leek	1,296
Liverpool	22,293
London	4,137
Lowestoft	699
Manchester	7,938
Milton Keynes	318
Northallerton	2,405
North Shields	3
Nuneaton	52
Oswestry	2,728
Peterborough	5,338
Plymouth	1,481
Preston	1,580
Pontefract	816
Retford	1,802
Reading	522
Rochdale	981
Severnside	1,045
Sevenoaks	1,613
Sheffield	774
Sherbourne	3,763
Shrewsbury	1,600
Southall	2,125
Stoke	409
Stanmore	3,846
St Helens	1,144
Stourport	2,340
Sutton in Ashfield	1,232
Swindon	905
Taunton	1,409
Tewkesbury	2,784
Thetford	1,517
Truro	2,938
Warwick	1,548
Warrington	2,613
Wigan	818
Wigston	1,512
Wolverhampton	7,476
Yate	684
Yeovil	168
Wales	
Cardiff	13,385
Milford Haven	480
Newport	1,606
Rhyl	971
Swansea	3,162
Whitland	280
Scotland	
Aberdeen	1,087
Bellshill	3,751
Dalcross	36
Dundee	540
Edinburgh	2,141
Glasgow	2,171
Glenrothes	5,062
Northern Ireland	
Annalong	680
Augher	1,001
Ballymena	133
Banbridge	5,081
Belfast	3,134
Coleraine	2,730
Craigavon	1,172
Lisburn	2,527
Londonderry	1,117
Omagh	820
Portadown	4,180
Strabane	3,336
Whiteabbey	1,097

Intervention skimmed milk powder stores at at 30 September 1986

Location	*Tonnes*
England	
Avonmouth	201
Billingham	1,077
Bootle	120
Bridgwater	560
Calne	20
Chard	600
Cockermouth	1,136
Darlington	482
Droitwich	441
Exeter	5,446
Great Torrington	1,072
High Ercall	3,590
Kingswinford	20
Knockin Heath	480

Location	Tonnes
Lostwithiel	232
Market Drayton	280
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	240
Newton Abbot	243
Nuneaton	288
Oswestry	120
Penrith	1,280
Plymouth	40
Redcar	121
Rotherwas	361
St. Helens	250
Stockton-on-Tees	655
Stonehouse (Gloucester)	560
Wellington	1,083
Westbury	153
Whitchurch (Salop)	1,990
Scotland	
Cumbernauld	657
Glenrothes	966
Wales	
Bedwas	1,835
Grymych	1,520
Llandysul	793
Llanelli	2,640
St. Clears	1,246
Northern Ireland	
Antrim	360
Ballymena	520
Banbridge	9,141
Coleraine	512
Craigavon	135
Hillsborough	370
Moneymore	706
Newton Abbey	45
Portadown	1,500
Strabane	4,200

Intervention Beef stores as at 30 September 1986

Location	Tonnes
England	
Avonmouth	734
Bishop Stortford	11
Blackburn	825
Bourne	190
Bury St. Edmunds	751
Cannock	632
Colnbrook	1,495
Cullompton	106
Doncaster	88
Droitwich	403
Eastleigh	154
Exeter	323
Felixstowe	142
Fleetwood	81
Gateshead	432
Gillingham	648
Grantham	2,088
Hull	6,293
Kings Lynn	3,206
Leeds	1,989
Leicester	150
Liverpool	1,265
London	1,693
Lowestoft	216
Luton	15
Maidstone	152
Manchester	353
March	36
Northallerton	20
Northampton	199
Nottingham	99
Nuneaton	29
Oswestry	59
Paddock Wood	1,236
Peterborough	2,510
Plymouth	69
Pontefract	1,277
Reading	42
St. Helens	154
Salford	576
Sherborne	54
Shrewsbury	867
Truro	214
Walsall	209
Warwick	40
Wigan	160
Wigston	118
Wolverhampton	861
Scotland	
Aberdeen	3,136
Bellshill	55
Bridge of Allan	22
Dundee	693
Edinburgh	284
Fraserburgh	199
Glasgow	891
Glenrothes	451
Inverness	492
Peterhead	175
Wales	
Cardiff	136
Rhyl	108
Northern Ireland	
Antrim	5,322
Ballymena	1,009
Belfast	1,586
Coleraine	689
Craigavon	12,114
Dungannon	2,802
Lisburn	3,461
Newry	37
Newtonabbey	6,317
Omagh	3,307
Portadown	32
Strabane	241

Intervention Cereal stores as at 30 September 1986
Wheat

Location	Tonnes
England	
Abingdon	38,877
Alford	7,412
Ancaster	11,585
Avonmouth	7,295
Aylesbury	17,431
Banbury	35,318
Bardney	16,806
Barrow-on-Humber	7,545
Bicester	36,442
Boston	4,455
Braintree	15,096
Bressingham	38,010
Bury St. Edmunds	14,158
Christchurch	37,902
Cleveland	25,754
Clopton	24,445
Colnbrook	39,726
Colsterworth	16,363
Dagenham	22,988
Didcot	12,541
Diss	11,972
Doncaster	57,849
Downham Market	11,426

Location	Tonnes
Driffield	28,931
Droitwich	1,945
Dudley	10,135
Easingwold	946
Ely	49,340
Elsworth	10,363
Fakenham	11,823
Felixstowe	49,410
Finmere	10,730
Foulsham	16,533
Fulbourn	9,869
Gainsborough	16,758
Gloucester	28,749
Grantham	66,061
Grateley	14,794
Grimsby	9,242
Hadleigh	4,450
Hadstock	9,646
Halesworth	77,722
Halstead	17,209
Haresfield	23,636
Hartlebury	80,065
Hayes	22,775
Heighington	5,039
Hemswell	74,787
Holton-le-Clay	14,493
Honeybourne	24,961
Horncastle	22,556
Hoveringham	15,762
Hull	88,490
Huntingdon	31,239
Immigham	9,489
Ipswich	35,078
Kings Lynn	71,988
Lincoln	57,780
Little Saxham	34,884
London	24,181
Long Eaton	14,950
Luton	50,232
Lutterworth	41,482
Lympne	19,662
Maldon	59,985
Manby	15,611
Market Drayton	22,630
Market Harborough	10,395
Melmerby	25,912
Membury	21,194
Minworth	78,756
Misson	25,610
Mistley	12,501
Monmouth	23,207
Newcastle	497
Newmarket	20,242
Norwich	9,942
Pebmarsh	8,603
Prees Heath	22,871
Raydon	9,113
Ringwood	67,163
Roydon	9,838
Royston	22,861
Salisbury	81,001
Sawston	14,776
Scunthorpe	55,539
Skegness	9,899
Sleaford	8,866
Snetterton	44,922
Soham	1,102
Southampton	26,769
South Wigston	15,073
Spalding	8,235
St. Ives	13,077
Stoke Ferry	15,057
Stowmarket	43,625
Stretham	20,429
Sudbury	11,169
Swaffham	5,036
Swinderby	16,830
Swindon	24,170
Tadcaster	4
Tangmere	9,072
Thetford	16,772
Thorne	2,921
Tuxford	12,459
Ulceby	10,298
Uttoxeter	122,021
Walsingham	7,039
Watford	60,750
Wednesbury	5,916
Wellingborough	10,445
Westbury	17,328
West Hallam	40,891
West Wratting	6,840
Whittlesford	22,958
Wimblington	15,406
Wingham	7,574
Wisbech	42,162
Witham	38,030
Witney	8,549
Wroughton	35,166
York	44,589
Scotland	
Duns	4,171
Glenrothes	1,228
Ormiston	135

Intervention Cereals stores as at 30 September 1986

Barley

Location	Tonnes
England	
Alnwick	20,520
Avonmouth	4,083
Bardney	12,421
Basildon	35,266
Belford	6,567
Blyth	4,585
Boston	5,458
Bressingham	10,943
Bury St. Edmunds	22,752
Chipping Warden	28,406
Colsterworth	8,361
Corby	19,054
Coventry	38,025
Driffield	14,757
Ely	38,339
Felixstowe	11,719
Gloucester	43,044
Grantham	2,950
Hadleigh	12,457
Hartlebury	35,511
Honeybourne	19,697
Hull	27,603
Kings Lynn	871
Lincoln	1,410
Linton	7,049
Long Eaton	17,629
Lowick	11,562
Manby	16,622
Market Harborough	2,591
Market Rasen	10,717
Newcastle	9,673
Newmarket	32,688
Normanton	2,644
Norwich	18,828
Owmby	9,005
Pickenham	941
Prees Heath	14,842
Rackheath	8,476
Retford	20,859
Scunthorpe	61,544
Selby	14,680
Skegness	23,308

Location	Tonnes
Snetterton	24,902
Southampton	25,212
Staughton	22,369
Swindon	32,150
Tamworth	7,859
Tangmere	12,501
Telford	21,199
Thetford	12,913
Uttoxeter	31,437
Wednesbury	61,943
West Bromwich	16,554
Whittlesey	10,474
Witney	36,489
Woodbridge	16,741
Wymeswold	8,731
York	17,325
Scotland	
Airdrie	21,984
Duns	103,949
Dysart	35,829
Evanton	10,001
Glenrothes	23,654
Granton	23,301
Keith	13,636
Kirkcaldy	11,588
Kirknewton	21,859
Leith	8,059
Leven	2,814
Locharbriggs	40,886
Newmachar	12,077
Ormiston	54,538
Penicuik	9,989
Stracathro	89,562
Tranent	12,506
Turriff	47,101

Provision in the Intervention Board's 1986-87 Supply Estimates (class IV, vote I) for the storage and related costs of maintaining intervention stocks is £130 million, towards which contributions from the EC budget were expected to total £109 million.

THE ARTS

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts if he will list the arts functions, theatres, art galleries and museums he has visited during the past 12 months.

Mr. Luce [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1986, c. *343*]: I have visited the following arts bodies and functions:

Nationals
- Arts Council
- British Film Institute
- Craft Council
- English National Opera
- Hayward Gallery
- National Film Theatre
- National Theatre
- Queen Elizabeth Hall
- Royal Opera House, Covent Garden
- Royal Shakespeare Company (Stratford and Barbican)

National Museums and Galleries
- British Library
- British Museum
- Museums and Galleries Commission
- National Maritime Museum
- National Portrait Gallery
- Science Museum
- Tate Gallery
- Victoria and Albert Museum
- Walker Art Gallery

Scotland
- Burrell Collection, Glasgow
- Easterhouse Festival Society
- Edinburgh College of Arts
- Edinburgh Festival
- Edinburgh Tapestry Company
- Kelvingrove Gallery, Glasgow
- Kings Theatre, Edinburgh
- National Youth Music Theatre
- Richard Demarco Gallery, Edinburgh
- Royal Museum of Scotland
- Scottish Arts Council
- Scottish National Orchestra

North
- Abbot Hall Gallery
- Beamish Museum
- Billingham Folk Festival
- Museum of Lakeland Life, Kendal
- Northern Arts

North West
- Bluecoat Theatre, Liverpool
- City Museum and Art Gallery, Manchester
- Cornerhouse, Manchester
- Halle Orchestra
- Manchester Evening News Theatre Awards
- Manchester Hospitals Arts Project
- Merseyside Arts Project
- NW Arts
- Octagon Theatre, Bolton
- Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester
- Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester

Yorkshire and Humberside
- British Library, Boston Spa
- Ferens Art Gallery, Hull
- Grimsby Leisure Centre
- Humberside Theatre in Education Company
- Jorvick Viking Centre, York
- Museum of Photography, Bradford
- New Theatre, Hull
- Nostell Priory
- Railway Museum, York
- Spring Street Theatre, Hull
- Town Docks Museum, Hull
- Yorkshire Museum, York

West Midlands
- Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham
- Birmingham Repertory Theatre
- Black Country Museum, Dudley
- City Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke
- City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
- Ironbridge Gorge Museum
- Lichfield Festival
- Shakespear Centre, Stratford
- The Birthplace, Stratford
- Wedgewood Museum, Stoke
- Weston Park

East Midlands
- Concordia Theatre, Hinckley
- Leicestershire Museum and Art Gallery
- Nottingham Playhouse

Wales
- Adopt-a-student awards, Cardiff
- Caernarvon: BSIS awards reception
- Mold: BSIS awards reception
- Plas Newydd
- Ruthin Crafts Centre
- Theatr Clwyd, Mold
- Welsh Arts Council
- Welsh National Opera

South West
- Artside Gallery, Bath
- Beaford Art Centre

CORAA Conference, Plymouth
Craft Study Centre, Bath
First Stop Photography, Bath
Salisbury Playhouse
Theatre Royal, Bath
Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham

South
Amberley Chalk Pits Museum
Arundel Festival
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
Bournemouth College of Art and Design
Bournemouth Sinfonetta
Chichester Festival
Chichester Festival Theatre
Lewes Living History Model
Museum of Modern Art, Oxford
National Film and TV School, Berkhamsted
Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford
Pittville Pumproom, Cheltenham
Theatre Royal, Brighton
Weald and Downland Museum
West Dean College

London
Architectural Association
Almeida Theatre
Ballet Rambert
Book Trust
Booker Prize
British Theatre Association Library
City of London Library
Contemporary Art Society
English Chamber Orchestra
Guildhall: United Kingdom Presidency Concert
Hamilton's Gallery
London Bach Society
London Philharmonic Orchestra
London Symphony Orchestra
Mall Galleries
Museum of London
Museums Road Show
National Campaign for the Arts
National Youth Theatre
Photographers' Gallery
Royal Academy
Sadler's Wells
Society of London Arts Publicists
Spink Gallery
Wallace Collection

Eastern
Cambridgeshire Symphony Orchestra
Cambridgeshire Courts Archives
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
Imperial War Museum, Duxford

This excludes overseas visits.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Monetary Targets

Mr. Rogers asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the Government's most recent monetary targets.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Monetary targets for 1986-87 remain as set out in the 1986 medium term financial strategy.

Industry (Borrowing)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to seek to reduce the current cost of borrowing to industry.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Short-term interest rates will be held at whatever level is necessary to maintain monetary conditions that continue to place steady downward pressure on inflation, and no higher.

Investment Depreciation

Sir Edward du Cann asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the effect on revenue which would follow from replacing the present 25 per cent. reducing balance method of depreciating investment for tax purposes by a 25 per cent. straight line system.

Mr. Lawson: I shall let my right hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Budget Council

Mr. Rowe asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Budget Council.

Mr. Brooke: The Budget Council met in Brussels on 26-27 November to consider the European Parliament's amendments and draft modifications to the first reading budget for 1987 established by the Council in September. I chaired the meeting, and my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary represented the United Kingdom.

The Council established by unanimity a second reading budget within the budget discipline limits.

The Council's proposals provide for total expenditure of 37·4 billion ecu in commitment appropriations (£23·5 billion at the budget exchange rate of 1·5939 ecu to the £) and 36·2 billion ecu (£22·7 billion) in payment appropriations. The proposals leave 729 mecu (£457 million) of unused resources within the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling.

The Council's proposals continue to provide for keeping the growth of agricultural market support expenditure within the budget discipline limit, though the Commission has again warned that on present policies a substantial overrun is likely. In response to wide-ranging modifications proposed by the European Parliament, the Council opened a new budget line for measures resulting from the work now under way in the Community on surplus production and agricultural stocks.

The growth of non-obligatory expenditure between 1986 and 1987 implied by the Council's proposals is 757 mecu (£475 million or 8·09 per cent.) for commitment appropriations and 617 mecu (£387 million or 7·37 per cent.) for payment appropriations. These increases are within the maximum rate of increase for 1987, as laid down in the Treaty, of 8·1 per cent. Payment appropriations are 62 mecu (£39 million) below the maximum rate.

The Council's proposals continue to make provision of 1,633 mecu (some £1,024 million) for the United Kingdom's VAT abatement in respect of 1986.

The Council's proposals for the 1987 budget were influenced by the expectation that a substantial deficit would have to be carried forward from the current year: the Commission is projecting a shortfall of revenue this year, particularly customs duties, of some 1·3 billion ecu (£0·8 billion), which is likely to be offset only in part by shortfalls in expenditure. The Commission re-submitted to the Council its earlier proposal for a 1986 amending budget to budgetise 776 million ecu of the expected deficit.

There was, however, no qualified majority in the Council for this, and the Council noted instead that, in accordance with the Community's financial regulation, the Commission would propose a supplementary and amending budget next year, when firm figures are available, to take account of the 1986 deficit.

The European Parliament is due to consider the Council's second reading budget for 1987 in the week beginning 8 December.

Finance Act 1975

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the certification of policies known as senior plan and senior saver policies as qualifying policies for the purposes of schedule 2 Part 1 of the Finance Act 1975 has been withdrawn.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 November 1986, c. *180*]: The certification of standard forms of the senior plan and senior saver policies as qualifying policies has not been withdrawn by the Inland Revenue. The Revenue takes the view that, in the terms of the contracts, the senior plan and senior saver policies actually issued neither conform to the standard form previously certified nor satisfy the statutory conditions for qualifying policies set out in the Taxes Act.

DEFENCE

Army Cadet Force (Northumbria)

Mr. Garrett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the amount of grant given to the Northumbria Army cadet force for the years 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Freeman: The Northumbria Army cadet force is one of three army cadet forces administered by the North of England Territorial, Auxiliary and Volunteer Reserve Association, whose responsibility it is to allocate to them, on an individual basis, grants received from the Ministry of Defence. The grants are to cover certain administrative and travelling expenses and running costs relating to accommodation. The latest figures are for the financial years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87, and are shown in the following table:

Grants made by the North of England territorial army and volunteer reserve association to the Northumbria army cadet force

	1984-85 £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £
Administration and Miscellaneous Expenses	7,276	7,410	7,924
Heating, Lighting, Cleaning and other charges	9,056	9,164	9,675
Travel	13,160	12,992	13,468
TOTALS	29,492	29,566	31,067

British Warships (South Korea)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the visit of HMS Beaver and HMS Fort Grange to Pusan, South Korea.

Mr. Stanley: HMS Beaver, accompanied by the Royal Fleet Auxiliaries Olmeda and Fort Grange, undertook a goodwill visit to Pusan between 10–14 July 1986. The ships were warmly received by the Government, the armed forces and people of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many British warships have visited South Korea in each of the past five years.

Mr. Stanley: The number of British warships to have visited ports in the Republic of Korea during each of the past five years is:

1982 — 2
1983 — None
1984 — 1 and 2 Royal Fleet Auxiliaries
1985 — 2
1986 — 3 and 2 Royal Fleet Auxiliaries

War Casualties

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy in relation to informing *(a)* relatives and *(b)* the House of Commons about fatalities in times of war known by the Ministry of Defence to be the result of action by Her Majesty's forces.

Mr. Freeman: I shall reply shortly.

3rd Battalion Royal Green Jackets

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the standard of discipline in the 3rd Battalion Green Jackets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have called for a report on the matter, and I shall write to the hon. Member shortly.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received any complaints from the people of Celle concerning the 3rd Battalion Royal Green Jackets.

Mr. Freeman: No. In fact the Oberstadtdirektor of Celle has recently spoken favourably of the Royal Green Jackets.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many private soldiers have been court-martialled for offences involving brutality in the 3rd Battalion Royal Green Jackets during the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: None has been convicted by court-martial for bullying, but 10 riflemen have been convicted by court-martial of assault involving other soldiers as follows:

	Number
1982	1
1983	Nil
1984	6
1985	1
1986	2

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many non-commissioned officers have been court-martialled for offences involving brutality in the 3rd Battalion Royal Green Jackets during the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: None has been convicted by court-martial for bullying or for assault.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many men serving with the 3rd Battalion Royal Green Jackets have gone absent without leave in the current year.

Mr. Freeman: In 1986, 28 soldiers have gone absent without leave, of whom nine are still absent. Of the 19 who have returned nine were absent for 24 hours or less. All others were absent for less than one month.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received any complaints of brutality in connection with the 3rd Battalion Royal Green Jackets.

Mr. Freeman: No. Any such complaints made through proper channels would be thoroughly investigated.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to prevent harsh initiation ceremonies in the 3rd Battalion Royal Green Jackets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: In February 1986 a case of an initiation ceremony came to light, which merited investigation. Following this, disciplinary action was taken against four soldiers of the battalion, and the unit was warned regarding the holding of such ceremonies.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many service men of 3rd Battalion Royal Green Jackets have received medical treatment following acts of brutality over the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: The treatment registers now available cover only the last four years. In total, 14 cases are recorded of treatment for injuries sustained in fights/assaults involving other service men. The assailants are not identified and they need not have been members of the battalion.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the extent to which the United Kingdom and its North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies possess the ability to verify independently and adequately any future reduction by the Warsaw pact of (i) its European-based SS-20 missiles, (ii) short-range nuclear missiles and (iii) medium-range nuclear missiles.

Mr. Stanley: The INF negotiations on reductions of United States and Soviet intermediate-range nuclear missiles are between the United States and Soviet Union, who would therefore be responsible for monitoring compliance with provisions of any INF agreement. Verification will be a key issue since almost all the Soviet systems in question are highly mobile and their launchers are assumed to have a reload capability. Detailed verification provisions have already been tabled by the United States at Geneva.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy with regard to the October 1983 resolution 147 on short-range nuclear weapons in Europe made by the special committee on nuclear weapons in Europe;

(2) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy with regard to the November 1982 resolution 134 made by the special committee on nuclear weapons in Europe.

Mr. Renton: I have been asked to reply.

Our policy on INF arms control is clear. We welcomed the progress made at Reykjavik which was consistent with long-standing Alliance insistence on an agreement on a global basis. A zero-zero solution in Europe must include tight limits on SS20s in Soviet Asia, and on Soviet shorter range INF. As in other areas of arms control, effective verification will be essential.

Medical Students

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Defence what scheme is currently in operation whereby medical students can study for their degree courses whilst at the same time undertaking a short service commission; what is the cost to public funds of assisting a typical student; and what is the minimum period of service required of service men and women who take advantage of such schemes.

Mr. Freeman: All three services currently offer cadetships to medical students. The cadetship leads to a short service commission of six years on the active list and a further two years on the reserve. The total cost to public funds of assisting a typical student in his cadetship is in the region of £17,000 after repayment of various grants and external earnings in the pre-registration year.

As with all types of SSC, the individual also receives a gratuity paid at the end of his active service, based on the number of years of active service rendered.

Jaguar Aircraft

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Jaguar aircraft which crashed on 27 November was engaged in low flying manoeuvres at the time it crashed.

Mr. Freeman: The Jaguar which crashed on 27 November had been authorised to fly at low level. The cause of the accident is still under investigation and it would be inappropriate for me to comment further at this stage.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Jaguar aircraft have been involved in crashes in the United Kingdom over the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: Since December 1981, nine RAF Jaguar aircraft have been involved in eight crashes in and around the United Kingdom.

Low Flying Procedures (Spadeadam)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will now undertake an immediate review of low flying procedures in and around Spadeadam.

Mr. Freeman: Safety regulations for military flying over all designated range areas and more generally are a matter to which I attach great importance and are kept under close and continual review.

Royal Fleet Auxiliary

Sir Edward du Cann asked the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the capital and annual operating costs of increasing the size of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary to the point where it would have the capacity to cope with a future conflict on the scale of the Falklands campaign without calling on the services of the Merchant Navy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: No such estimate has been made. The major role of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary is to provide operational support for Her Majesty's ships and its current size is tailored to meet the expected number and dispositions of the fleet. It is planned to use merchant ships in an emergency to provide a supply chain where

necessary. In relation to other priorities for defence expenditure it is not considered that it would be justifiable at present to invest in RFA ships over and above those needed for normal peacetime operations particularly when merchant ships for our defence requirements are available in an emergency.

Merchant Fleet (Defence Requirement)

Sir Edward du Cann asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest available figures for each of the categories of merchant vessels required for defence purposes as set out in Table 1.3 of Volume 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" (Cmnd. 9763-II).

Mr. Stanley: I shall write to my right hon. Friend.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Abortions

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, concerning each death notified in connection with legal abortion, performed in England and Wales in each of the years 1968 to 1985, inclusive, what was the woman's age and parity, gestation period, under nine, 9 to 12, 13 to 16, 17 to 19, and over 19 weeks, abortion premises (National Health Service or non-National Health Service) and procedure; whether sterilisation was performed concurrently; and whether the Registrar General attributed the death to the operation.

Mr. Newton: Information on deaths in connection with legal abortion from 1968 to 1981 is contained in the triennial reports of the confidential inquiry into maternal deaths in England and Wales. Deaths which were attributed by the central assessors to the operation are shown in the tables. Information for 1982 to 1985 is not yet available. Figures for the number of deaths attributed by the Registrar General to legal abortion and given in my reply to the hon. Member on 27 November at columns *347-8* are based on the cause of death written by the certifying doctor on the death certificate; that information may not correspond to the more detailed information available to the inquiry which looks at all deaths occurring up to 12 months after a delivery or abortion.

1968 to 1969 (CEMD)
Legal abortion deaths

Number	*Gestation in weeks*	*Age*	*Parity*	*Method*	*Sterilisation*	*Place of TOP*[1]	*Attributed to operation by central assessors*
1	<9	25	3	D and C, Hysterectomy	+	[2]N/S	Yes
2	<9	31	2	D and C	–	N/S	Yes
3	9-12	34	3	Hysterotomy	–	N/S	Yes
4	9-12	38	5+	Hysterotomy	+	N/S	Yes
5	9-12	39	5+	Hysterectomy	+	N/S	Yes
6	13-16	18	1	Med. Induction—Saline	–	N/S	Yes
7	13-16	35	5+	D and C	–	N/S	Yes
8	13-16	36	3	Hysterotomy	–	N/S	Yes
9	13-16	38	3	Hysterotomy	+	N/S	Yes
10	13-16	38	2	Hysterotomy	+	N/S	Yes
11	13-16	43	3	Utus Paste	–	N/S	Yes
12	17-19	31	5+	Utus Paste	–	N/S	Yes
13	17-19	38	3	Utus Paste	–	N/S	Yes
14	20-	15	1	Hysterotomy	–	N/S	Yes
15	Not stated	18	1	Dilatation & Aspiration	–	N/S	Yes

[1] Termination of pregnancy.
[2] Not stated.

1970 to 1972 (CEMD)
Legal abortion deaths

Number	*Gestation in weeks*	*Age*	*Parity*	*Method*	*Sterilisation*	*Place of TOP*[1]	*Attributed to operation by central assessors*
1	<9	30	5	D and C	–	[2]N/S	Yes
2	<9	39	2	Utus Paste	–	N/S	Yes
3	9-12	17	1	Utus Paste—>Hysterectomy	+	N/S	Yes
4	9-12	23	2	Suction Curettage —>Hysterectomy	+	N/S	Yes
5	9-12	29	7	Suction Curettage	+	N/S	Yes
6	9-12	32	4	D and C	–	N/S	Yes
7	9-12	38	3	D and C	–	N/S	[3]Yes
8	9-12	38	N/S	Laminaria Tents	–	N/S	Yes
9	9-12	39	4	Hysterotomy	+	N/S	Yes
10	9-12	41	6	D and C	+	N/S	Yes
11	9-12	42	6	Hysterotomy	+	N/S	Yes
12	9-12	42	3	D and C	–	N/S	[3]Yes
13	9-12	43	3	Hysterectomy	+	N/S	Yes
14	9-12	44	4	Hysterotomy	+	N/S	Yes
15	9-12	44	6	Hysterectomy	+	N/S	Yes
16	13-16	18	1	Utus Paste	–	N/S	Yes
17	13-16	19	1	Utus Paste	–	N/S	Yes

Number	Gestation in weeks	Age	Parity	Method	Sterilisation	Place of TOP[1]	Attributed to operation by central assessors
18	13-16	21	3	D and C	–	N/S	Yes
19	13-16	22	2	Suction Curettage	–	N/S	Yes
20	13-16	22	3	Suction Curettage	–	N/S	[3]Yes
21	13-16	29	3	Laminaria Tents	–	N/S	Yes
22	13-16	29	1	Hysterotomy	–	N/S	Yes
23	13-16	33	3	Utus Paste	–	N/S	Yes
24	13-16	34	4	Suction Curettage —>Hysterectomy	+	N/S	Yes
25	13-16	36	4	Utus Paste	–	N/S	Yes
26	13-16	37	6	Hysterotomy	+	N/S	Yes
27	13-16	37	3	Hysterotomy	+	N/S	Yes
28	13-16	40	5	Hysterotomy	+	N/S	[3]Yes
29	13-16	41	5	Hysterotomy —>Hysterectomy	+	N/S	Yes
30	17-19	19	1	Med. Induction—Saline	–	N/S	Yes
31	17-19	26	6	Utus Paste	–	N/S	Yes
32	17-19	27	2	Med. Induction—Saline —>Hysterectomy	+	N/S	Yes
33	20-	15	1	Med. Induction—Saline	–	N/S	Yes
34	20-	19	4	Med. Induction—Saline	–	N/S	Yes
35	Not stated	34	7	Hysterotomy	+	N/S	[3]Yes
36	Not stated	38	4	Hysterotomy	+	N/S	Yes
37	Not stated	44	3	Suction Curettage (Attempted)	–	N/S	Yes

[1] Termination of pregnancy.
[2] Not stated but 30 out of 37 known to be NHS.
[3] Anaesthetic death.

1973 to 1975 (CEMD)
Legal abortion deaths

Number	Gestation in weeks	Age	Parity	Method	Sterilisation	Place of Top[1]	Attributed to operation by central assessors
1	<9	31	3	D and C	–	[2]N/S	[3]Yes
2	<9	37	2	D and C	–	N/S	Yes
3	9-12	20	3	Med. Induction Extra-amniotic P.G. + D and C	3 of these patients were sterilised	N/S	Yes
4	9-12	28	4	Hysterotomy		N/S	Yes
5	9-12	37	4	Hysterotomy		N/S	Yes
6	9-12	38	9	Vacuum Aspiration		N/S	Yes
7	9-12	39	8	Hysterotomy			
8	13-16	26	2	Vacuum Aspiration	–	N/S	Yes
9	13-16	31	6	D and C—>Hysterectomy	+	N/S	Yes
10	17-19	18	2	Utus Paste	–	N/S	Yes
11	17-19	25	1	Med. Induction Intra-amniotic Prostaglandin and Urea	–	N/S	Yes
12	17-19	43	6	Med. Induction Extra-amniotic Prostaglandin	–	N/S	Yes
13	20-	43	6	Dilatation and Rupture of Membranes Curettage	–	N/S	Yes
14	Not stated	21	1	D and C	–	N/S	Yes

[1] Termination of pregnancy.
[2] Not stated but nine out of 14 known to be NHS.
[3] Anaesthetic death.

1976 to 1978 (CEMD)
Legal abortion deaths

Number	Gestation in weeks	Age	Parity	Method	Sterilisation	Place of Top[1]	Attributed to operation by central assessors
Nil	<9						
1	9-12	>40	1	D and C	–	NHS	Yes
2	9-12	>40	4	D and C	+	NHS	Yes
3	13-16	<20	1	Dilatation and Aspiration	–	NHS	Yes
4	13-16	<20	1	Med. Induction with Prostaglandin	–	NHS	Yes
5	13-16	>25	3	Med. Induction with Prostaglandin	–	NHS	Yes
6	13-16	>40	5	D and C—>Hysterectomy	+	NHS	Yes

Number	Gestation in weeks	Age	Parity	Method	Sterilisation	Place of Top[1]	Attributed to operation by central assessors
7	13-16	>40	8	Med. Induction with Prostaglandin	–	NHS	Yes
8	17-19	>35	2	Med. Induction with Prostaglandin	–	NHS	Yes

[1] Termination of pregnancy.

1979 to 1981 (CEMD)
Legal abortion deaths

Number	Gestation in weeks	Age	Parity	Method	Sterilisation	Place of top[1]	Attributed to operation by central assessors
Nil	<9						
1	9-12	31	6	Suction Curettage	+	NHS	Yes
2	9-12	36	2	Suction Curettage	–	NHS	Yes
3	9-12	38	4	Suction Curettage	–	NHS	Yes
4	13-16	16	1	Med. Induction with Prostaglandin	–	NHS	Yes
5	17-19	21	2	Med. Induction with Prostaglandin	–	NHS	Yes
Nil	20						

[1] Termination of pregnancy.

Hospital Building

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement giving details of new hospital building during the next five years.

Mr. Newton: Of the present 10-year hospital building programme in England, which contains some 380 projects whose individual cost exceed £1 million and is expected to cost nearly £3 billion in all, 154 such projects are due for completion by 1991 at a total cost of about £1·6 billion.

Paybeds

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the basis of weighting applied to hospitals for the calculation of National Health Service paybed charges.

Mr. Newton: In-patient charges in each category of hospital reflect the sum of daily paybed costs for all authorised hospitals within that charging class. Weighting takes account of the actual patterns of use of paybeds in those same hospitals, measured by the sum of occupied paybeds per day.

Industrial Motivation Ltd.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many district health authorities are using the services of Industrial Motivation Ltd.; how many district health authorities have introduced a "Quid Every Day" scheme; when each district health authority introduced such a scheme; and how much they have saved to date.

Mr. Newton: This information is not available centrally.

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department has any plans to establish an autonomous body to co-ordinate measures taken against acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend announced in the debate in the House on 21 November at column 805 that the Health Education Council is to be reconstituted as a special health authority and will in the longer term have the major executive responsibility for public education about AIDS. Overall responsibility for co-ordinating measures to combat the spread of AIDS will remain with the Government.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when his Department will commence distribution of leaflets on acquired immune deficiency syndrome to every household, and associated advertising; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's speech to the House on 21 November at columns 801-10.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to in which parts of Yorkshire and Humberside those people who, to date, have been confirmed as having acquired immune deficiency syndrome live; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: This information is collected by the communicable disease surveillance centre of the Public Health Laboratory Service from confidential reports of cases from doctors. Because of the small numbers involved, breakdown of data into small area statistics would create the possibility of identifying individuals and thereby breaching this confidentiality.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health visitors in the Bradford district are trained and qualified to give help, advice and information about acquired immune deficiency syndrome; what arrangements are being made *(a)* in Yorkshire and *(b)* elsewhere in the United Kingdom to increase the number of health visitors with such training and qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The information on Bradford and Yorkshire is not available centrally and the hon. Member may wish to approach the relevant health authorities.

The following action has been taken in England to assist community nursing staff:

1. Guidelines for the community care of AIDS patients were sent to health authorities and professional organisations in July 1985.

2. Guidance on problems related to AIDS and children at school was sent to health authorities in July 1986 (Chief Nursing Officer letter CNO(86)12).

3. The second edition of the Royal College of Nursing guidelines: "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome/HIV related diseases" is published today.

4. The national boards for England and Wales have approved an outline curriculum on care and management of persons with AIDS and courses are expected to begin in January 1987.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what discussions he has had with the British Medical Association and others on the provision by doctors of information to insurance companies, or other public or private organisations, as to whether any patient, National Health Service or private, has undergone tests for acquired immune deficiency syndrome, or of information about the outcome of such tests; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions he is having with representatives of the insurance industry on the matter of individual companies approaching general practitioners asking for information as to whether patients have undergone tests for acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: None. Disclosure of clinical information about patients to third parties is a matter for the responsible doctor, and can normally take place only with the consent of the patient.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what representations he has received from *(a)* British Telecom and *(b)* others about the technical difficulties arising from telephone inquiries following national publicity concerning acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and what action he is taking to ensure telephone inquiries are dispersed on a regional basis to alleviate pressures on voluntary agencies with limited telephone lines in London;

(2) if he will arrange for regional free telephone numbers to be made available so that people can obtain information and advice about acquired immune deficiency syndrome; if he will arrange for such telephone numbers to be publicised widely, including on leaflets he is proposing to circulate to all households; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what information he has as to how many organisations in Bradford provide help, advice and information on acquired immune deficiency syndrome; if he will list the name of each organisation and information available to him on *(a)* the times of the week when the public can obtain counselling and *(b)* the telephone number of each organisation; and what action he is taking to ensure that the public in Bradford have free and easy access to advice and information about acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Newton: We are aware that the telephone advisory services on AIDS operated by several voluntary bodies have become overloaded because of the increasing level of inquiries. We are in contact with them and with British Telecom to see what can be done quickly to increase the capacity of their telephone systems.

Urgent consideration is also being given to ways of providing additional telephone advisory services both nationally and regionally to meet any further demand generated by our publicity campaign.

I suggest the hon. Member writes to the district health authority chairman for specific information relating to AIDS information and advice services in Bradford.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to announce decisions on the free provision of needles and condoms to help prevent the spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: On the question of the provision of injecting equipment to drug misusers, I refer the hon. Member to the reply from my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) on 28 November, at column *405*.

Suggestions have been made that condoms should be provided free as part of the fight against AIDS. Careful consideration will be given to whether this is likely to be worthwhile, given that they are already widely available at low cost.

Embryonic Research

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the licensing regulations for embryonic research.

Mr. Newton: Guidelines for centres carrying out research involving human embryos have been published by the voluntary licensing authority which is sponsored by the Medical Research Council and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Mental Health Act

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further consultation period he plans for the drafting of the Mental Health Act Commission code of practice.

Mrs. Currie: Officials are considering the extensive comments received in the consultation on the Mental Health Act Commission draft, which ended in June. There will be further consultation before my right hon. Friend presents a definitive code to Parliament for approval prior to publication. The period for this further consultation has not yet been settled.

Warnock Report

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Government intend to introduce a Bill following the publication of the Warnock report on embryo research.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) on 25 November at columns *189-90* as amended on 26 November at column *298*.

BBC Childline Project

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions his Department has had with the organisers of the BBC Childline project as to the help and advice to be given by his Department to the project.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend and departmental officials had discussions with the organisers of Childline prior to announcing on 30 October that £55,000 was being made available to help launch the project. An official of the Department is an observer on the council set up by Childline to advise the project.

Child Abuse

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will state the policy of his Department on the help and advice to be given in the training of people to work with children who are suffering, or have suffered, from sexual abuse;

(2) what is the estimated number of child psychiatrists in the United Kingdom with special expertise in child sexual abuse; and if he will make a statement as to the policy of his Department towards the development of training in this field.

Mr. Newton: The Department recognises the importance of advice and training being available to professionals working with children who are or who have suffered from sexual abuse. On 30 October my right hon. Friend announced that £300,000 was being made available over three years to set up an advice and training facility at the National Children's Bureau and the Department of Psychological Medicine at Great Ormond street. The number of consultant child psychiatrists in England and Wales is 318·3 (whole-time equivalent). Their professional training enables them to assess and treat cases of child sexual abuse. The numbers of child psychiatrists with additional special expertise is not known.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance his Department has given to local benefit offices as to the financial help they can give to local groups working with children who have suffered, or are suffering from, child abuse.

Mr. Newton: The Department has not issued guidance to local benefit offices on this matter.

Children in Care

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing for the latest available date the number of children under 16 years of age in each region of England who are living permanently *(a)* in long-stay mental subnormality hospitals and *(b)* in other institutional care; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The figures available do not distinguish "institutional" from more homely care, nor do they distinguish "permanent" residents from those who are resident at that date for a short period.

National Health Service: Mental handicap hospitals and units are not categorised by the length of time people stay. Table 1 shows the number of children under 16 years of age resident in National Health Service mental handicap hospitals and units (of various sizes) at 31 December 1985, by regional health authority. The table also shows the number of children resident in small (fewer than 25 beds) National Health Service units providing community provision for mentally handicapped people. The figures include children admitted for short-term care —for example, for family respite—as well as permanent residents.

Local Authority: Table 2 shows the number of children under 16 years of age resident in homes and hostels for mentally handicapped people at 31 March 1985, by local authority region. Most of these children were in local authority "homes" (of various sizes) — just over a quarter were accommodated in voluntary or private "homes". Again, the figures include short-term as well as permanent residents.

My right hon. Friend has already indicated that he is asking the Health Service to ensure that by the end of 1988 no mentally handicapped child receiving long-term care should be required to live in a large mental handicap hospital.

Table 1: Children under 16 resident in NHS mental handicap hospitals and units at 31 December 1985

Regional Health Authority	*Hospitals and units*	*Small units in the community*
England	585	293
Northern	47	10
Yorkshire	40	5
Trent	81	—
East Anglian	19	6
NW Thames	27	7
NE Thames	27	25
SE Thames	67	16
SW Thames	56	15
Wessex	63	70
Oxford	56	6
South Western	27	68
West Midlands	48	34
Mersey	19	3
North Western	5	28
Special Health Authorities	3	—

Table 2: Children under 16 resident in "homes" for mentally handicapped people at 31 March 1985†

Local Authority Region	*Number*
England	1,468
Northern	94
Yorks/Humberside	150
North Western	301
West Midlands	125
East Midlands	70
Thames/Anglia	237
London	288
Southern	167
South Western	36

† Children in LA homes or in LA-sponsored residential places.

Consultant Community Paediatricians

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information that his Department holds on the number of consultant community paediatricians employed by health authorities in England.

Mr. Newton: A number of consultant paediatricians have recently been appointed with special interest in community child health, but responsibilities differ widely between appointments. I regret that information on the number of such appointments in England is not collected centrally.

Ethoheptazine-Citrate

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on the inclusion of ethoheptazine-citrate on the limited list of drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I understand that there is at present no single ingredient preparation of ethoheptazine-citrate being marketed in the United Kingdom. We have received representations about the one proprietary combination product on the market which contains ethoheptazine-citrate amongst its ingredients. We accepted the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs that there was no clinical need for this combination product to be available for prescription under the National Health Service.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide up-to-date figures, for the Hamilton area, indicating *(a)* the number of persons living below the official poverty line, *(b)* the number of persons on supplementary benefit, *(c)* the number of unemployed people claiming supplementary benefit and *(d)* the number of people not claiming supplementary benefit who are entitled to do so.

Mr. Lyell: Information cannot be provided in the precise form requested. The table shows the number of supplementary benefit claimants at the Hamilton local social security office which covers Hamilton and outlying villages, including High Blantyre, Blantyre and Larkhall.

Supplementary Benefit Claimants on 13 August 1986(1)

	Numbers (thousands)
Unemployed claimants	6,769
Pensioners	4,260
Other case[2]	4,869
Total[3]	15,898

Notes:
[1] 100 per cent. count of cases in action.
[2] These are claimants under pension age who are not required to be available for work.
[3] A proportion of this total will be in receipt of benefits other than supplementary benefit.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, using the 1983 "Family Expenditure Survey", how many people fell below supplementary benefit level, were on supplementary benefit and were on incomes up to 140 per cent. of supplementary benefit level in 1983, broken down by family type and economic status; what proportion each group was of the population of Wales; and how this compares with 1979 and 1981.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) on 25 July at columns *711-12* and to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 6 November at column *584*.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further provisions are being made to reduce hospital waiting lists.

Mr. Newton: In addition to action already in hand by health authorities to reduce hospital waiting lists and times by better management of current and planned general National Health Service resources, my right hon. Friend has established a fund totalling £50 million over two years, within which health authorities will be able to bid for money for specific initiatives to reduce waiting lists and/or times. The money will go to health authorities which can demonstrate that they are managing existing resources effectively and that some specific addition would enable them to make faster progress.

Crewe Health Authority

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list his Department's funding of the Crewe health authority for the following years *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1980-81, *(c)* 1981-82, *(d)* 1982-83, *(e)* 1983-84, *(f)* 1984-85 and *(g)* 1985-86; and how this funding compares with the resource allocation working party recommendations.

Mr. Newton: The net revenue expenditure for Crewe district health authority is as follows:

	£(000s)
1982-83	30,036
1983-84	31,855
1984-85	33,784
1985-86	35,520

This shows an overall increase of 18·3 per cent. and an increase of 2·4 per cent. in real terms.

Figures for revenue expenditure in the Crewe district health authority are not available centrally prior to 1982 because the district formed part of Cheshire area health authority before the National Health Service reorganisation in 1982.

Distribution of resources to individual health authorities is a matter for regional health authorities to decide. The Department expects the principles developed by the resource allocation working party to be applied in arriving at a fair distribution, taking into account the district's approved plans and local circumstances.

Canada (United Kingdom Pensions)

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether discussions are continuing between his Department and the Canadian Department of Health and Welfare about a bilateral social security convention regarding an uprating of United Kingdom pensions payable in Canada to pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 22 October at columns *906-7*.

There is regular informal contact between officials of the Department and the Canadian Department of Health and Welfare regarding social security matters, including discussion and exchange of information in connection with a new convention, but there are no formal discussions taking place at present about the detailed technical matters involved. Until such time as the necessary finance can be made available, it will not be possible to make significant progress towards a new social security convention with Canada.

Mortality

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action is being undertaken to ensure the future availability of more accurate statistics relating to social class mortality, in the light of the outcome of the 1979-80 and 1982-83 occupational mortality supplement.

Mrs. Currie: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' longitudinal study provides statistics of social class mortality free of the bias in the Registrar General's decennial supplement on occupational mortality. Some statistics from the logitudinal study for the period 1981-83 have already been published in "Population Trends No. 45" and results for the period 1981-85 will be available in due course.

Benefits

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many staff in the Wandsworth offices of his Department at Irene house, Arndale house and Parkgate road, currently administer *(a)* supplementary benefit and *(b)* contributory benefit; and what were the comparable figures at 31 December 1984 and 31 December 1985.

Mr. Lyell: Information on numbers of staff in post is available only for the first day of each month. The number of staff administering *(a)* supplementary benefit and *(b)* contributory benefit at the Department's offices at Irene house, Arndale house and Parkgate road at 1 January 1985, 1 January 1986 and 1 November 1986 is as follows:

	1 January 1985		*1 January 1986*		*1 November 1986*	
	Supplementary Benefit	*Contributory Benefit*	*Supplementary Benefit*	*Contributory Benefit*	*Supplementary Benefit*	*Contributory Benefit*
Irene House	136·0	54	126·5	49·0	138·5	45·5
Arndale House	85·5	51	85·5	45·5	84·5	42·0
Parkgate Road	138·0	30	125·5	28·5	127·0	30·0

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many families with children were dependent on supplementary benefit in 1984 broken down by *(a)* economic status, *(b)* according to whether they were one-parent or two-parent families and *(c)* by duration of time on supplementary benefit;

(2) if he will publish a breakdown of the number of supplementary benefit claimants and dependants in 1984 broken down by social security region;

(3) if he will publish a table using his Department's low income families 1983 tables showing how many people fell below supplementary benefit level, were on supplementary benefit or 140 per cent. of supplementary benefit level, analysed according to both economic and family status together at the latest available date.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Irradiated Food

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to introduce regulations relating to irradiated food.

Mrs. Currie: We have no plans at present for further amendments to the Food (Control of Irradiation) Regulations 1967 which, in effect, prohibit the irradiation of food. I also refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) on 23 October at columns *978-80*.

Urgent Needs Payments

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state, for each office of his Department covering the constituency of Leyton, the number of urgent needs payments (i) requested, (ii) given-out and (iii) refused in the current year and the two previous years.

Mr. Lyell: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. Leyton is covered by two of the Department's offices. The tables show how they determined claims for urgent needs payments during years ending early in April.

Table A *Leytonstone*

	1984-85	[1]*1985-86*
Successful claims for living expenses	588	610
Unsuccessful claims for living expenses	34	62
[2]Claims for single payments for one-off needs	14	7
TOTAL CLAIMS	636	679

Table B *Walthamstow*

	1984-85	[1]*1985-86*
Successful claims for living expenses	283	1,307
Unsuccessful claims for living expenses	7	21
[2]Claims for single payments for one-off needs	128	115
TOTAL CLAIMS	418	1,443

[1] 1985-86 figures are provisional.
Information is not available for any period before April 1984.
[2] These figures include awards and refusals.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to review levels of pay for speech therapists.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 6 November at column *601*.

Holywood Hall Hospital

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will indicate whether the sale of Holywood Hall hospital in County Durham was advertised publicly;

(2) whether any inquiries received by the Northern regional health authority to purchase the Holywood Hall hospital complex were received prior to its closure;

(3) whether the Northern regional health authority sought planning permission to enhance the value of the Holywood Hall hospital complex before it was offered for sale;

(4) whether the Northern regional health authority carried out any vetting procedures on the firms which bid for the Holywood Hall hospital site.

Mrs. Currie: The Northern regional health authority has been asked for a report on the sale of Holywood Hall hospital, and I will let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as it has been received and studied.

RAWP Formula

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions the resource allocation working party formula has been modified since its inception.

Mr. Newton: The national RAWP formula has been modified on three occasions:

(i) in accordance with the recommendations of the Advisory Group on Resource Allocation in 1980: the main changes were recalculation of the Thames regions' resource targets to take account of labour market cost differences between the Greater London area and the rest of England; and revision of the service increment for teaching;

(ii) an amendment to the capital RAWP formula, phasing out a stock equalisation element in the formula, is being introduced after consultation with regions, over seven years from 1985-86;

(iii) from 1985-86, after consultation with regions, population projections have been used in place of population estimates in the revenue RAWP formula; some other technical changes were introduced at the same time.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what progress has been made regarding greater equality of resources in the National Health Service according to the resource allocation working party formula since 1979;

(2) if he will list in rank order the health regions and the district health authorities according to the percentage by which their resources are above or below those given by the resource allocation working party formula.

Mr. Newton: The following table shows each region's distance from its RAWP target share of the available resources in 1979-80 and 1986-87. Regions are shown ranked according to their 1986-87 distance from target.

Regional Health Authority	*Post-allocation distance from target (per cent.)*	
	1979-80	*1986-87*
North West Thames	+13·0	+7·6
North East Thames	+11·5	+5·9
South East Thames	+10·0	+3·9
South West Thames	+ 5·9	+1·9
Mersey	− 1·0	+0·1
North Western	− 8·8	−0·8
Wessex	− 3·7	−1·4
Northern	− 7·5	−1·9
Oxford	+ 0·6	−2·0
Yorkshire	− 3·7	−2·2
South Western	− 4·0	−2·4
Trent	− 7·3	−3·7
East Anglian	− 5·1	−3·8
West Midlands	− 5·8	−3·9

Comparable information cannot be supplied for district health authorities, as comprehensive information is not held centrally and regions use varying methodologies for calculating resource targets.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) which individuals, institutions and health authorities have urged changes in the resource allocation working party formula and its implications; and if he will categorise them according to whether they urged quicker or slower progress towards equality in resource distribution;

(2) if he will detail the way in which the resource allocation working party formula and process has been reviewed by the Health Service Management Board; from which people and institutions evidence was obtained; what measures of patient care were considered; and when he will announce the results of the review.

Mr. Newton: The National Health Service management board is being assisted in its review of the resource allocation working party formula by a steering group and a technical group, both with members drawn from health authorities and the DHSS. A list of respondents to the review's formal consultation is as follows. Ministers take decisions each year on the pace of movement towards each region's target share of the available resources; this is not determined by the formula and is therefore not within the remit of the review.

My right hon. Friend hopes to make an announcement shortly about progress with the review to date.

Northern RHA
Yorkshire RHA
Trent RHA
East Anglian RHA
North West Thames RHA
North East Thames RHA
South East Thames RHA
South West Thames RHA
Wessex RHA
Oxford RHA
South Western RHA
West Midlands RHA
Mersey RHA
North Western RHA
The Regional Medical Officers
The National Association of Health Authorities in England and Wales (NAHA)
The Community Medicine Consultative Committee
The Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFM)
The Institute of Health Service Management

The Joint Consultants Committee (JCC)
The Royal College of Nursing (RCN)
The Royal College of Midwives (RCM)
The Health Visitors Association (HVA)
The British Dental Association (BDA)
The Guild of Hospital Pharmacists
The Society of Chiropodists
The British Medical Association
General Medical Service Committee (GMSC)

The Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association (HCSA)
The Trades Union Congress
The National and Local Government Officers Association
The British Paediatric Association
The Royal College of Physicians
The Royal College of Radiologists
The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
The Royal College of Surgeons
The Royal College of Psychiatrists
The Royal College of Pathologists
The Royal College of General Practitioners
The Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA)
The Association of County Councils (ACC)
Caradon District Council
North Cornwall District Council
Borough of Restormel
Carrick District Council
The University Grants Committee
The University of London
The University of Leicester
The University of Oxford
The Queen's University of Belfast
The University of Surrey
The Committee of Vice-Chancellors & Principals
The University Hospitals Association
Federation of Associations of Clinical Professors
The Association of University Teachers of Psychiatry
The Conference of Metropolitan Deans
The Dental Education Advisory Council
The Supra-Regional Services Advisory Group
The United Medical and Dental Schools of Guys and St. Thomas' Hospital
The Medical Research Council
King Edward's Hospital Fund
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's Special Health Authority
The London Postgraduate Special Health Authorities
Bolton DHA
Wandsworth DHA
West Lambeth DHA
Paddington & N Kensington DHA
Airedale DHA
Tower Hamlets DHA
SE Kent DHA
Frenchay DHA
N W Surrey DHA
Lewisham & N Southwark DHA
East Sussex Joint Consultative Committee
The Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales
Haringey CHC
North Derbyshire CHC
Riverside CHC
Mid Essex CHC
Eastbourne CHC
Bexley CHC
Portsmouth and SE Hants CHC
Medway CHC
South Gwent CHC

Nurses

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost to public funds of training *(a)* a state-enrolled nurse and *(b)* a state-registered nurse; and what was the total cost of training all such nurses for the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: The estimated cost, based on July 1986 figures, for England, is as follows:

(a) Two-year training of an enrolled nurse (general)—previously state enrolled nurse—£7,700.

(b) Three-year training of a registered general nurse—previously state registered nurse—£11,700.

The total cost of training all such nurses in England, for the financial year 1985-86 was £449 million. This is made up of £378 million in salaries, national insurance and superannuation costs for learners, paid by health authorities, and £71 million expenditure by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting in training costs. These figures are subject to audit by the National Audit Office. There is additional, but not separately identified expenditure on informal teaching costs (teaching provided by qualified staff as learners during clinical placements) and on maintenance and conditions in lieu of rates in respect of schools of nursing.

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make an estimate of the number of agency nurses currently employed to provide temporary nursing cover in the National Health Service hospitals in the North-West Thames region.

Mr. Newton: As at 30 September 1985, there were 1,060 whole-time equivalent hospital nursing and midwifery agency staff employed in the North-West Thames region.

Doctor Agencies

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make an estimate of the number of *(a)* single and *(b)* multiple doctor agencies which are currently providing temporary medical cover to National Health Service hospitals in the North-West Thames region.

Mr. Newton: This information is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may like to contact the chairman of the North-West Thames regional health authority.

Doctors (Earnings)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the average earnings of a general medical practitioner in each of the first five years in general practice; and what are the comparable figures for a doctor working in a National Health Service hospital.

Mr. Newton: A straight comparison is not possible. After graduation, all doctors spend a year in the hospital house officer grade. Future general practitioners spend a further two years as senior house officers and a year attached to a practice as a trainee. These are minimum requirements, and a doctor will not necessarily enter general practice immediately thereafter. The National Health Service incomes of individual general practitioners would depend on a variety of factors, such as list sizes, services provided and partnership agreements. From 1 July 1986 the average intended net income of all unrestricted principals in general practice has been set at £25,080 following the recommendation of the Doctors and Dentists Review Body. It is, however, unlikely that a doctor would achieve this average in the first few years of practice.

Future hospital consultants spend at least a year as senior house officers, two to three years as registrars, and three to four years as senior registrars. These periods may be longer, depending on the individual and the specialty. The average salaries for practitioners on the first two points of the registrar scale and the first three points of the senior registrar scale are as follows:

£16,206 £17,023 £17,622 £18,553 £19,484	exclusive of London weighting allowance £877 (Inner) or £677 (outer)

Community Resource Centres, Brent

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the three community resource centres planned by the Brent district health authority will qualify for special project grants within the extra funds announced in the "Autumn Statement"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: It will be for North West Thames regional health authority to decide on allocations to its districts when it receives its regional allocation for 1987-88.

Detailed guidance on the use of the special fund for regions receiving below average growth will be issued soon.

Slough (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the cost of the reception held for the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of Health and Social Security the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) at Slough hospital on 26 November;

(2) what was the purpose of the visit by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Health the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) on 26 November; and what was its cost.

Mrs. Currie: The purpose of my visit to Slough on 26 November was to attend the launch of a video "The Slough Health Habit" which forms part of the East Berkshire health authority's health promotion programme. I attended at the invitation of the district health authority. The question of the cost of the occasion is a matter for the health authority and the hon. Member might like to contact the district chairman.

Occupational Therapists

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many occupational therapists are employed by the National Health Service; what was the comparative annual figure for 1983, 1984 and 1985; and what is the current and comparative vacancy figure.

Mr. Newton: The figures are as follows:

Occupational therapists: England

Numbers (wte) as at 30 September		*Estimated vacancies against funded posts after 3 months*
		Per cent.
1983	3,380	Not available
1984	3,610	15
1985	3,990	19

wte (whole time equivalents)

Hospitals (Islington)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the bed availability of the Whittington hospital and Royal Northern hospital of Islington health authority; and what are the comparative figures for 1985 and 1984.

Mrs. Currie: The requested information is given in the table. Between 1984 and 1985 the number of in-patient cases treated increased from 21,814 to 22,044 at the Whittington hospital and increased from 5,467 to 6,042 at the Royal Northern hospital. The number of in-patient cases treated per available bed increased from 29·3 to 33·6 at the Whittington hospital and increased from 30·5 to 35·1 at the Royal Northern hospital.

Average daily number of available beds

Hospital	*1984*	*1985*
Whittington	744·0	655·3
Royal Northern	179·4	172·0

Leamington Park Hospital

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the sale of Leamington Park hospital was completed; what was the total sum realised; and what are the amounts to be given to Brent district health authority in the current year and in 1987-88 over and above the normal allocation.

Mrs. Currie: An offer for the former Leamington Park hospital conditional on the granting of planning permission has been accepted, and the parties concerned are in discussion with the London borough of Ealing. The sale price, and the amount accruing to the Brent health authority, will not be known until the planning situation is resolved.

Price Indices

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the rise in the pensioners' price index (less housing) and the rise in the retail price index (less housing) for the years between 1979 and the latest available date.

Mr. Major: The information requested is shown in the table. The pensioner price indices are published quarterly, and for comparison purposes quarterly figures for the retail prices index minus housing have also been used. The figures show annual percentage increases at the fourth quarter of each year except 1986, where the latest available second quarter figures have been used.

Percentage increase since previous year (Fourth quarter)

Year	*One-person Pensioners prices index minus housing*	*Two-person Pensioner prices index minus housing*	*Retail prices index minus housing*
1979	15·8	15·8	16·8
1980	14·7	14·0	13·3
1981	10·7	11·5	10·6
1982	7·5	7·0	6·6
1983	4·6	4·8	4·7
1984	4·4	4·5	3·9
1985	4·8	4·7	4·8
1986[1]	2·2	2·1	1·6

[1] Second quarter figures.

Primary Health Care

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the towns and cities in which consultation meetings were held on the Green Paper, "Primary Health Care — Agenda for Discussion," indicating the date of each such meeting.

Mr. Newton: Meetings were held in Norwich on 12 September; in Newcastle on 23 September; in Birmingham

on 29 September; in Exeter on 31 October; in Manchester on 5 November; and in Leeds on 10 November. Meetings were also held in London on 14 and 22 July, 28 October, and 27 November. The final meeting will take place in London on 10 December.

Occupational Therapy

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the total number of occupational therapy teaching places available in appropriate institutions; and what were the comparative figures for 1985 and 1984.

Mr. Newton: The total number of teaching places available in 1986 in England and Wales is 1968. A similar number were available in 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of occupational therapists employed by social service authorities in the current year, and the relative figures for 1985, 1984 and 1983; and what is the current and comparative vacancy figure.

Mr. Newton: The numbers of occupational therapists employed by social services authorities in England are given in the table — 1985 is the latest year for which figures are available. Information on numbers of vacancies for occupational therapists is not collected centrally, but a survey in 1984 carried out by the Association of Social Services Directors estimated that 13 per cent. of funded posts in England were vacant.

Occupational therapists employed by social services authorities—England

As at 30 September	*Number*[2]
1983	1,021
1984	1,068
1985[1]	1,185

[1] The figures for 1985 are provisional.

[2] These figures include estimates for authorities which did not submit statistical returns.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 3 December 1986

NORTHERN IRELAND

Prisons (Sport)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether there has been any discussion within the Anglo-Irish ministerial conference about *(a)* facilities for playing Gaelic football at Northern Ireland prisons and *(b)* facilities for playing cricket at Republic of Ireland prisons.

Mr. Scott: There has been no such discussion, but at the request of the Irish Government we recently provided information on the facilities for playing Gaelic football in Northern Ireland prisons.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Speech Therapists

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he will make a statement on the number of student places available for speech therapists;

(2) how many speech therapists graduated in 1979 and for the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Walden: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) on 7 July 1986, at column 53. For the reasons that I gave then, I am not in a position to provide information in the form requested. I understand, however, that in 1985 the College of Speech Therapists awarded a licence to practise to 286 graduates from approved courses of relevant study. Comparable information for 1979 is not available.

Motor Neurone Disease

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to increase funding for research into motor neurone disease.

Mr. Walden: The research councils, which receive grants-in-aid from the Department's science budget, are the main Government agencies for the support of scientific research. They determine their own scientific priorities. Both the Medical Research Council and the Science and Engineering Research Council are funding research into motor neurone disease. I understand that the councils are always willing to consider soundly based research proposals for support through their grants scheme in competition with other applications.

Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in respect of the statistics kept and published by his Department, he will publish in the *Official Report* any changes since 1979 in *(a)* the statistical series which are published, including those which have been introduced and those which have been dropped, *(b)* the basis on which any elements in the statistics are estimated, calculated or presented, *(c)* the periods over which, and the dates on which the series are collected or published and *(d)* any other respects in the ways in which the statistics are collected, recorded, presented, evaluated or published; and if he will explain the reasons for any such changes.

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state, for each year since 1964, for the whole of the United Kingdom *(a)* the percentage of secondary schools accounted for by grammar schools, *(b)* the average pupil-teacher ratio in secondary schools, *(c)* the level of per capita expenditure in secondary schools at constant 1986 prices and *(d)* the number of pupils achieving five or more higher grade passes at O level or certificate of secondary education; and if he will give his assessment of the impact on these figures of the raising of the school leaving age.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply as soon as possible.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Sickness and Invalidity Benefits

Mrs. Beckett asked the Attorney-General what are the latest figures for the number of appeals to the commissioner for *(a)* sickness benefit and *(b)* invalidity benefit; and what were the results of the appeals and references in each category.

The Attorney-General: To the end of November 1986, the relevant figures for this year for England and Wales are as shown in the table. I understand from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland that the relevant figures for Scotland are also as shown in the table. It is assumed that by "references" are meant appeals remitted to the lower tribunal. The results of those cases before the tribunal are not immediately available and further information will accordingly be provided to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

	Number of Appeals Disposed of						
	Number of Appeals Received	*Appeals by Claimant*			*Appeals by Adjudication Officer*			*Total*
		Allowed	*Disallowed*	*Remitted to Tribunal*	*Allowed*	*Disallowed*	*Remitted to Tribunal*	
England and Wales								
(a) Sickness benefit	22	2	15	2	—	—	—	19
(b) Invalidity benefit	111	38	56	6	3	1	—	104

	Number of Appeals Received	Number of Appeals Disposed of: Appeals by Claimant: Allowed	Disallowed	Remitted to Tribunal	Appeals by Adjudication Officer: Allowed	Disallowed	Remitted to Tribunal	Total
Scotland								
(a) Sickness benefit	3	2	2	—	—	—	—	4
(b) Invalidity benefit	23	14	24	—	—	—	—	38

Treasury Solicitor

Mr. Adley asked the Attorney-General what is the practice of Her Majesty's Government in seeking the advice of the Treasury Solicitor in civil cases in which Her Majesty's Government are involved; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The advice of the Treasury Solicitor in relation to civil cases is sought as required.

"One Woman's War"

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General whether he will prosecute under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act the *New Statesman* for publishing information in the form of excerpts from the book, "One Woman's War" by Joan Miller.

The Attorney-General: No.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Civil Service

90. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he now plans to allow retired members of the Overseas Civil Service to count war service towards their pension entitlement on the same terms as apply to retired members of the Home Civil Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: So far, we have not been able to accommodate this extra commitment; but we are keeping the matter under careful review.

Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in respect of the statistics kept and published by his Department, he will publish in the *Official Report* any changes since 1979 in *(a)* the statistical series which are published, including those which have been introduced and those which have been dropped, *(b)* the basis on which any elements in the statistics are estimated, calculated or presented, *(c)* the periods over which, and the dates on which the series are collected or published and *(d)* any other respects in the ways in which the statistics are collected, recorded, presented, evaluated or published; and if he will explain the reasons for any such changes.

Mr. Chris Patten: The only regular series of statistics kept and published by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office relate to British overseas aid. Details of commitments and disbursements of aid by type, purpose and geographical distribution are contained in the annual publication "British Aid Statistics", normally published in July or August, and in which most tables provide a series for five years.

The layout of the publication was thoroughly reviewed for the 1983 edition in order to simplify the presentation and increase the amount of detailed information available. The only series dropped as a result of the review related to the receipt of interest due on official loans, other than those from the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

Minor changes in the basis of compilation, presentation and publication of the statistical series are made from time to time in response to the Government's requirements for statistical information, to conform with changes in internationally agreed definitions and classifications of aid, to comply with international reporting requirements, changes in the administrative systems on which some series are based, the development of new statistical techniques and technological developments affecting the compilation and dissemination of statistical data.

When such changes are made they are fully explained in the introduction to "British Aid Statistics".

HOME DEPARTMENT

Warning and Monitoring Organisation

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the dates of the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation's exercises in 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The exercise programme for the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation (UKWMO) in 1987 has not yet been finalised.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation and the Royal Observer Corps will be participaing in the WINTEX 1987 exercises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Full-time staff at HQ United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation (UKWMO) and HQ Royal Observer Corps (ROC) will be participating in WINTEX/CIMEX 87.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Peter Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were held on remand on 1 November in *(a)* Preston prison and *(b)* Manchester, Strangeways prison.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is given in the table.

Remand population of Manchester and Preston prisons on 31 October 1986 by type of prisoner

	Untried	Convicted unsentenced
Manchester remand centre	510	5
Manchester prison		190
Preston remand unit	75	
Preston prison		

Firearms

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* firearms and *(b)* shotguns were registered between 1960 to 1970, 1970 to 1980 and 1980 to 1985 in the United Kingdom as a whole and in (i) England, (ii) Wales, (iii) Scotland and (iv) Northern Ireland separately; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information is as follows:

(i) England and Wales

	Number of firearm certificates on issue under section 1 of the Firearms Act 1968	Number of shotgun certificates on issue under section 2 of the Firearms Act 1968
1968	216,281	n/a
1971	190,649	715,453
1974	185,865	766,952
1979	169,590	782,074
1980	168,047	781,854
1981	164,872	785,225
1982	162,696	780,629
1983	159,804	783,378
1984	160,307	798,352
1985	160,385	819,333

n/a Not available.

Notes:

1. The information relates to the number of certificates on issue on 31 December.
2. More than one weapon may be held on a certificate. Information about the total number of weapons covered by certificate is not held centrally.
3. Statistics are not available except in respect of the years given. Shotguns were not subject to certification before 1968, and statistics about the number of firearms certificates on issue were not collected before that year.
4. Statistics are not available in respect of England alone, or Wales alone.
5. The figures for 1985 incorporate a correction, and therefore vary slightly from those published previously.

(ii) Scotland

	Number of firearm certificates on issue under section 1 of the Firearms Act 1968	Number of shotgun certificates on issue under section 2 of the Firearms Act 1968
1968	39,780	69,748
1969	39,603	74,454
1970	39,285	76,613
1971	38,272	77,639
1972	37,813	77,708
1973	38,087	80,416
1974	38,800	83,555
1975	39,184	84,709
1976	39,041	85,018
1977	39,237	84,938
1978	39,049	83,249
1979	39,155	85,075
1980	38,752	85,126
1981	38,548	84,847
1982	38,115	84,183
1983	37,825	84,306
1984	37,750	84,606
1985	38,165	86,198

Notes:

1. The information relates to the number of certificates on issue on 31 December.
2. More than one weapon may be held on a certificate. Information about the total number of weapons covered by certificates is not held centrally.
3. Shotguns were not subject to certification before 1968, and statistics about the number of firearm certificates on issue were not collected before that year.

(iii) Northern Ireland

	Number of firearm certificates on issue	Number of weapons covered by certificates, classified by type			
		1. Shotguns	2. Air weapons	3. Bullet firing weapons	4. Misc.
1970	72,596	—	—	—	—
1971	73,548		—	—	—
1972	76,790		—	—	—
1973	76,942		—	—	—
1974	79,117	65,587	12,125	23,446	838
1975	78,216	65,640	11,810	23,687	809
1976	79,718	67,148	11,830	24,066	806
1977	81,402	69,525	12,112	24,236	777
1978	82,248	71,119	12,491	23,812	781
1979	83,549	72,843	13,362	23,785	792
1980	82,923	74,836	14,450	23,807	795
1981	83,342	76,087	15,103	23,949	801
1982	84,250	77,392	15,635	23,979	796
1983	85,170	78,587	16,071	23,937	800
1984	86,039	79,845	16,659	23,842	800
1985	88,340	81,247	17,240	23,980	802

Notes:

1. The figures given are of the certificates on issue, and of the weapons held under a certificate, on 31 December.
2. Information about the weapons covered by certificates before 1974, and about the number of certificates on issue before 1970, is not readily available and could only be obtained, if at all, at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of prisoners serving life sentences for murder with firearms involving *(a)* rape with homicide, *(b)* robbery, *(c)* terrorism and *(d)* murder of police officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information is that in prison department establishments on 31 December 1985 one person was serving a life sentence for murder by shooting involving a sexual motive, 38 for murder by shooting during the course of theft, five for murder by shooting whilst engaged in terrorist activity and 10 for murder by shooting a policeman in the course of his duty.

Police (Graduates)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure for the recruitment of graduate entrants to the police service in England and Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not possible to estimate the total expenditure on the recruitment of graduates to the police service in England and Wales, since this includes the

time spent by members of police forces in interviewing and assessing candidates, which cannot be quantified. Expenditure by the Home Office, which is responsible for graduate recruitment advertising and literature and for the administration of the graduate entry scheme for the police service, amounted to a little under £300,000 in 1985-86. I regret that comparable figures for earlier years are not readily available.

Radio Interference

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will investigate the reason why residents in the Colton area of Staffordshire experience radio interference from the Pye Green repeater station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Preliminary tests have shown that the transmitting equipment at Pye Green is operating in accordance with the licence issued under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949, but further investigations are being carried out and I shall write to my hon. Friend when these have been completed.

NATO (Civil Defence Committee)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the formal lines of communication between his Department and the civil defence committee of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's senior civil emergency planning committee.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Head of F6 (Emergency Planning) Division is the United Kingdom delegate to the civil defence committee.

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what specific deliberations of the civil defence committee of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's senior civil emergency planning committee have affected the formulation of current civil planning in the United Kingdom;

(2) when the civil defence committee of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's senior civil emergency planning committee last met; and if he will place the minutes of the committee's deliberations in the Library;

(3) what are the terms of reference for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's civil defence committee.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The civil defence committee provides the forum for consultation on national plans for all aspects of the protection of the public in an emergency. Discussions inform the development of planning in the United Kingdom, but do not determine its direction.

The committee last met on 2 and 3 October 1986. It would not be appropriate to place records of the committee's meetings in the Library.

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the terms of reference for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's senior civil emergency planning committee.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The senior civil emergency planning committee co-ordinates and gives guidance for the activities of eight planning boards and committees, each of which covers a specific field in civil emergency planning.

Murders

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up a committee to review the re-introduction of capital punishment as a penalty for child murder.

Mr. Mellor: No.

AIDS

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy in Her Majesty's Government's campaign against acquired immune deficiency syndrome to license and legalise brothels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have no plans to introduce legislation to legalise brothels.

Prison Population

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans any changes to penal policy in the light of the Howard League's proposals for reducing the prison population and easing the prison crisis published in the booklet, "Go Directly to Gaol", on 24 November, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Mellor: No. Our policies were summarised in the revised edition of the working paper "Criminal Justice" published on 27 November.

Forensic Science Laboratory, Chorley

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for each year since 1978, how many persons were convicted of offences whose investigation was assisted by the forensic science laboratory at Chorley; and what were the offences.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state for each year since 1978 the number of crimes whose investigation was assisted by the forensic science laboratory at Chorley.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The forensic science service maintains records of the numbers of cases submitted for examination but not the number of crimes to which they relate. The number of cases received at the forensic science laboratory, Chorley, since 1978 are as follows:

	Number
1978	9,995
1979	8,654
1980	8,595
1981	8,282
1982	7,924
1983	6,873
1984	6,493
1985	5,564

The numbers have declined since 1978 as a result of decisions to concentrate efforts on the more serious and generally time-consuming cases.

Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in respect of the statistics kept and

published by his Department, he will publish in the *Official Report* any changes since 1979 in *(a)* the statistical series which are published, including those which have been introduced and those which have been dropped, *(b)* the basis on which any elements in the statistics are estimated, calculated or presented, *(c)* the periods over which, and the dates on which the series are collected or published and *(d)* any other respects in the ways in which the statistics are colleced, recorded, presented, evaluated or published; and if he will explain the reason for any such changes.

Mr. Hurd: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Crossbows

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he plans to seek to restrict the sale of crossbows; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: In consultation with the police and other interested parties I have been considering whether any steps can usefully be taken to prevent the misuse of crossbows. The law relating to cases of actual misuse is already extensive and I have concluded that there are no significant gaps.

Crossbows are, however, dangerous weapons in the wrong hands, and I do not consider that they are suitable to be in the possession of unsupervised young people. Accordingly, my Department proposes to issue a guidance notice to traders urging them not to sell crossbows to persons under 17. The Government approve, in principle, of a statutory prohibition on the sale of crossbows to persons under 17, and on their purchase or possession, without supervision, by young people. In the absence of an early opportunity for Government legislation on this matter, the Government would look favourably on an initiative by a Private Member if a suitable Bill were to be introduced.

In consultation with the responsible crossbow sports organisations, we also propose to prepare and issue a code of safe practice for crossbow users.

Greiss Test

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) to whom the forensic laboratory at Chorley provided details of the method used by Dr. Skuse in his application of the Greiss test on 22 November 1974;

(2) what information he has as to whether Granada Television was provided with details of Dr. Skuse's method for the Greiss test used on 22 November 1974 whilst Dr. Skuse was still in service, in connection with the "World in Action" programme on the Birmingham pub bombing.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his replies*, 1 December 1986, c. *486*]: Information was given in response to a request from Mr. Baldock, an independent forensic scientist, who was engaged by Granada in the preparations for a "World in Action" programme. No such information was given direct to Granada Television. For further detail I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 20 November 1986, at column *287*.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Business Prospects (Midlands)

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the factors most likely to improve business prospects in the midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The best prospects for business lie in the Government's economic and industrial policies which are creating conditions for sustainable growth in jobs and output. A large part of the midlands was designated as an assisted area two years ago. Companies there are already benefitting from financial assistance from my Department although it is too early to carry out a full assessment of the impact of these measures.

Consumer Protection

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he intends to introduce legislation to strengthen the consumer protection offered to people taking package holidays, with regard to the overbooking of chartered holiday flights; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he intends to introduce legislation to strengthen the consumer protection offered to people taking package holidays with regard to the overbooking of holiday accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Government have no plans to legislate in these areas at present. Tour operators are already bound by legislation such as the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 and the Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982. In addition, holiday makers who travel with tour operators belonging to the Association of British Travel Agents, which represents the great majority of the United Kingdom travel industry, receive further protection by virtue of the association's code of conduct for tour operators. This contains provisions on the overbooking of holiday accommodation. It also contains provisions on other holiday alterations, which embrace changes to charter flights, and which have been strengthened with effect from the 1986-87 winter season. The Government favour self-regulation by the industry provided that the code and associated conciliation facilities operate effectively.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to seek to extend existing consumer protection legislation to the sales techniques used by companies to sell time-share properties, with particular regard to national time-share competitions organised by British companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have no plans at present to introduce such new legislation. I recognise the concern that arises from the selling methods used by some of those engaged in marketing time-share and my Department will shortly be issuing a checklist to which consumers may refer when they are approached about time-share purchases.

Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, in respect of the statistics kept and published by his Department, he will publish in the *Official Report*

any changes since 1979 in (*a*) the statistical series which are published, including those which have been introduced and those which have been dropped, (*b*) the basis on which any elements in the statistics are estimated, calculated or presented, (*c*) the periods over which, and the dates on which the series are collected or published and (*d*) any other respects in the ways in which statistics are collected, recorded, presented, evaluated or published; and if he will explain the reasons for any such changes.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Takeovers

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy towards takeovers of public limited companies by management groups from outside such companies.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 December 1986, c. *432*]: The Fair Trading Act 1973 enables certain transactions to be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for further investigation. These are mergers of two or more enterprises when either the assets test of the market share test in the act is satisfied. Our policy is that references to the MMC will be made primarily on competition grounds.

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the Director General of Fair Trading has provided him with information about the management buy-in of Simon Engineering plc by means of an offer by a new management and institutional consortium through Valuedale plc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 December 1986, c. *432*]: The proposed management buy-in of Simon Engineering plc through Valuedale plc is being considered by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT). A qualifying merger for the purposes of the Fair Trading Act 1973, must involve two or more enterprises ceasing to be distinct. I understand that, on the information currently available, the OFT considers that the proposal does not qualify for further investigation because Valuedale does not constitute an enterprise under the terms of the Act.

Unit Labour Costs

Mr. Malins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing information available to him in index form of (i) output, (ii) output per hour, and (iii) unit labour costs in Japan, the United States of America and the European Community as a whole for the years 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

Information on output per man hour and unit labour costs in the whole economy are not readily available for countries outside the United Kingdom. The following table shows figures for manufacturing industry:

Output, productivity and costs in manufacturing (1980 = 100)

	1970	*1975*	*1980*	*1985*	*1986H1*
(i) Output					
United States	74·0	83·0	100·0	116·7	118·5
Japan	56·3	69·4	100·0	139·2	139·4
European Community[1]	79·9	87·9	100·0	104·4	106·2
(ii) Output per manhour					
United States	77·2	92·2	100·0	120·1	121·9
Japan	53·9	73·2	100·0	129·2	130·0
European Community[1]	64·7	81·9	100·0	125·5	129·0
(iii) Unit labour costs					
United States	55·9	69·6	100·0	111·1	111·9
Japan	53·1	97·6	100·0	97·0	99·0
European Community[1]	42·2	65·8	100·0	127·7	129·7

[1] Excludes Greece, Luxembourg and Portugal.
Source: IMF.

TRANSPORT

M11 (Link Road)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria were used (*a*) in rejecting any developments on the proposed tunnel lid on the M11 link road at Leyton and Leytonstone and (*b*) in approving development on the tunnel lid on the A1 at Hatfield; if he will now reconsider his decision in relation to the M11 project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No local authority or developer has come forward with plans for the commercial exploitation of tunnel lids over the A12 Hackney Wick to M11 link road. At Hatfield the local authorities took the initiative at the outset in promoting the redevelopment of a wide area which included the tunnel lid. I see no reason to reconsider the decisions that have been announced on the link road.

Shipping Wastes (Reception Facilities)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to require all large ports in the United Kingdom to provide reception facilities for residues and mixtures of oily and noxious wastes from vessels visiting the United Kingdom's shores; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Legislation was introduced in July 1984 which required port authorities and terminal operators to provide reception facilities for oily waste and, from 6 April 1987, such facilities for residues and mixtures of noxious liquid substances.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list ports where in accordance with the United Kingdom's obligations under annex II of the Marpol convention 73/78 reception facilities are available to accept residues containing noxious liquid substances from vessels visiting British shores.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The United Kingdom has no obligations under annex II of Marpol 73/78 with respect to reception facilities for residues containing noxious liquid substances until 6 April 1987. A list of ports where these are provided will be available after that date.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information Her Majesty's Government provides to mariners of a detailed and periodically updated nature on the location of and possibilities for utilising reception facilities in United Kingdom ports which receive oily residues and mixtures of noxious materials from vessels visiting United Kingdom shores.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The United Kingdom advises the International Maritime Organisation annually on the availability and use of reception facilities for oily residues in United Kingdom ports. The Department is in the process of advising port authorities that shipping agents and ship operators using ports should be provided with certain detailed information so that mariners are fully informed of the provisions for oily residues. It is envisaged that similar arrangements will be made with respect to reception facilities for residues containing noxious liquid substances when annex II of Marpol is implemented.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if there is a standard charge for the use of reception facilities in United Kingdom ports which receive oily residues and mixtures of noxious materials from vessels visiting United Kingdom shores; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Whilst a United Kingdom port may make reasonable charges for the use of reception facilities in accordance with current legislation, a standard charge does not exist.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number, locations and types of reception facilities available in the United Kingdom to accept oily residues and mixtures of noxious materials from vessels visiting United Kingdom shores.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Department of Transport records show that approximately 80 reception facilities are available for oily wastes throughout United Kingdom ports and terminals.

There is at present no legal requirement for United Kingdom ports to provide reception facilities for noxious liquid wastes arising from ships, therefore no information is available as to established facilities. Such facilities will, however, be required in certain ports for wastes from a limited number of noxious liquid substances carried in bulk by ships after implementation of Marpol, annex II, on 6 April 1987.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps Her Majesty's Government has taken to ensure that the best available technology is employed in reception facilities in United Kingdom ports which receive oily residues and mixtures of noxious materials from vessels visiting United Kingdom shores.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been asked to reply.

The transfer of ship residues from vessels to reception facilities is covered by the Prevention of Pollution (Reception Facilities) Order 1984. The handling, transfer and storage of the residues in the harbour area will be subject to the Dangerous Substances in Harbour Areas Regulations 1986 and elsewhere to the provisions of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. Advice on the best practicable means of dealing with waste is available from the regulatory authorities. The actual technology employed is a matter for the owner or operator of the reception facilities provided these comply with the relevant regulations.

Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Transport if in respect of the statistics kept and published by his Department, he will publish in the *Official Report* any changes since 1979 in *(a)* the statistical series which are published, including those which have been introduced and those which have been dropped, *(b)* the basis on which any elements in the statistics are estimated, calculated or presented, *(c)* the periods over which, and the dates on which the series are collected or published and *(d)* any other respects in the ways in which the statistics are collected, recorded, presented, evaluated, or published; and if he will explain the reasons for any such changes.

Mr. John Moore: Changes in the basis of compilation, presentation, and publication of statistical series are made from time to time in response to the Government's requirements for statistical information, changes in the administrative sytems on which some series are based, the development of new statistical techniques, and technological developments affecting the compilation and dissemination of statistical data. When such changes are made they are documented in the Department's annual statistical publication "Transport Statistics Great Britain", copies of which are in the Library.

The principal changes since 1979 have been:

Bus and coach industry: the Transport Act 1980 and the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981 resulted in the redefinition of certain categories within the published statistics. The introduction of new returns for 1985-86 in anticipation of the provisions of the Transport Act 1985 has also involved some change in the published statistics.

Domestic waterborne freight: new estimates of the volume of domestic waterborne freight traffic (that is freight traffic by coastal shipping and on rivers and other inland waterways) introduced in 1984.

Heavy goods vehicles: development of the computer sytems at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre allowed information on heavy goods vehicles derived from the vehicle licensing system to be used to compile statistics on HGVs and on road goods transport, in place of information from a register of vehicles on operators' licences. This change, which was made in the interests of economy and efficiency, produced some discontinuity in the statistical series and adjustments have had to be made to produce consistent series.

Port Statistics: a "mode of appearance" classification was introduced in 1982 in place of the previous commodity classification which had become less relevant with the unitisation of cargo.

Road traffic: series revised in 1984 due to the introduction of more sophisticated statistical techniques.

Vehicle taxation: categories changed on 1 October 1982 which affected series for new vehicle registrations and vehicles currently licensed.

M25 (Defects)

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether W. S. Atkins and Partners, consulting engineers on the Reigate-Leatherhead section of the M25, have yet received a submission from the contractors Birse Farr; whether W. S. Atkins and Partners have yet determined where responsibility for defects in the construction of this section lies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The consulting engineers have recently received a detailed statement of claim from the contractor concerning the defects in the concrete pavement of the Reigate-Leatherhead section of the M25. The consultants are considering this. It may take them some time to reach a decision.

Helicopters

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) on how many occasions in each year from 1981 to 1985, and in respect of the current year to 15 November, civil helicopter pilots on flights over the North sea contacted air traffic control at (i) Aberdeen, (ii) Sumburgh, (iii) Baltasound and (iv) Shetland radar at Royal Air Force Saxa Vord to report suspected, indicated or actual technical malfunctions of their aircraft;

(2) on how many occasions emergency services were alerted at (i) Aberdeen, (ii) Sumburgh and (iii) Baltasound airports in connection with civil helicopter landings in each year between 1981 and 1985 and in the current year to 15 November.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority, which is responsible through the national air traffic services for air traffic control, has informed me that the information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mandatory Occurrence Reporting Scheme

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many mandatory occurrence reports were filed by civil helicopter pilots on flights over the North sea in each of the following years: *(a)* 1981, *(b)* 1982, *(c)* 1983, *(d)* 1984, *(e)* 1985 and *(f)* 1986 to 15 November;

(2) what steps have been taken in the last five years to ensure enforcement of the regulations on mandatory occurrence reports in respect of civil fixed-wing and rotary wing aircraft, operating in the north of Scotland and in North sea operations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority, which is statutorily responsible for all aspects of aviation safety, has informed me that legislation on the mandatory occurrence reporting scheme is contained in article 85 of the Air Navigation Order 1985. Information and guidance on the scheme is set out in the CAA's "Civil Aviation Publication Number 382," which was last amended in 1984 and is currently subject to review. The authority subjects all holders of an air operator's certificate for the conduct of public transport flights to periodic detailed inspection. An operator's system for the handling and forwarding of mandatory occurrence reports to the authority is one of the aspects to which particular attention is paid. Any shortcomings found, that is failure to report a reportable occurrence, are drawn to the operator's attention. Serious weakness in MOR practices could be one of the factors in suspension or revocation of an air operator's certificate. In the last five years, all the North sea major helicopter operators have been subject to the CAA inspection. During that period the number of MOR reports filed by civil helicopter pilots on flights over the North sea were as follows:

	Number
1981	157
1982	202
1983	178
1984	220
1985	193
[1]1986	127

[1] To date.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

13. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has had against sanctions from non-governmental South African sources; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have received representations in this sense from a number of non-governmental South African sources, including the Inkatha movement, the Progressive Federal party, and the South African business community. We agree with them that general economic sanctions would not be effective as a means to end apartheid.

Terrorism

14. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress on European Economic Community co-operation on measures to combat terrorism.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The measures agreed by the Twelve on 10 November and the statement issued on 29 November sent a clear signal to Syria that the involvement of its officials in acts of terrorism was totally unacceptable. These latest actions demonstrate the determination of the Twelve to co-operate closely in adopting practical counter-terrorist measures.

54. **Mr. Anderson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further steps he will take to seek to combat terrorism from all sources in the middle east.

Mr. Eggar: We shall continue to do everything we can to combat terrorism, from whatever quarter it may come, working closely with other like-minded countries in the process.

61. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the adequacy of security measures taken following the expulsion of the Syrian ambassador from London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Yes. Security measures are reviewed on a regular basis according to the level of threat.

70. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise the issue of state sponsored terrorism at the next meeting of European Economic Community Foreign Ministers.

Mr. Eggar: The issue of terrorism will be discussed at the European Council on 5 and 6 December in London.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the Republic of Ireland to pass the legislation providing for extradition, arising from the European convention for the suppression of terrorism; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: A Bill which makes provision for Irish ratification of the European convention on the suppression of terrorism was published by the Government of the Republic of Ireland on 25 November. Its passage is a matter for the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Ireland.

Middle East

15. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to visit the occupied territories and east Jerusalem.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend has at present no plans to do so.

21. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with middle east countries.

Mr. Renton: We enjoy excellent relations with most countries in the middle east: these are founded on mutual interest and respect.

38. **Mr. Walters** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress in the peace process in the middle east.

Mr. Renton: We shall continue to look for realistic ways forward towards the negotiation of a just and lasting settlement.

China

16. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the United Kingdom's relations with China.

88. **Mr. Bright** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of Anglo-Chinese relations.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Our relations with the People's Republic of China are excellent, as I saw for myself during the state visit to China in October. Exchanges in many fields, including trade, continue to expand fruitfully in both directions.

Anti-ballistic Missile Treaty

17. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications of the modernisation of Fylingdales for the anti-ballistic missile treaty.

Mr. Renton: As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces told the House on 22 May, we are satisfied that the modernisation of RAF Fylingdales will be in full conformity with US obligations under the ABM treaty.

41. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions Her Majesty's Government have had with the United States Administration on the interpretation of the anti-ballistic missile treaty.

59. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Administration on the interpretation of the anti-ballistic missile treaty.

74. **Mr. James Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the United States Secretary of State, since the Reykjavik talks, on the applicability of the anti-ballistic missile treaty to strategic defence initiative developments.

Mr. Renton: We regularly hold discussions with the US Administration on a range of political military issues, for example, when my right hon. and learned Friend met Mr. Shultz in Vienna. The ABM treaty, to which the UK is not a party, is raised in the course of these discussions as appropriate.

Argentina

18. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement about the proposal of President Alfonsin on 18 November to end the state of hostilities in the south Atlantic.

Mr. Eggar: The specific points in the Argentine declaration of 17 November are all conditional on negotiations on sovereignty. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister stated on 18 November, we are not prepared to negotiate sovereignty.

44. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about Anglo-Argentine relations with special reference to the south Atlantic.

57. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on non-negotiability of the sovereignty and self-determination of the Falkland Islanders in the light of the recent offer made by the Government of Argentina.

Mr. Eggar: We shall continue to seek more normal relations with Argentina, while honouring our commitments to defend the Falkland Islanders' right to self-determination. We are disappointed that Argentina continues to refuse to co-operate on matters of practical importance to us both. In addition, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Berwick-Upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) earlier today.

Syria

19. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's current relations with Syria.

Mr. Renton: Following the break in diplomatic relations with Syria on 24 October, a small British interests section remains in Damascus as part of the embassy of Australia, which has agreed to protect British interests in Syria.

68. **Mr. Redmond** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to discuss relations with Syria with the Government of France.

Mr. Renton: The French Foreign Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend discussed Syria at the Anglo French summit on 21 November. We are in regular contact and will continue to exchange views on Syria as necessary.

80. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of EEC measures against Syria.

Mr. Renton: The measures agreed on 10 November reaffirmed the resolve of the Twelve to curb terrorism in all its forms and to send a clear message to Syria that its involvement in the Hindawi affair was absolutely unacceptable.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the reaction of the Soviet authorities to evidence from Her Majesty's Government that the Syrian Government are involved in terrorism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The Soviet authorities have questioned the weight of our conclusive evidence of Syrian official involvement in the Hindawi affairs which my right hon. and learned Friend discussed with Mr. Shevardnadze on 4 November. We have provided a detailed account of this to the Soviet authorities and hope that on reflection they will accept the force of our case.

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assurances Her Majesty's Government have received from their Common Market counterparts regarding their policy towards putting pressure on Syria to obtain the release of hostages in the Lebanon.

Mr. Renton: We have not sought the assurances described by the hon. Member. We are in close touch with our partners in the Twelve, especially those whose nationals are among those missing in Lebanon, and continue to do all we can to obtain news of the hostages.

Nuclear Weapons

20. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have any evidence that the Soviet Union has contravened the moratorium on nuclear weapons testing which it initiated in August 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No.

79. **Mr. George Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons by 1996.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Reagan agreed at their meeting at Camp David on 15 November that NATO's strategy of forward defence and flexible response would continue to require effective nuclear deterrence based on a mix of systems.

Falklands Fisheries

22. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications of the extent to which the exclusive fishing zone around the Falkland Islands overlaps the 200-mile territorial limit claimed by Argentina for the possibilities of increased tension in the area.

Mr. Eggar: The boundaries of the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone fully respect the rules of international law governing the delimitation of maritime jurisdiction between neighbours. We therefore see no reason why the choice of the zone's boundaries should increase tension in the area.

Soviet Union

23. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had discussions with the Soviet authorities in recent weeks concerning human rights.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend raised human rights with the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Shevardnadze, at his meeting with him in Vienna on 4 November. We shall continue to take every suitable opportunity to raise with the Soviet authorities our concerns on this score.

26. **Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will indicate the number of occasions since June 1983 that he has raised the issue of human rights with the Soviet Government.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend has raised the issue of human rights with Soviet leaders on 10 occasions since June 1983, and most recently on 4 November with Mr. Shevardnadze in Vienna. We will continue to take every suitable opportunity to represent to the Soviet authorities the extent of public and parliamentary concern about their performance on this most important issue.

77. **Mr. Gourlay** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent meeting with Mr. Shevardnadze, the Soviet Foreign Minister.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki) on 18 November, at column *143*.

87. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what pressure is being brought on the Soviet Government concerning their breaches of human rights under the Helsinki agreement.

Mr. Renton: We and our Western partners raise human rights abuses regularly with the Soviet authorities at the CSCE follow up meeting in Vienna. We also do so in bilateral contacts.

Iran

24. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the United States Secretary of State on the supply of arms to Iran.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend has not discussed arms supplies to Iran at any of his recent meetings with the United States Secretary of State.

28. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's relationship with Iran.

56. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Iran.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 18 November, at column 145.

72. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to make any further representations to the United States Government concerning arms deals with Iran.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to do so.

SALT 2

25. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made on behalf of Her Majesty's Government to the United States Government regarding the SALT 2 treaty.

32. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made on behalf of Her Majesty's Government to the United States Government regarding the SALT 2 treaty.

69. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the United States Government's compliance with the SALT 2 treaty.

Mr. Renton: We have repeatedly made it clear that the SALT agreements should continue to be observed by both sides. We have recognised the United States concerns about Soviet non-compliance and have urged the Soviet authorities on many occasions to take action to allay these concerns. We regret the lack of substantive Soviet response. We look forward to further consultations with the United States Administration on these and related issues.

Drug Liaison Officers (India)

27. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest position in relation to the proposal to station two drug liaison officers in India; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: As I told my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) on 21 November, the Indian Government have agreed to the postings of the drug liaison officers, who will take up their posts as soon as their personal arrangements have been completed.

78. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had recently with the Indian Government regarding their refusal to allow two British drug officers to be posted in Delhi and Bombay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: As I told my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir Bernard Braine) on 21 November, the Indian Government have informed us that the postings of drug liaison officers to Delhi and Bombay can now take place; and they will do so as soon as the officers concerned have completed their personal arrangements. We welcome this development.

Disarmament

29. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest negotiations on arms control.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's statement of 15 November, agreed with President Reagan,

set out the priorities for arms control after Reykjavik. A copy of the statement has been placed in the Library of the House.

34. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of the mutual and balanced force reduction talks in Vienna.

55. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about recent progress at those disarmament and security conferences at which the United Kingdom is represented.

Mr. Renton: During the 40th round of the mutual and balanced force reduction talks in Vienna, which opened on 25 September, Britain and her allies have continued to press for a serious response from the Warsaw Pact to the Western initiative of December 1985. Although the Warsaw pact agreed the principle of on-site inspection at the Stockholm conference on disarmament in Europe, it has shown little flexibility on this at MBFR. Nor has it shown willingness to exchange detailed information on force levels, which is the other principle issue under discussion at Vienna.

In the chemical weapons negotiations we are pressing for further progress on verification issues. Although the next session of the conference on disarmament only formally reconvenes on 4 February 1987, we will continue to seek agreement to the United Kingdom initiative on challenge inspection during intersessional work.

75. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what responses there have been to the United Kingdom's compromise proposal on verification of a chemical weapons ban at the conference on disarmament in Geneva.

Mr. Renton: The reaction of other delegations to the conference on disarmament has been generally encouraging. We have particularly welcomed a number of public expressions of support. The United Kingdom proposals are currently the subject of detailed discussion among delegations in Geneva.

East-West Relations

30. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current East-West relations.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) on 29 October, at column 171. We are pressing the Soviet Union at the Vienna Meeting for progress on human rights and contacts.

Egypt

31. **Mr. Merchant** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit Egypt.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend last visited Egypt in January 1984. He hopes to visit Egypt again, but has no plans to do so at present. I visited Egypt in September this year.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

33. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the memorandum giving new life to the Helsinki accords signed by opposition and human rights representatives from eastern Europe and submitted to the conference on security and co-operation in Europe in Vienna.

Mr. Renton: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to an appeal signed by individuals in four eastern European countries published at the time of the 30th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian uprising. In a statement on 24 October, my right hon. and learned Friend welcomed the appeal as a courageous statement of belief in traditional European values, and noted that the Vienna CSCE meeting provided an opportunity for participating states to give further effect to those values. A copy of his statement has been placed in the Library of the House.

50. **Dr. Blackburn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters have been raised by the United Kingdom delegation at the Helsinki review conference in Vienna; and whether any progress has been made in the area of human rights.

Mr. Renton: Our delegation has raised a wide range of issues, including those relevant to Soviet and east European human rights performance. It is too early to say whether our efforts will result in real advances in the area of human rights.

91. **Mr. Lawrence** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the subject of immigration and freedom of movement has been discussed at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in Vienna; and whether any progress has been made in the discussion.

Mr. Renton: Yes, by our Delegation and by others. The head of the Soviet CSCE delegation in Vienna has referred to newly published Soviet legislation relating to travel, which we shall study carefully, but which at first sight does not appear to introduce relaxations.

Palestinian People

35. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the answer of the Prime Minister on 18 November, *Official Report*, column 445, he will define proper representatives of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Renton: It is for the Palestinians to choose their representatives: such representation should permit the authentic voice of the Palestinians to be heard in peace talks.

Immigration

36. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of immigration controls overseas.

Mr. Eggar: The exercise of United Kingdom immigration controls at our posts overseas is performed firmly and fairly in accordance with the immigration rules.

89. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many new entry clearance officers have been allocated to take up posts in Bombay; if they are already working; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Seven additional entry clearance officers have been allocated, of whom six are already in post.

Iraq

37. **Dr. M. S. Miller** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government has made to the Government of Iraq about abuses of human rights in that country.

Mr. Renton: We take every opportunity to make our views known to the Iraqis. My right hon. and learned Friend raised the question of abuses of human rights with the Iraqi Foreign Minister when he saw him in New York in September, but received no satisfactory reply.

Law of the Sea Conference

39. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the enforcement of the Final Act of the United Nations law of the sea conference.

Mr. Eggar: The Final Act of the United Nations law of the sea conference records the proceedings of the conference; the law of the sea convention and a number of resolutions are annexed to it.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) the then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, told the House on 6 December 1984, we regard much of the convention as valuable, but we have objections to the proposed deep seabed mining regime. Even for states which have ratified or acceded to it, the convention comes into force only one year after deposit of 60 instruments of ratification or accession; only 32 such instruments have been deposited. But many states follow some of the practices laid down in the convention.

Soviet Jews

40. **Mr. Burt** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the British delegation to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe review meeting will raise during discussions in Vienna the subject of religious contacts and the difficulties experienced by Soviet Jews in obtaining prayer books and other religious literature; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Our delegation has already done so. Religious freedoms will remain high among our concerns at the Vienna CSCE follow-up meeting.

Mr. Vanunu

42. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further discussions the Government have had with the Israeli Government concerning the departure from the United Kingdom of Mr. Vanunu.

Mr. Renton: There have been no such discussions since 13 November.

67. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to make any further representations to the Israeli Government concerning Mr. Mordechai Vanunu.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend has at present no plans to do so.

British Hostages (Lebanon)

43. **Mr. Hanley** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest information about the fate of British citizens held as hostages in the Lebanon.

Mr. Renton: Regrettably, we still have no hard information on the whereabouts of the British hostages in Lebanon. We are doing everything possible to obtain news that might help to resolve these cases.

64. **Mr. Campbell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what help the Government of Saudi Arabia has given Her Majesty's Government relating to the release of British hostages in Lebanon.

Mr. Renton: The Government of Saudi Arabia have no direct involvement in the problems of British hostages kidnapped in Beirut. Saudi Arabia is aware, as are other Governments in the area, of our concern over British hostages in Lebanon.

53. **Mr. Leadbitter** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has assessed the degree of influence of Iran over Lebanese groups holding hostages; and what steps are being taken to secure the release of these hostages.

Mr. Renton: We keep under continuous review all developments that might affect British hostages in Lebanon and continue to do all we can to obtain information on their whereabouts and the identity of their kidnappers.

Central America

45. **Mr. Jim Spicer** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have any evidence of Soviet intervention in Central America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The presence of Soviet military personnel and massive arms supplies are evidence of Soviet intervention in Nicaragua. Military supplies include substantial numbers of Mil-24 helicopter gunships, tanks, armoured veicles, artillery and SA-7 surface-to-air missiles. This extensive military support for Nicaragua, from a country whose record hardly suggests it is interested in the development of genuine democracy, is of legitimate concern to her neighbours.

Falkland Islands

46. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to discuss matters relating to the Falkland Islands with the Government of the United States of America.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no specific plans at present to discuss the Falklands with members of the United States Government.

Nicaragua

47. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Nicaraguan Government about British citizens claiming to have entered Nicaraguan territory with the Contra forces.

Mr. Eggar: None.

65. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to meet members of the Nicaraguan Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The next occasion for a meeting with Central American Foreign Ministers, including the Nicaraguan Foreign Minister, will be at the EC/Central America/Contadora Foreign Ministers' meeting due to be held at Guatemala City in February 1987.

Council of Foreign Ministers

48. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the main matters to be discussed at the next meeting of the European Economic Community Council of Foreign Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 28 November at column 381, which sets out the agenda for meetings of the Council of Ministers in December.

Philippines

49. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current United Kingdom-Philippines relations.

Mr. Renton: United Kingdom-Philippines relations are very good. We have followed closely recent developments in the Philippines, and with our European partners have made clear our strong political support for President Aquino and the restoration of democracy there. The Foreign Affairs Committee paid a useful visit to Manila in April. We have doubled our bilateral aid to the Philippines since Mrs. Aquino became President and assistance from the European Community has also significantly increased. President Aquino has accepted, in principle, the Prime Minister's invitation to visit the United Kingdom.

Iran-Iraq (Arms Supplies)

51. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to review Her Majesty's Government's policy on arms supplies to Iran and Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. British policy remains as set out in the reply that my right hon. and learned Friend gave the right hon. Member for Tweedale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) on 29 October 1985, at column 454.

Kenya

52. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to seek to pay an official visit to Kenya.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at the moment to pay an official visit to Kenya.

India

58. **Mr. Bidwell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of Anglo-Indian relations.

Mr. Eggar: Relations are close across a broad spectrum of activities.

Afghan Refugees

60. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Pakistan about the Afghan refugee problem; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: During his visit to Pakistan in April my right hon. and learned Friend listened to representations from Afghan refugees and discussed the matter with the Pakistan Government. We remain in contact.

The continuing flow of refugees into Pakistan poses real problems and my hon. Friend the Minister for overseas Development announced in Pakistan last week a further grant of £3·5 million to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for refugee programmes in Pakistan.

Departmental Staff (Languages)

62. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many of his Department's overseas staff in *(a)* Japan speak fluent Japanese, *(b)* China speak fluent Chinese, *(c)* Iran speak fluent Farsi and *(d)* Iraq speak fluent Arabic.

Mr. Eggar: *(a)*, 17; *(b)*, 10; *(c)*, 5; *(d)*, 5.

President Museveni

63. **Mr. Barnett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the recent state visit of President Museveni of Uganda.

Mrs. Chalker: President Museveni of Uganda visited the United Kingdom officially between 15 and 18 November. His programme included an audience of Her Majesty the Queen, and meetings with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development and myself. The visit underlines the importance which we attach to the return of stability and prosperity to Uganda.

Reykjavik Summit

66. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations took place between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the United States of America immediately prior to the Reykjavik summit.

Mr. Renton: As part of the continuous process of alliance consultation, senior United States officials briefed the North Atlantic Council shortly before the Reykjavik meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev.

Saudi Arabia

71. **Mr. White** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's current relations with Saudi Arabia.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Relations with Saudi Arabia are excellent. There have been a number of ministerial visits to Saudi Arabia during the year. Further visits are expected early in the new year. The hon. Member will also be aware that Their Royal Highnesses The Prince and Princess of Wales recently paid a highly successful visit to Saudi Arabia. In addition, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia will be making a state visit to Britain in 1987 at the invitation of Her Majesty The Queen.

Afghanistan

73. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations Her Majesty's Government has made to the Soviet Government about human rights in Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: When my right hon. and learned Friend met Mr. Sheyardnadze on 15 July he drew his attention to the suffering he had witnessed during his visit to Afghan refugee camps and hospitals in Pakistan in April. We have recently drawn the attention of the Soviet embassy in London to our deep concern over the serious violations of human rights in Afghanistan, which have again been documented by the United Nations special rapporteur in his recent report to the General Assembly.

82. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the implications of the recent withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: The claimed withdrawal in October of six regiments of Soviet forces in Afghanistan was stage-managed, had minimal military significance and, we believe, was in part fabricated. Despite the "withdrawal" of two motor rifle regiments, for example, we do not believe there has been a reduction in the number of such regiments in Afghanistan. Over 110,000 Soviet troops continue to prosecute a bitter war of occupation. The key to peace is their complete and early withdrawal.

Hong Kong

76. **Mr. Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Foeign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make a statememt of progress on drafting a constitution for Hong Kong.

Mr. Renton: Hong Kong's current constitutional arrangements are contained in the Hong Kong Letters Patent 1917 to 1986 and the Hong Kong Royal Instructions 1917 to 1986. These arrangements will end when British sovereignty and jurisdiction over Hong Kong ends on 1 July 1997. From that date, Hong Kong will be a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China. A Basic Law of the SAR is now being drafted by a Committee of the National People's Congress of the PRC, in close consultation with Hong Kong people.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many men were imprisoned in Hong Kong in each of the years 1984 and 1985 for consensual homosexual acts with *(a)* males between the ages of 16 and 21 years and *(b)* males over the age of 21 years; and for each category, and each year, what were the maximum, minimum and average sentences served by such men.

Mr. Renton: The information requested by the hon. Member is not readily available. However, in 1984 one male between the age of 16 and 20 was sentenced to imprisonment of three to six months for homosexual offences. Two males ages 21 or over were sentenced to imprisonment, one for six to 12 months, the other for 12 to 18 months. In 1985 no males under 21 were sentenced to imprisonment for homosexual offences. Two males over 21 were sentenced to imprisonment, one for six to 12 months, the other for 12 to 18 months.

NATO (Secretary General)

81. **Mr. Sackville** asaked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to meet the secretary general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in the near future.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend will be meeting Lord Carrington at the ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council which will take place at Brussels from 11-12 December.

Bonn

83. **Mr. Carttiss** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects next to visit Bonn.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to do so.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

84. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the current state of proceedings under the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Steady progress is being made in implementing the Anglo-Irish Agreement. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland regularly places in the Library of the House copies of the statements issued after meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference.

Brunei

85. **Mr. Moynihan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current United Kingdom relations with the Sultanate of Brunei.

Mr. Renton: We continue to enjoy warm and friendly relations with the Sultanate of Brunei.

Poland

86. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of relations with Poland.

Mr. Renton: Since the visit of my right hon. and learned Friend to Warsaw in April 1985 we have maintained an active dialogue with the Polish authorities in which our concern for human rights and the need for national reconciliation within Poland have played a major part. Together with our partners in the Twelve we welcomed the release of Polish political detainees in September as a step in this direction. A copy of that statement has been placed in the Library of the House. My right hon. and learned Friend had bilateral talks with the Polish Foreign Minister in September during the United Nations General Assembly and we hope to have further contacts with the Polish Government at ministerial level in the new year. I am glad to note that a group of right hon. and hon. Members are visiting Poland this week under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Eastern Europe

92. **Sir Brandon Rhys Williams** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to bring the nations of eastern Europe into closer formal relationships with the European Economic Community.

Mrs. Chalker: The Commission is in contact with the individual European members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. The Foreign Affairs Council of 27 October confirmed the importance of mutually beneficial commercial and economic links with eastern European countries. The Council reviewed progress on a number of bilateral discussions in train between the Community and individual states concerned, as well as considering its reaction to the CMEA's expressed wish to enter into official relations with the Community. On 24 November, the Council approved a negotiating mandate for an EC-Czechoslovakia trade agreement.

Cambodia

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 24 November, *Official Report*, columns 267-68, if he will set out the items and amounts of each which constitute the £200,000 in 1986-87 pledged to Cambodia in humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Renton: I regret that there was an error in the answer I gave to my hon. Friend on 26 November and that the figure I gave for humanitarian assistance should have read £100,000 not £200,000 as given. This has been pledged not to Cambodia but to the non-Communist resistance. No final decision has yet been taken on the items to be provided in 1986-87, but we anticipate that, as for last year, medicines will be the major item.

European Single Act

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, which European Community countries have not ratified the European Single Act.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Kingdom, Denmark and Belgium have already ratified the Single European Act. The other nine Community Countries expect to ratify by the end of the year.

Iran-Iraq War

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about damage done to British ships in the Iran-Iraq war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Since the beginning of the conflict two British-registered vessels have been damaged in air attacks in the Gulf.

On 10 July 1984 an Iranian helicopter attack on the MV British Renown slightly damaged the starboard tank. Fortunately there were no casualties.

On 23 September 1986 the MV Pawnee was attacked by an Iranian helicopter. An unexploded missile lodged in the engine room causing slight damage. Again, there were no casualties.

We condemn all unprovoked attacks on innocent, unarmed merchant vessels, and we have repeatedly called on both sides to refrain from further attacks.

Nezar Hindawi

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the Hindawi case, he intends to propose any changes in the convention on diplomatic immunity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No. We agree with the conclusion reached in December 1984 by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons that it would be wrong to regard amendment of the Vienna convention as the solution to the problem of abuse of diplomatic immunities, given the difficulties of achieving any restrictive amendment to the convention and the doubtful net benefit to the United Kingdom of so doing. A fuller statement of our position is given in the White Paper on Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities" (Cmnd. 9497).

State Security

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is represented at the court proceedings in Sydney on the Wright book.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No. The Government are represented by Australian counsel, instructed by the Treasury Solicitor. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is fully involved in consultations in London about the case.

Denis Charles Lehane

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the treatment in the United States of America during 1984 of Denis Charles Lehane, a United Kingdom citizen; and what representations he has made to the authorities in the United States of America concerning allegations made by and on behalf of Denis Charles Lehane about his treatment in the United States during 1984.

Mr. Eggar: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has received seven approaches from or on behalf of Mr. Lehane. No representations have been made to the authorities in the United States of America. Mr. Lehane has recourse to the courts of the United States if he so wishes.

SCOTLAND

Rents

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the average level of *(a)* local authority rents and *(b)* fair rents registered for unfurnished lettings in Scotland in each of the years from 1979 to 1986, indicating the percentage increase in each on an annual and a cumulative basis; and how these increases compare with the movement of the retail price index over the same period.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is given in the table below. Comparisons of average rents registered between one year and the next can be misleading because of the large variation in property types registered at different points in time. Similar considerations can invalidate comparisons between the movements in averages for registrations and local authority rents.

Average local authority rents and average of rents registered, Scotland

	Local authority[1]			*Registered rents all registrations*[2]			*General index of retail prices*[3]	
Year	*Average annual rent (£)*	*Annual change percentage*	*Cumulative change, percentage since 1979*	*Average annual rent (£)*	*Annual change percentage*	*Cumulative change, percentage since 1979*	*1979 = 100*	*Annual change percentage*
1979	256	—	—	322	—	—	100·00	—
1980	306	19·53	19·53	366	13·66	13·66	117·97	17·97
1981	400	30·72	56·25	443	21·10	37·65	131·85	11·76
1982	469	17·25	83·20	605	36·57	87·99	143·31	8·69
1983	513	9·38	100·39	690	14·17	114·61	149·94	4·63
1984	544	6·04	112·50	787	14·03	144·73	157·36	4·95
1985	601	10·48	134·77	883	12·18	174·53	166·95	6·09
1986	677	12·65	164·45	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

[1] Rents at 30 September based on annual returns from local authorities.
[2] All registrations, for unfurnished tenancies, including housing associations, in year ending 31 December.
[3] General index of retail prices at 31 December—source Economic Trends.

Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in respect of the statistics kept and published by his Department, he will publish in the *Official Report* any changes since 1979 in *(a)* the statistical series which are published, including those which have been introduced and those which have been dropped, *(b)* the basis on which any elements in the statistics are estimated, calculated or presented, *(c)* the periods over which, and the dates on which the series are collected or published and *(d)* any other respects in the ways in which the statistics are collected, recorded, presented, evaluated, or published; and if he will explain the reasons for any such changes.

Mr. Rifkind: The changes in the statistics kept and published by the Scottish Office since 1979 affect the series listed in the following table:

Statistics	Changes
School Leavers	Coverage extended in 1981, 1983 and 1984 to reflect changes in the education system.
Further Education Statistics	Coverage extended in 1980 and 1982.
School Leavers Statistics	Coverage extended in 1986.
Placing Requests	Statistical return introduced in 1982; coverage extended in 1984.
Community Education Statistics	Coverage restricted in 1980 (following Rayner Review).
Joint Manpower Watch	Seasonally adjusted quarterly figures introduced in 1981.
"*Rates and Rateable Values in Scotland*"	Last published in 1982. (Information available in CIPFA's "Rating Review").
"*Criminal Statistics Scotland*" (Annual volume)	Last published 1982. Replaced by series of statistical bulletins (from 1983 onwards).
Police Detention Statistics	Introduced 1981 to monitor section 2 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980.
Fine Defaulters Statistics	More detail introduced 1983 on defaulters received into penal establishments.

Statistics	Changes
Statistics of initial breath tests	Not collected centrally after: 1981—previous findings of guilt for persons proceeded against 1982—results of applications for removal of disqualification from driving; and 1984—initial breath tests administered by police.
Statistics of previous convictions of those received into penal establishments	Not published after 1983 due to unreliability.
"*Scottish Transport Statistics*"	Statistics extended in each of 1985 and 1986 publications.
Radioactivity Statistics	Annual statistics introduced in statistical bulletins in 1984 for both emissions and environmental levels.
"*Scottish Housing Statistics*"	Quarterly volume ceased 1982. Replaced by annual volume and series of quarterly and occasional statistical bulletins.
Household Projections	Biennial frequency adopted instead of annual in 1983 (following Rayner Report).
Homelessness Statistics	Reduction in range of statistics collected and published, 1982 (following Rayner Report).
Review of Housing Statistics	1985, across the board review, resulting in more relevant information with some forms dropped and some extended.
Index of Industrial Production	Revised and rebased (1980 base) in 1984. More detailed indices published 1985.
Gross Domestic Product (Output based)	Estimates for Scotland first published 1986.
December Agricultural Census	Sample census introduced in 1983 instead of full census.
Costs and Earnings of Scottish Fishing Fleet	Annual survey results first published 1981.
Scottish Salmon and Sea Trout Catches	Detailed results for 1952-81 published 1983-84. Subsequent annual figures in statistical bulletins.

Changes in the basis of compilation, presentation and publication of statistical series are made from time to time in response to the Government's requirements for statistical information, changes in the administrative systems on which some series are based, the development of new statistical techniques and technological development affecting the compilation and dissemination of statistical data. When such changes are made they are fully documented in the relevant statistical publications.

Forestry

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest available figure for total receipts from the Forestry Commission's disposal programme relating to plantations and planting land.

Mr. John MacKay: Receipts from the sale of Forestry Commission plantations and plantable land from the passing of the Forestry Act in July 1981 to 21 October 1986 amount to £54·2 million.

WALES

Beef Variable Premium

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy towards the retention of the beef variable premium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: As part of this year's price fixing decisions, the Council of Ministers agreed that the European Commission's proposals for reforming the beef regime should be studied further with a view to decisions being taken by 31 December 1986. The regulations governing the beef variable premium scheme were accordingly extended to that date.

The Commission's proposals for changes to the beef regime include a Community-wide premium scheme which is intended to replace the variable premium. The Commission has, however, undertaken to propose a continuation of the variable premium scheme, taking account of the budgetary situation, if changes to the regime are not agreed in time to be brought into effect by the end of the year. Discussions on the proposals are continuing and we are pressing the merits of a slaughter premium scheme in that context.

Rents

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the average level of *(a)* local authority rents and *(b)* fair rents registered for unfurnished lettings in Wales in each of the years from 1979 to 1986, indicating the percentage increase in each case on an annual and cumulative basis; and how these increases compare with the movement of the retail price index over the same period.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Average weekly net unrebated rents of local authority dwellings as at April of each year

	£ week	Per cent. increase over previous year	Per cent. change since 1979
1979	6·32	—	—
1980	7·85	24·2	24·2
1981	11·43	45·6	80·9
1982	13·93	21·9	120·4
1983	14·55	4·5	130·2
1984	15·51	6·6	145·4
1985	16·48	6·3	160·8
1986	17·34	5·2	174·4

Fair rents registered by rent officers for regulated unfurnished tenancies

	£ pa[1]	Percentage change[2] over previous period	since 1979
1979	397	—	—
1980	441	—	—
1981	509	—	—
1982	570	46	46
1983	574	—	—
1984	664	23	80
1985	708	—	—
1986	840	19	114

Fair rents registered by rent officers for housing association tenancies

	£ pa[1]	Percentage change[2] over previous period	since 1979
1979	556	—	—
1980	601	—	—
1981	684	—	—
1982	797	45	45
1983	822	—	—
1984	927	20	74
1985	964	—	—
1986	1,083	17	104

[1] Based on registrations during the first 6 months of each year except for 1979 and 1980 which are annual averages.

[2] Data on registered fair rents are analysed by the Department of the Environment. The range and types of property presented for registration vary from year to year. More accurate measurement of increases in these registered rents is obtained by comparing rents for properties which have been registered previously and for which there have been no material changes in either the terms of the tenancy or in the dwelling's condition. The percentage increases for 1982 represent the increase over the previous 3 years since 1979, while those for 1984 and 1986 cover increases of their respective preceding 2 years. The implied annual rates of increase are set out in the following table:

Estimated percentage annual increase in registered rents

Year (First Half)	Regulated Unfurnished	Housing Association
1980	13	13
1981	13	13
1982	13	13
1983	11	10
1984	11	10
1985	9	8
1986	9	8

Retail Price Index

	Index	Per cent. increase over previous year	Per cent. change since 1979
1979	214·2	—	—
1980	260·8	21·8	21·8
1981	292·2	12·0	36·4
1982	319·7	9·4	49·3
1983	332·5	4·0	55·2
1984	349·7	5·2	63·3
1985	373·9	6·9	74·6
1986	385·3	3·0	79·9

Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Wales if, in respect of the statistics kept and published by his Department, he will publish in the *Official Report* any changes since 1979 in *(a)* the statistical series which are published, including those which have been introduced and those which have been dropped, *(b)* the basis on which any elements in the statistics are estimated, calculated or presented, *(c)* the periods over which, and the dates on which the series are collected or published and *(d)* any other respects in the ways in which the statistics are collected, recorded, presented, evaluated, or published; and if he will explain the reasons for any such changes.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and will place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

Perinatal Mortality

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to publish the Welsh Office report, "The Perinatal Mortality Initiative"; when the report was completed; what extra funds he will make available to tackle the problem in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: "The Perinatal Mortality Initiative" report will be published very soon and I shall make a statement at that time.

Local Authorities (Capital Allocations)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce the capital allocations for individual local authorities.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 26 November I announced that the total capital allocations for 1987-88 in Wales would be £369 million. On the same day, authorities were informed of the allocations that I have made for housing (£154 million). A package of special urban programme schemes totalling £2·4 million was announced on 27 November.

The major remaining component of local authority capital allocations is distributed on a formula basis. These allocations, together with those for major road schemes and projects of regional or national importance and special projects, will be notified to local authorities today. In total they amount to almost £188 million. Authorities will then have the information that they need to plan their detailed capital programmes for the coming year. Allocations for remaining schemes under the urban programme, totalling almost £24 million, will be announced early in the new year.

Details of allocations for individual authorities have been placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Beam Technology

93. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the information available to his Department on current progress in eastern Europe with the development of beam technology.

Mr. Stanley: The Soviet Union maintains extensive and vigorous research and development programmes in the high fields of high energy laser, particle beam, and radio frequency beam technologies. Other eastern European work is less advanced and is confined to low energy laser applications. The Soviet Union is advancing only slowly in application of bean technologies to civil industrial processes. My Department believes higher priority has been given to military applications. In particular, I would refer my hon. Friend to my Department's paper "The Soviet Ballistic Missile Defence Programme" which was placed in the Library of the House on 26 November 1985.

Airborne Early Warning System

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent his Department is lending its support to the promotion of the Nimrod system to France and other interested nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have assisted GEC Avionics Ltd. in its promotion of the Nimrod mission system avionics to overseas countries, for example through the loan of aircraft for demonstrations, and will continue to do so to the maximum extent possible.

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the offset work offered by Boeing in its airborne early warning bid is new work to British industry rather than work already placed in the United Kingdom, or work which would be open to tender of British industry regardless of the purchase of airborne warning and control system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the event of a decision to buy the Boeing airborne warning and control system we shall monitor the Boeing company's proposals for meeting its offset commitment very carefully, with due regard to these factors.

Royal Navy Vessels

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether private shiprepair companies are currently able to tender for contracts for Royal Naval vessels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes. Apart from HMS Manchester—at present in an Australian yard—HMS Otter, HMS Wilton, HMS Wotton and HMS Carron are in British private shiprepair yards. Tenders have been invited for work on HMS Caroline, HMS Dovey and HMS Hunter, and a tender will be issued in the next few weeks for work on HMS Smiter. In addition there are 18 Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service, Army and Royal Air Force vessels in private sector yards, and another 14 invitations to tender. Seventeen more invitations to tender should be issued in the next four weeks or so.

Oberon

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average time taken and final price for the last three refits of Oberon class submarines in Rosyth dockyard.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Only two 'O' class refits have so far been completed at Rosyth dockyard. That for HMS Odin cost £26·5 million and took 180 weeks. This included 36 weeks when all resources were transferred to more urgent work arising from the Falklands crisis. HMS Onyx cost £23·895 million and took 127 weeks.

King Hussein

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement about his meeting on 23 November with King Hussein of Jordan; and what discussion took place regarding the war between Iran and Iraq.

Mr. Younger: During the course of a most valuable visit to Jordan from 22 to 24 November, I had useful and friendly discussions with a number of senior figures and, on 23 November, with King Hussein. In my meeting with the King, views were exchanged on regional issues and on Anglo-Jordanian relations on defence matters. We both expressed satisfaction at the excellent state of our relations, which are founded on a firm basis of friendship and trust. The details of my talks in Jordan remain confidential.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the value and amount and type of Government equipment sold recently in the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I shall answer shortly.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the television service for the Falkland Islands garrison to be available.

Mr. Stanley: I am glad to say that the new taped television service will open on 4 December and will be run by the Services Sound and Vision Corporation (SSVC) from its new broadcasting complex at Mount Pleasant in the Falklands. SSVC will be transmitting for four hours each day a blend of taped current BBC and ITV programmes.

The new service will be a welcome addition to the existing radio broadcasting services that we already provide for members of the Armed Forces serving in the Falkland Islands, especially as it will be in time for Christmas.

Military Hospitals

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the existing and planned United States contingency military hospitals will admit injured service peope of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries other than Britain in time of war;

(2) whether the existing and planned United States contingency military hospitals will admit injured British service people in time of war.

Mr. Freeman: Although United States contingency hospitals are primarily designed for use by United States military personnel, all casualties, from any NATO country, both military and civilian, would be admitted in an emergency. The use of United States contingency hospitals would be based on the joint plans prepared in consultation with the United Kingdom emergency services.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's Government have plans to build military hospitals solely for the use of injured British service people.

Mr. Freeman: No.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's Government is required to meet any of the costs involved in the use of Royal Air Force, Upwood as a hospital which would be activated in an emergency by the United States of America.

Mr. Freeman: All costs, except the use of the site for RAF Upwood, which is provided rent free under the terms of the United States/United Kingdom LOC arrangement, are borne by the United States.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Alternative Crops

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to encourage farmers to use alternative crops for land to cereals currently in over supply within the European Economic Community.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Meat and Livestock Commission

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the performance of the meat promotional activities of the Meat and Livestock Commission.

Mr. Gummer: Since the Meat and Livestock Commission completed the reorganisation of its work on meat promotion, I have received one representation on this matter which was forwarded by my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) on behalf of a constituent.

Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in respect of the statistics kept and published by his Department, he will publish in the *Official Report* any changes since 1979 in *(a)* the statistical series which are published, including those which have been introduced and those which have been dropped, *(b)* the basis on which any elements in the statistics are estimated, calculated or presented, *(c)* the periods over which, and the dates on which the series are collected or published and *(d)* any other respects in the ways in which the statistics are collected, recorded, presented, evaluated or published; and if he will explain the reasons for any such changes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Changes in the basis of compilation, presentation and publication of statistical series are made from time to time in response to the Government's requirements for statistical information, changes in the administrative systems on which the series are based, the development of new statistical techniques and technological developments affecting the compilation and dissemination of statistical material.

My Department, for example, introduced in February 1984 two new series measuring farming income. Details were published in the "Annual Review of Agriculture 1984" (Cmnd. 9137). Many other changes, mainly minor ones, have been introduced and documented over the years, but to bring all this information together in one source would involve disproportionate cost.

Battery Hens

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in implementing the European Community directive laying down minimum welfare standards for battery hens.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We propose to implement this directive by regulations made under section 2(3) of the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968. Statutory consultation procedures have today been set in train by circulating our detailed proposals to interested organisations. Following consideration of comments received, draft regulations will be laid before both Houses of Parliament for approval in good time for these welfare measures to apply from 1 January 1988.

Monetary Coefficients

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the current levels of monetary coefficients applied in respect of sales of beef under regulation 2670/86 and sales of butter under regulation 765/86, expressed in terms of pence per pound.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1986]: The monetary coefficients applied to export refunds on sales from the United Kingdom to European third countries of frozen beef forequarters under regulation 2670/86, and of butter of a fat content of 82 per cent. under regulation 765/86, currently increase these refunds by 4·62p per pound and 12·61p per pound, respectively.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the purpose of applying monetary coefficients to sales of food from European Economic Community stockpiles; and if he will make a statement explaining the manner in which these coefficients are calculated and applied.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1986]: Monetary coefficients are applied to export refunds, which are set in ecus, in order to ensure that the refunds are of

approximately equal value in the national currencies of all member states. The monetary coefficient is calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{monetary coefficient} = \frac{100\text{-MCA\%}}{100}$$

Decommissioned Vessels

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what checks are made by his Department to ensure that fishing boats which are the subject of a decommissioning grant paid by his Department remain decommissioned and are not subsequently used following the transfer of a licence from another vessel to the decommissioned vessel; if any changes to the procedures are being considered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1986]: Payment of decommissioning grant is not made until the vessel has been permanently withdrawn from fishing in Community waters and any licences issued in respect of that vessel cancelled.

The subsequent activities of decommissioned vessels are closely monitored by the sea fish inspectorate and all applications for licence transfer are carefully checked against lists of such vessels. I am satisfied that the existing procedures are sufficient to ensure that no decommissioned vessel would receive a licence.

Fishing Industry (Aid)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards grant aids being given towards the building of new pursers or new fishing vessels with a pursing capability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 December 1986, c. *471*]: It has been the policy of successive Governments, since 1974, not to grant aid the construction of purse seiners or fishing vessels with a pursing capability. This policy is kept under review in the light of changing circumstances within the fisheries sector.

Intervention Stores

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the quantity of butter in European Economic Community intervention which is two years old or more; what is the estimated value of such butter expressed in pence per pound; and what is the estimated cost of storing it for the average period in which such stocks have been in intervention.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 December 1986, c. *473*]: As at 25 November 1986, 280,363 tonnes of butter in intervention in the European Community were two years old or more. The average book value of these stocks, representing the balance of the original purchase price not yet recovered by member states, is approximately 50p per lb. But the price likely to be realised at the time of disposal will be considerably lower in the present state of the market. It is estimated that the cost of storing this butter for the average period it has been in intervention is about £148 million.

EMPLOYMENT

North-West Region

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what have been the major causes of the loss of jobs in the north-west area in the last seven years.

Mr. Lee: The principal reason for the loss of jobs in the north-west area has been the decline in labour-intensive, traditional industries and the lower manning levels required by more efficient manufacturing processes. Lack of competitiveness due to overmanning and high labour costs contributed to this loss of jobs. Unemployment also reflects an increase in the number of people seeking work.

Benefit Offices (Ramp Access)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Paymaster General how many unemployment benefit offices do not have ramp access for disabled people; and if there are any plans to increase the number of unemployment benefit offices with wheel chair access.

Mr. Lee: Information is not available in the form requested. Many unemployment benefit offices already provide wheelchair access, but where this is not available, and access is a problem, special alternative arrangements are made for disabled persons. The unemployment benefit service has plans for replacing or improving unsatisfactory offices, and these afford opportunities for improving access.

Restart

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General whether he will make it his policy to recruit more restart counsellors to cope with the numbers of the long-term unemployed being interviewed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. The Manpower Services Commission, which is responsible for the restart programme, has not asked for any increase in the recruitment of restart counsellors and I see no need for such an increase.

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General in what areas the long-term unemployed are being given counselling interviews lasting one hour or more.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There is no policy of giving longer interviews in some areas than in others. The length of interview depends on people's needs. Some people need and get interviews lasting over an hour. Others are shorter, the average being around 30 minutes.

Departmental Initiatives

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General if he will list the new steps, measures, initiatives and policy developments of his Department over the past two years in chronological order.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Over the past two years my Department has continued to develop and implement programmes designed to help unemployed people, improve the workings of the labour market and encourage business growth and employment creation.

The main innovations since November 1984 are as follows:

Date	*Development*	*Purpose*
November 1984	Adult Training Strategy	To improve the quantity and quality of training and increase the supply of skills needed in modern industry.
	First Jobclubs pilot	To help unemployed people compete more effectively for jobs.
	Publication of Code of Good Practice on Employment of Disabled People	To advance the employment interests of disabled people and promote good practice.
March 1985	Publication of White Paper "Employment—The Challenge for the Nation"	To set the employment problem of the country in context and explain the Government's employment strategy.
	Expansion of Community Programme to 230,000 places	To provide more places to help long-term unemployed people.
April 1985	City Action Teams set up	To coordinate Government programmes in the five partnership areas.
	Restructuring of MSC training provision	To improve targeting and cost effectiveness of training for unemployed people.
	Business Development Service established by Small Firms Service	To assist small firms with growth potential.
	White Paper: "Education and Training for Young People"	Developments in YTS.
June 1985	Employment Protection Act provisions amended	Qualifying period for unfair dismissal extended to two years and industrial tribunals procedures changed — to achieve a better balance between employers' needs and workers' rights.
July 1985	Publication of White Paper "Lifting the Burden"	To identify areas where the removal of administrative burdens could help business and encourage job creation.
October 1985	Implementation of final sections of the Trade Union Act 1984	To make trade unions more democratic and responsive to members' views.
January 1986	Restart pilots set up	To test intensive programme of assistance for long-term unemployed people.
January 1986	Jobstart Allowance Scheme introduced	To help long-term unemployed start work and enabling them to take lower-paid jobs.
February 1986	Inner City Initiative set up inner city task forces	To achieve a more targeted impact on inner city areas and mobilise community and other resources in tackling employment environmental and social problems.
March 1986	New Workers Scheme introduced	To improve the employment prospects of young adults and those graduating from YTS.
April 1986	Action for Jobs initiative	To publicise facilities available to help employment and business and schemes to assist unemployed people.
	Loan Guarantee Scheme premium halved to 2½ per cent.	To improve small firms' access to finance.
	Two-year YTS	To improve the quality of training for young people and provide opportunities to work towards a recognised vocational qualification.
	Local Enterprise Agency Grant Scheme launched	To promote development of a network of viable local enterprise agencies.
May 1986	White Paper "Building Businesses. . .Not Barriers"	Reviewed progress made in relieving business of unnecessary administrative barriers and identified further areas where progress should be made.
	"Payment on Time" booklet launched	To encourage a more enlightened approach to bill payment practice.
June 1986	Document "Employment Growth into the 1990s: a strategy for the Labour Market" tabled jointly with Irish and Italian Governments	Proposals to combat unemployment in the European Community; in November 1986 resolution based on paper tabled for December Council.
	Greater private sector involvement in Community Programme	Currently developing with CBI greater private sector involvement.
July 1986	Publication of "Action for Jobs in Tourism"	Reviewed the steps taken to help strengthen tourism's contribution to employment.

Date	Development	Purpose
July 1986	Restart: nationwide extension	
	White Paper "Working Together, Education and Training" included extension of Technical and Vocational Education Initiative pilot to national scheme from Autumn 1987	To give young people aged 14 to 18 access to wider and richer curriculum more relevant to the world of work.
	Announcement of "Headstart"	Joint initiative by Industrial Society, MSC and Inner Cities Initiative to provide enterprise and training and advice for 18 to 25-year-olds in inner city areas.
	Open College	To extend use of open learning through Broadcasting media.
August 1986	Implementation of the Wages Act	To repeal outdated Truck Acts; reform wages councils and abolish redundancy payment rebates for all but smallest firms so that resources can be used to encourage business and generate jobs.
	Enterprise Allowance Scheme rules changed	To make the scheme more accessible for those leaving other schemes and training courses.
September 1986	Improved availability test for unemployed benefit claimants	Introduced in reply to criticism from National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee.
October 1986	National Council for Vocational Qualifications established	To create a new framework of national vocational qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
	Better deal for ethnic minority young people in YTS	Guidelines to be set for desired improvements in ethnic minority participation in employer-led schemes from spring 1987.
	Prince of Wales Trust	Government will provide £6 million 1987-90 to help young entrepreneurs through advice, counselling and small amount of finance.
	Extension of Restart to six-month unemployed	Being tested in original pilot areas.
	Expansion of Jobclubs to 1,000 by April 1987, 2,000 by September 1987 if need continues	To develop Jobclub network to help those unemployed for more than six months.
November 1986	Sex Discrimination Act 1986 implemented	To improve sex discrimination and equal pay legislation.
	Pilot Job Training Scheme introduced	To test training provision geared to needs of long-term unemployed people.
	Publication of leaflet AIDS and Employment	Gives factual information about AIDS and guidance on industrial relations problems.
	Broughton Road project	Major experimental scheme to employ local people to refurbish a run-down street of Victorian buildings in Handsworth area of Birmingham. Joint project of DE/DoE/City Council/Tarmac Ltd.

There have been other smaller developments within existing programmes such as the £1 million given to the Newcastle city action team to aid employment in the area, and the United Kingdom 2000 project, under the community programme, launched in July 1986.

YTS

Mr. Knox asked the Paymaster General, whether the Government have agreed the levels of funding for YTS schemes in 1987.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment received last week the Manpower Services Commission's recommendations on the funding arrangements to apply in YTS in 1987-88, and he today approved all the commission's recommendations.

There will be no change in the management fee of £110 per place per year or in the basic grant of £160 per filled place per month. Special grants payable in addition to the basic grant will increase as follows (all the rates are per filled place per month):

	1986-87 £	*1987-88* £
Premium grant	110	116·75
Information Technology Centres grant	110	116·75
Permanent additional funding for disabled young people	75	76·90

Ex-Mode B1 schemes which provide training for disadvantaged young people and information technology centres receive transitional funding to help cope with the move to two year YTS funding, and this will continue for a second year. The transitional funding arrangements in 1987-88 will be on the basis of detailed recommendations made by the commission, and take account of experience in two-year YTS so far.

The first-year allowance for trainees will increase from £27·30 a week to £28·50 per week; the second year

allowance will remain unchanged at £35 per week; and trainees who spend more than £3 a week on travel will continue to have the excess reimbursed by the commission.

Since 1983, YTS has provided over a million young people with work-related training, and has opened up new prospects for jobs and qualifications. About 360,000 young people are expected to enter YTS next year and the MSC will be making available over 500,000 places in all. This latest settlement will bring the cost of YTS next year to around £1·1 billion—a major investment in training our future work force. I believe the funding arrangements for 1987-88 represent a realistic balance, which should encourage further the growth and development of a highly successful scheme.

Community Programme

Dr. McDonald asked the Paymaster General what was the number of married women in the community programme for each year since it started; and if he will also give the total number of participants.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 December 1986, c. *424*]: The following table shows, for each year of operation of the community programme, the total number of entrants, the number of entrants who were women and, based upon a sample survey undertaken each year, the percentage of women on the programme who were married.

	Entrants	*Women entrants*	*Percentage of women on the programme who are married*
12 months to			
September 1983	79,987	17,277	45
September 1984	147,221	33,861	50
September 1985	189,679	39,833	33
September 1986	294,111	67,646	[1]

[1]Sample results not yet available.

ENERGY

Marine Pollution

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to ensure that within the last three years all existing platforms or technical equipment used to explore and exploit petroleum and natural gas in the North sea within the United Kingdom's jurisdiction operate using only the best available technology.

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 28 November, at column 385, on the technical equipment aspects. Existing installations are under continuous review so that, where reasonably practicable, they may be modified to meet changing standards.

Sellafield

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy what reply has been sent to the Irish Government's call for the closure of Sellafield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has received no such call from the Irish Government.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the maximum distance at which radioactive contamination has been found from Sellafield in the past five years.

Mr. Goodlad: Because artificial radionuclides can be measured at extremely low concentrations, radioactivity arising from liquid discharges from Sellafield can be detected over considerable distances in water. The levels of activity which can be detected are of no significance and represent only a small fraction of the natural variations found in the levels of radioactivity in seawater.

Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, in respect of the statistics kept and published by his Department, he will publish in the *Offical Report* any changes since 1979 in *(a)* the statistical series which are published, including those which have been introduced and those which have been dropped, *(b)* the basis on which any elements in the statistics are estimated, calculated or presented, *(c)* the periods over which, and the dates on which the series are collected or published and *(d)* any other respects in the ways in which the statistics are collected, recorded, presented, evaluated or published; and if he will explain the reasons for any such changes.

Mr. Peter Walker: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Power Stations

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will describe the latest detailed six-year forecast of capital requirements supplied to his Department by the Central Electricity Generating Board; what are the approximate figures in respect of *(a)* building new power stations, *(b)* refurbishing or improving existing power stations and *(c)* improving the distribution and transmission system for each year of the period; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the latest detailed six-year forecast of capital requirements supplied to his Department by the Central Electricity Generating Board contains specific provision for at least one new coal-fired power station to begin construction in that period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Electricity demand forecasts and ways in which these might be met by new generation capacity and —or plant refurbishment are under continuing consideration by the CEGB. My right hon. Friend has received no applications for consent to new power stations other than Sizewell B. Any necessary development of the transmission system will depend on decisions about generation. Improvements to the distribution system are for the area electricity boards.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will name the power stations for which investment approval has been given since 1979, stating the date of approval in each case; whether for each such power station his Department received a detailed analysis of alternative siting costs; whether his Department received other information on alternative siting options; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The only major station for which the CEGB has been given approval since 1979 is Heysham II

in September 1981. A wide range of relevant information is received by the Department when considering applications for investment approval on new power stations.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 25 November, *Official Report*, column 154, whether the costs of alternative siting options are a material factor in giving investment approval for a new power station on a specified site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The importance of alternative siting options is likely to vary with the case in question.

Nuclear Reactor (Safety)

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will detail what specific organisational and technical appraisals have been made of the methodology of determining the risks of an accident at a nuclear installation in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 November 1986, c. *233*]: Operators of nuclear installations in the United Kingdom and overseas have for a number of years been developing and using the technique known as probabilistic risk (or safety) assessment (PRA). This technique has been widely adopted internationally as a valuable aid for assessing the risks of accidents at nuclear installations. Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate now requires PRA assessments to form part of the safety case which must be prepared before a nuclear power station is licensed, and has also asked operators to make similar assessments as part of the long-term reviews now being carried out on the older power stations.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish a table showing, for each licensed nuclear power station that started operating before 1970 *(a)* the date each reactor started operating, *(b)* the date each reactor attained, or is expected to attain 20-years operating life, *(c)* the date the nuclear installations inspectorate started, or expects to start, work on the 20-year safety review, *(d)* the date the nuclear installations inspectorate expects to finish work on the 20-year safety review and *(e)* the date the nuclear installations inspectorate expects to publish a summary of the 20-year safety review.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 November 1986, c. *18*, and further to the replies 24 June 1985, at c. *296* and 17 November 1986, c. *18*]: Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate's work on the CEGB's long-term reviews of Bradwell and Berkley commenced in August 1981. As I told the right hon. Member for Salford, East on 16 June 1986, at column 387, the NII completed work in March 1983 on its assessment of BNFL's long-term reviews of Calder Hall and Chapelcross with the exception of a few issues which require further assessment and discussion. The CEGB has begun its reviews of Hinkley Point A, Trawsfynydd, Sizewell and Dungeness A. The NII will publish its conclusions on all this work in due course.

PRIME MINISTER

Legislation

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Prime Minister how many pages of *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary legislation were added to the statute book in 1956, 1960, 1970 and in each year since 1979 to date.

The Prime Minister: The following table give the figures for primary and secondary legislation[1] (excluding unprinted local legislation).

	Primary				*Secondary*			
	Public General Acts and Measures				*Statutory Instruments*		*Statutory Rules of Northern Ireland*	
	(Westminster)		*(Stormont)*					
	No.	*Pages*	*No.*	*Pages*	*No.*	*Pages*	*No.*	*Pages*
1956	63	1,046	24	244	720	2,990	183	747
1960	66	1,153	24	494	733	4,099	175	764
1970	61	1,516	34	586	1,040	6,627	310	1,519
1979	60	1,435	—	—	955	4,969	435	2,050
1980	70	2,876	—	—	1,197	7,719	404	1,769
1981	72	2,276	—	—	1,076	7,468	377	2,110
1982	59	2,130	—	—	1,085	5,957	385	1,619
1983	62	1,541	—	—	1,110	6,669	378	1,887
1984	62	2,876	—	—	1,116	6,368	347	2,125
1985	76	3,233	—	—	1,203	6,976	318	1,461
1986	70	2,846	—	—	1,172	*	292	*

* = Figures not fully available as at 1 December 1986.

[1] Printed in official annual editions of primary and secondary legislation published by authority.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister whether the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the right hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) was aware of the likely contents of the letter from the Solicitor-General to the then Secretary of State for Defence before extracts from the letter were read to him over the telephone on 6 January; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer which I gave him on 17 November at column 49-50.

State Security

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister at what stage she first was aware of the intention to give undertakings to Messrs Sidgewick and Jackson not to bring action to prevent distribution of the book, "Their Trade is Treachery."

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply which I gave him on 28 November at column *388*.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister whether she will prosecute Mr. Chapman Pincher under section 7 of the Official Secrets Act 1920 for inducing Mr. Peter Wright to break his duty of confidentiality on security matters to the Crown by being party to the offer of payments by Summerpage of moneys in respect of information to be included in his book, "Their Trade is Treachery."

The Prime Minister: Prosecutions are a matter for my Right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has signed any certificate under section 27 of the Data Protection Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tebbit: No, Sir.

ENVIRONMENT

Houses (Multiple Occupation)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local housing authorities in England which have registration schemes for houses in multiple occupation in their areas as confirmed by him under sections 346 to 351 Housing Act 1985.

Mr. Tracey: Registration schemes confirmed under the 1985 Act and earlier legislation are in force in England in the following local authority areas:

Informatory schemes

Bassetlaw district council
Bournemouth borough council
Crawley borough city council
Croydon London borough council
Kingston upon Hull city council
Leeds city council
Liverpool city council
Middlesbrough borough council
Mole Valley borough council
Reigate and Banstead borough council
Trafford borough council

Regulatory schemes

Exeter city council

Combined schemes

Barnsley borough council
Bradford city council
Brent London borough council
Bristol city council
Cambridge city council
Camden London borough council
Doncaster borough council
East Staffordshire district council
Enfield London borough council
Greenwich London borough council
Hackney London borough council
Hereford city council
Ipswich borough council
Islington London borough council
Kirklees district council
Lambeth London borough council
Lancaster city council
Leicester city council
Lewisham London borough council
Manchester city council
Milton Keynes borough council
Newcastle under Lyme borough council
Newcastle upon Tyne city council
Newham London borough council
Norwich city council
Oldham borough council
Portsmouth city council
Redbridge London borough council
Rotherham borough council
Salford city council
Sandwell borough council
Scunthorpe borough council
Sheffield city council
South Tyneside borough council
Southwark London borough council
Stoke on Trent city council
Tower Hamlets London borough council
Walsall borough council
West Devon borough council
Woodspring district council
Wycombe district council
Wycombe district council
Wyre borough council

Schemes have also been confirmed in respect of two other authorities (Coventry city and Eastbourne borough councils), but these are not yet in force.

Radiation Protection

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect the study by Don Popplewell of the National Radiological Protection Board on plutonium levels in Sellafield workers and Cumbrians has had, or will have, on his policy towards protection from radiation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The levels of plutonium in Cumbrians that have been reported so far in the NRPB study are substantially below those which would cause concern or suggest the need for a change in policy. The Government will, however, continue to encourage monitoring of doses of radiation actually received by members of the public in west Cumbria, and in other relevant areas, as recommended by Sir Douglas Black, and to study the results with care.

Dog Wardens

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the present number of dog warden schemes operating in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is not collected by my Department, but I understand that the Joint Advisory Committee on Pets in Society estimates that some 200 local authorities in Great Britain currently operate dog warden services. In Northern Ireland it is mandatory under the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 for each of the 26 district councils to appoint such number of dog control officers as the council considers necessary.

Dolphins and Porpoises

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what research Her Majesty's Government have commissioned or completed in the last three years to determine why coastal dolphins and porpoises are disappearing from the southern part of the North sea.

Mr. Waldegrave: No such research has been commissioned. There is no clear evidence of these populations declining, but the Sea Mammals Research Unit is collating relevant available material in readiness for next year's London conference on the North sea.

Marine Pollution

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek powers to require the nuclear industry to take account of the best available technology in order to reduce radioactive discharges into the aqueous environment from all their installations, including reprocessing plants.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom already complies with the 1985 recommendation of the Paris Commission on the prevention of marine pollution from land-based sources that:

"The contracting parties to the Paris Commission on the prevention of marine pollution from land-based sources declare their firm intention to respect the applicable recommendations of the competent international organisations and to this end to take account of the best available technology in order to reduce radioactive discharges coming from all nuclear industries including reprocessing plants into the marine environment".

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to ensure that officers and crews of vessels visiting United Kingdom shores are regularly and comprehensively informed of the extant regulations concerning discharge from vessels into the sea.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.

During the drafting of legislation the Department of Transport consults widely with seafaring unions and shipping organisations, and issues explanatory merchant shipping notices when considered necessary. The shipping industry, both national and international, is generally aware of the regulations covering discharges from ships into the sea, and ships, in any event, are required to be surveyed and issued with oil pollution prevention certificates under the terms of the Marpol convention.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what evaluation he has made of the effects of the Marpol convention 73/78 on the quality of the North sea; and if he will make a statement on its effectiveness.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.

Responsibility for the control of shipping in accordance with the Marpol convention 73/78 rests with the Department of Transport.

The Department is currently evaluating the quantity of oil that is being discharged into the North sea following the entry into force of annex I of Marpol 73/78. First indications are that the quality of oil entering the North sea from ships has been drastically reduced.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how frequently airborne surveillance systems fly over the North sea to detect oil and noxious liquid spills;

(2) if Her Majesty's Government employ airborne surveillance systems, functioning independently of visibility, in detecting oil and noxious liquid spills in the North sea.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 26 November 1986, at column 283. Outside major shipping casualty spills, the use of airborne surveillance systems as all-weather, day-night, detectors of oil and other noxious liquid spills from ships is still being evaluated. This will involve 400-450 hours of research flying over the North sea and other United Kingdom coastal waters during the next nine months.

Mobile Homes Act 1983

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received concerning the workings of the Mobile Homes Act 1983; what proposed changes to the law his Department is considering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: We have received various representations about the working of the Act. We are satisfied that the Act is in general working well and we have no plans to amend it. However, problems have arisen for some residents over its operation. Officials are discussing with representatives of residents and site owners ways in which the Act can be made to work better, and I believe that some positive proposals are emerging from these discussions. In addition, the local authority associations are being consulted about the effectiveness of local authority powers in respect of mobile homes sites.

Rents

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the average level *(a)* of local authority rents and *(b)* of fair rents registered for unfurnished lettings in England in each of the years from 1979 to 1986, indicating the percentage increase in each on an annual and cumulative basis; and how these increases compare with the movement of the retail price index over that same period.

Mr. Tracey: The figures on local authority rents, the average rents registered by rent officers and the movements in the retail prices index, are as follows:

	Average weekly rents[1] England				*Retail prices index United Kingdom April*	
	LA (unrebated) April			*Fair rents Unfurnished tenancies[2] 1st half year*		
	£	*per cent. increase over year*	*since 1979*	*£*	*per cent. increase over year*	*since 1979*
1979	6·41			[3]9·00		
1980	7·70	20	20	[3]10·40	22	22
1981	11·42	48	78	11·80	12	36
1982	13·48	18	110	13·85	9	49
1983	13·97	4	118	14·15	4	55
1984	14·66	5	129	16·65	5	63
1985	15·54	6	142	16·85	7	75
1986	16·36	5	155	19·75	3	80

[1] service charges, if any, are included in fair rents, but not in local authority rents
[2] registered rents for private regulated tenancies only
[3] England and Wales

The mix of properties for which rents are registered varies from year to year for a number of reasons: for example, extension of decontrol in 1981; the reduction from three to two years in the minimum period for re-registration which led to re-registrations in 1983 of rents previously registered in 1980 and 1981. Therefore, comparisons of averages for consecutive years do not properly reflect rent movements. Better estimates of rent movements are derived from previous and new registered rents for tenancies where there has been no material change in terms or in the physical condition. For properties with rents fixed in the first halves of 1979, 1982, 1984 and 1986, the estimated increases are:

	per cent. increase in period	*annualised per cent. increase*
1979-82	50	14
1982-84	21	10
1984-86	17	8

Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in respect of the statistics kept and published by his Department, he will publish in the *Official Report* any changes since 1979 in *(a)* the statistical series which are published, including those which have been introduced and those which have been dropped, *(b)* the basis on which any elements in the statistics are estimated, calculated or presented, *(c)* the periods over which, and the dates on which the series are collected or published and *(d)* any other respects in the ways in which the statistics are collected, recorded presented, evaluated or published; and if he will explain the reasons for any such changes.

Mr. Ridley: The following are the major statistical series and surveys which have been introduced or dropped by my Department since 1979.

Series introduced since 1979
Enterprise Zone annual monitoring statistics
Land Use change statistics
Renovation grants, applications and approvals statistics
Expansion of council house sales statistics to cover 'right to buy' purchases
Planning appeals statistics

Series dropped since 1979
Commercial and Industrial Floorspace Statistics
Private enterprise housing enquiry
Local authority salary and wage statistics
Local authority expenditure budget estimates (at November prices)
Local authority design work statistics
Subcontracted construction output statistics
EC state of trade enquiry (for construction)

Changes in the basis of compilation, presentation and publication of statistical series are made from time to time in response to the Government's requirements for statistical information, changes in the administrative systems on which some series are based, the development of new statistical techniques and technological developments affecting the compilation and dissemination of statistical data. When such changes are made they are fully documented in the relevant statistical publications.

Home Improvements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking to promote home improvements and repairs in Leicester; and how much money is estimated to be spent during 1987-88 on these purposes.

Mr. Tracey: The Department promotes rehabilitation in Leicester by contributions to improvement grants and enveloping schemes, by housing association grant and through the expertise of the estate action unit. My right hon. Friend also hopes to contribute to the cost of a care and repair agency. It is largely for the city to determine how much will be spent, once it has received its housing investment programme allocation.

Home Security

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking to promote improvements to home security; and how much money is estimated to be spent during 1987-88 on these purposes.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer this question shortly.

Portsdown Park

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, when officers of his Department telephoned offices of Portsmouth city council on 4 March

concerning Portsdown park, they made it clear that information contained within that call should not be disclosed until after receipt of the subsequent letter.

Mr. John Patten: There was no such restriction on disclosure of the content of the telephone call.

Basildon (Exhibition)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has considered an exhibition relating to Basildon to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition on "Basildon — A Town of Opportunity" to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 8 December to Friday 12 December.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about his proposals for the rate support settlement for 1987-88.

Mr. Ridley: I have received a substantial number of representations about the consultation paper which I issued on 3 October.

As is usual at this time of year, more up-to-date information has also become available for some of the items which are used in the calculation of grant. It includes information about expenditure in 1986-87, about capital allocations for 1987-88, and about rateable values. It has the effect of reducing still further the grant entitlements of some of the authorities who were already losing most under my earlier proposals.

I have given full consideration to the representations. The situation is also changed by the new data. I have therefore decided to revise my earlier proposals. I now propose to give greater protection to those authorities which lose grant, by providing a tighter safety net of 7p at ratepayer level. I also propose to introduce a new cap on grant gains larger than 12p at ratepayer level. The full details are set out in a further consultation paper issued today.

The aggregate Exchequer grant to local authorities is unchanged from my previous proposals at £12·8 billion, so some authorities will still get less grant than in 1986-87, but my new proposals will particularly benefit those authorities which lost most grant in the previous distribution, notably Surrey, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Oxfordshire. Most other shire counties, shire districts and outer London boroughs also benefit. The limit on grant gains affects 22 authorities: however, all these authorities are still expected to receive substantially more grant in 1987-88 than in 1986-87.

Copies of the consultation paper have been sent to all local authorities and to the local authority assocations: their responses have been requested by 19 December. Copies of the paper have been placed in the Libary and in the Vote Office.

World Heritage

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any of the seven sites nominated by the Government for inclusion on the world heritage list have been accepted; and whether any further nominations are to be submitted to the World Heritage Committee.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am delighted to announce that the World Heritage Committee at its meeting in Paris last week decided that all seven of the sites nominated by the Government last year will be placed on the world heritage list from 1 January 1987. The sites are:

Durham Cathedral and Castle, Durham
Studley Royal and Fountains Abbey, North Yorkshire
The Castles and town walls of King Edward I in Gwynedd
Ironbridge Gorge, Shropshire
Stonehenge and Avebury, Wiltshire
St. Kilda, Scotland
Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland

I am delighted by this decision, which gives proper recognition to the extraordinarily rich and diverse inheritance we have in the United Kingdom, covering 3,000 years and more.

Under the world heritage convention, each participating state is entitled to nominate sites annually and we shall be putting forward a further nine sites for consideration by the World Heritage Committee in 1987 for inclusion in the 1988 list. These sites are:

St. David's Close and Bishop's Palace, Dyfed
Blenheim Palace, Oxon
The Palace of Westminster, London
Ecclesiastical Sites of Lough Erne, Northern Ireland
Bath, Avon
New Lanark, Strathclyde
Hadrian's Wall
The Lake District
St. Helena: Diana's Peak and High Peak, South Atlantic Ocean

I look forward to these sites being given similar recognition by the World Heritage Committee during next year and added to the list in 1988.

Landscape Conservation Orders

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government proposes to issue its consultation document on landscape conservation orders.

Mr. Ridley: The consultation document was issued today. It proposes that national park authorities and the Broads Authority (if Parliament approves the Norfolk and Broads Bill) should be able to make orders to prohibit certain harmful agricultural operations in the most vulnerable parts of their areas. Orders should be applied only where the authorities are convinced that operations are likely to be carried out in the immediate future. Those on whom orders were served would have a right of appeal; be eligible for compensation; and would be offered a management agreement if one had not already been refused. If such an agreement were accepted the order would be revoked. We expect these powers to be employed in only a few cases each year. They will underpin, not replace, the voluntary approach to conservation. Comments are invited by 6 March next year. A copy of the document has been placed in the Library of the House.

Local Ombudsman

Mr. Wood asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has proposals for legislation in the current session in relation to the powers of the local ombudsman.

Mr. Chope: Yes. Provisions relating to the Commissions for Local Administration in England and

Wales (the "Local Ombudsmen") will be included in the Local Government Bill. In most cases these will give effect to proposals for change made over a period of time by the commissioners themselves. These proposals were in some instances first agreed by the previous Government. A major provision will be to extend the local ombudsman's jurisdiction to certain functions of new town bodies and urban development corporations. The Government's undertaking to make this change was contained in their response to recommendations by the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (Cmnd. 9563, July 1985).

The provisions will amend part III of the Local Government Act 1974, which relates to the local ombudsmen in England and Wales, as follows:

1. The Commissions for Local Administration (CLASs) are required annually to review the powers governing their operations. An amendment will make this requirement a triennial one (section 23(12)).

2. The CLAs are required to produce a general annual report of their activities, to be published by the representative body (of local and water authorities). An amendment will require the commissions to publish their annual reports themselves (section 24(6)).

3. An amendment will extend the local ombudsman's jurisdiction to the housing functions of the Commission for new Towns and of new town development corporations; and to the town and country planning functions of urban development corporations (section 25(1)).

4. Complaints to the local ombudsman are time-limited. They must in the first instance have been made to a member of the authority complained against within a year of the alleged injustice. The local ombudsman may override this restriction if he considers there are special circumstances. An amendment will provide the ombudsman with wider discretion to accept compliants made "out of time". (section 26(4)).

5. When the local ombudsman produces a report of an investigation into an alleged injustice he must submit a copy to the authority complained against. The authority is required to make the report available for public inspection; and permit copies to be taken. An amendment will require authorities to supply copies of reports at reasonable cost to any person requesting them (section 30(4)).

6. When local authorities receive a report of an investigation as described above, they must advertise its availability for inspection within a week. This often presents practical difficulties. An amendment will extend the period for advertising to two weeks (section 30(5)).

7. Reports by the local ombudsman which find injustice as a result of maladministration must be considered by the authority concerned. If it fails to provide the remedy proposed, the ombudsman may make a further report; but the authority is not required to consider any such further report. An amendment will require that authorities should consider all reports by the local ombudsman (section 31(2)).

8. For the purposes of the law of defamation, communications between a member of an authority and the local ombudsman are absolutely privileged. An amendment will extend such privilege to officers of the authority (section 32(1)).

9. The local ombudsman may delegate to his staff any function other than that of making a report. An amendment will give the ombudsman the discretion to delegate report making. (Schedule 4, paragraph 4(5)).

Proposals for more fundamental changes in the local ombudsman's powers than those described above were included in the recent report of the Widdicombe committee on the conduct of local government business. It is, however, premature to consider legislation in relation to any of those more radical proposals. The Government have invited comments on the Widdicombe report by the end of the year, and will then consider the recommendations as a whole, consulting further as necessary. In the meantime, the items listed above, which were not subject to proposals by Widdicombe, will be implemented as recommended by the commissioners and accepted by the Government.

Home Improvement

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to make a statement on the responses received to the Green Paper "Home Improvement—A New Approach", published in May 1985, before 31 December.

Mr. Tracey [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 December 1986]: No. We are continuing to consider possible changes to the home improvement grant system in the light of the Green Paper and responses to it.

Leicester (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the recent visit to Leicester by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey).

Mr. Tracey [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 December 1986]: As part of my continuing programme of meetings with all the regional councils for sport and recreation, I visited Leicester on 1 December for a meeting of the East Midlands Regional Council for Sport and Recreation. In addition to discussions with members of the council and addressing their meeting, I visited impressive sport and recreational facilities in the city—Granby Halls, Moat community college and the Avril Lennox gymnasium.

Stocken Hall

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) has received a copy of the document sent to him by Mr. John Nickols entitled "Stocken Hall RIP", regarding the condition of a grade 2 listed building recently sold by the Property Services Agency to Endersby Developments Ltd; and whether he will order an immediate inquiry into the allegations contained in that document.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to the reply*, 28 November 1986, c. *375*]: I have seen a copy of the document written by Mr. Nickols about Stocken Hall. I understand that Endersby Developments Ltd. is in discussion with both the local planning authority and the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission about the repair and restoration of this property.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will explain the reasons whereby the Property Services Agency did not require as a condition of the contract of sale of Stocken Hall to Endersby Developments Ltd. the renovation of the building, in accordance with the original specification contained in the offer for sale document published by Messrs. Cluttons, on behalf of the Home Office; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 November 1986, c. *375*]: In order to make clear to prospective purchasers that Stocken Hall should be preserved and not demolished, the contract for sale contained a condition that the building should be renovated. That condition is, however, unenforceable.

CIVIL SERVICE

Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Minister for the Civil Service if, in respect of the statistics kept and published by his Department, he will publish in the *Official Report* any changes since 1979 in *(a)* the statistical series which are published, including those which have been introduced and those which have been dropped, *(b)* the basis on which any elements in the statistics are estimated, calculated or presented, *(c)* the periods over which, and the dates on which the series are collected or published and *(d)* any other respects in the ways in which the statistics are collected, recorded, presented, evaluated or published; and if he will explain the reasons for any such changes.

Mr. Luce: This is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. However, I understand that changes in the basis of compilation, presentation and publication of statistical series produced by the Central Statistical Office are made from time to time in response to the requirements of Government, businesses and international organisations for statistical information. Other changes reflect changes in administrative systems on which some series are based, the development of new statistical techniques and technological developments affecting the compilation and dissemination of statistical data.

When such changes are made they are fully documented in the relevant statistical publications. Several thousand series are involved in this process, the principal groupings among them being as follows:

National Income

(i) Introduction of a revised Standard Industrial Classification in 1983;

(ii) Rebasing of constant price series to a new base year (1980) in 1983;

(iii) Introduction of a new "classification of the functions of government" (COFOG) which has been applied to the national account analyses of government expenditure from the 1985 Blue Book; and

(iv) Reclassification of consumers' expenditure in the 1983 Blue Book.

The bases of the above series are set out in the publication "The United Kingdom National Accounts Sources and Methods"; this was thoroughly revised, re-edited and republished in 1985 to take account of the changes which had occurred since the previous edition in 1968. Subsequent changes are notified in the CSO's annual national accounts "Blue Book".

Balance of Payments

(i) Additional series now incorporated in the balance of payments accounts include:

UK residents' deposits with banks abroad;

Gross interest payments and receipts in respect of foreign currency borrowing and lending;lending;

Services provided by contractors.

(ii) Less information is now available on trade credit following the discontinuation of the inquiry previously sent to companies about sources and uses of funds.

(iii) Following the abolition of exchange control in 1979, several series previously dependent on information from exchange control records now use information from internaioal banking organisations and new surveys.surveys.

Exact details of the changes in the contents of the balance of payments accounts, both in presentation and in the availability of particular series, are described in each issue of the annual publication "United Kingdom Balance of Payments" (The CSO "Pink Book").

Financial and Public Sector Statistics

Changes since 1979 include:

(i) The introduction of statistics of personal sector committed and discretionary saving.

(ii) The introduction of monthly estimates of the PSBR;

(iii) The first official estimates of annual balance sheets, covering financial items and also physical assets for the main economic sectors and for the country as a whole.

(iv) A number of new or rearranged tables have appeared in "Financial Statistics", in particular relating to public expenditure, showing separate financial accounts for central government, local authorities and public corporations, and analysing public corporations capital and financial accounts.

(v) Some Tables have been dropped—eg relating to Trustee Savings Bank when it became part of the monetary sector in 1981.

Notes on changes generally appear in the CSO monthly publication "Financial Statistics".

Index of Production

(i) Extension of stock adjustment from quarterly to monthly series.

(ii) Bias adjustment introduced (to early estimates only) for monthly manufacturing series in January 1986.

(iii) Construction reverted from monthly to quarterly series.

(iv) Separate identification of North Sea Oil Index of Production discontinued.

Notes on these changes appear in *Economic Trends*, except for (ii) above, which has been described in press notices and for which a detailed note is available on request.

Gross Domestic Product (Output Measure)

(i) Separate identification of North Sea Oil and non-oil production no longer published, although available on request.

(ii) A series for "total service industries" was introduced in 1986.

Productivity

Output per hour for manufacturing industry added in 1982.

Unit Wage Costs

The output measure of GDP replaced the income measure in the calculation of whole economy unit wage costs and, in addition, an adjustment was incorporated to cover the earnings of the self-employed. This change was described in the *Employment Gazette* May 1986, and in a footnote reference in *Monthly Digest* table 7.4.

Distribution of Income

The estimates of the distribution of income based jointly on the survey of personal incomes and the family expenditure survey have been reduced in frequency from annual to triennial following a recommendation of the Rayner review of the GSS.

THE ARTS

Provincial Art Galleries

Mr. Latham asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will seek to sponsor a national competition by which provincial art galleries could seek to improve their premises in order to place on display some of the paintings currently stored in the cellars of the national galleries in London; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I am anxious to encourage all museums and galleries to improve their attractiveness to the visiting public, and to encourage the national institutions to lend items from their collections for exhibition in other museums and galleries. I am discussing with the Museums

and Galleries Commission the scope for introducing a scheme to support touring exhibitions including those which involve the loan of items from national collections.

The Government's indemnity scheme already exists to facilitate the loan of items between the national and provincial museums and galleries. In addition to this, the Museums and Galleries Commission and the area museum councils operate schemes which assist non-national museums and galleries to improve their displays and premises.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation (Personal Allowances)

Mr. Fallon asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the revenue cost in 1987-88 and in a full year of raising all the main personal allowances by 5 per cent., 10 per cent., 15 per cent. and 20 per cent. more than indexation; and how many single, married and aged tax units would be taken out of tax by these increases.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The estimates in the table show the cost of the proposals, and the effect on the numbers of taxpayers, in 1987-88 compared with indexation of 1986-87 allowances by the illustrative increase of 3·25 per cent. in the 1986 autumn statement.

thousands

Increase in allowances	*Cost in 1987-88*	*Cost in a full year at 1987-88 income levels*	*Reduction in tax units*				
			under 65		*over 65*		*Total*
Per cent.	*£ million*	*£ million*	*Single*	*Married*	*Single*	*Married*	
5	875	1,100	190	70	70	80	410
10	1,725	2,150	320	140	120	170	750
15	2,600	3,200	480	210	190	220	1,100
20	3,400	4,300	620	280	250	280	1,430

Taxation Revenue

Mr. Wheeler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has of the revenue accruing in the current financial year as a result of the 60 per cent. top rate of income tax; and what estimate he has made of the comparable yield from a 50 per cent. top rate.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The tax liability in 1986-87 accruing from the top rate of income tax of 60 per cent. is about £1·6 billion. If this rate and the 55 per cent. rate were reduced to 50 per cent., the ex ante direct revenue cost in a full year at 1986-87 income levels would be about £350 million. This estimate makes no allowance for any behavioural effects.

P11D Notification

Mr. Speller asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will raise the level of P11D notification relating to benefits in kind to £12,000 per annum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have no plans to raise the P11D threshold.

Privatisation

Mr. Jackson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the companies in which the Government retained, at the time of first privatisation, a golden share with special voting rights, indicating in each case the period of applicability of such special rights and whether such rights have subsequently been varied; and if he will place in the Library particulars of the terms and conditions of issue of each such golden share, details of the special rights and of any subsequent changes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government retained, at the time of privatisation, special shares with special voting rights in Amersham International, Britoil and Enterprise Oil. The voting rights have not been subsequently amended. Unless they are amended, the voting rights will continue unless and until the special shares themselves are redeemed. Particulars of the terms of the special shares can be found in the Library, where they were placed following the question tabled by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), on 26 July 1985, c. 843-44.

Mr. Jackson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the companies into which the Government at the time of first privatisation, introduced provisions restricting the proportion of the capital that may be acquired by a single shareholder, or category of shareholders indicating in each case the form that such restrictions took; what information he has as to whether such restrictions have been invoked or applied in practice; and if he will place in the Library details of the provisions setting out the restrictions in each case and for invoking or applying them.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The companies into which these restrictions were introduced by the Government at privatisation are Amersham International, Britoil, Enterprise Oil, Jaguar, British Telecom, VSEL and British Gas. To my knowledge, none of the restrictions has been invoked or applied in practice. Details are contained in the article of association for each of the companies concerned. Relevant extracts from the articles of the first five of these companies have already been placed in the Library, in response to the question tabled by the hon. Member for Sedgfield (Mr. Blair) on 26 July 1985, at columns 842-43. I am arranging for copies of the relevant sections of the articles of association for VSEL and British Gas to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Taxation

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding the credit intervals tolerated by the collecting departments of the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My hon. Friend has recently written to me on behalf of a constituent, and I hope to let him have a reply shortly.

EC Budget

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about Britain's contributions in 1986-87 to the European Economic Community budget.

Mr. Brooke: Our net contribution to the Community budget is the main element in our net payments to Community institutions, which are now estimated to be £1,090 million in 1986-87. This is £440 million above the figure published in the last public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702). The reasons for this were set out in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 18 November, at column *178*.

Unemployment

Mr. Boyes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost to his Department of the present level of unemployment in the northern region.

Mr. MacGregor: No figures are kept dividing benefit expenditure on the unemployed by regions. For the overall cost to the Exchequer of unemployment and supplementary benefit paid to the unemployed, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 6 November, at columns 516-17.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he intends to announce any change in the scope and application of value added tax in respect of works of art purchased or imported from abroad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I can assure my hon. Friend that no change is imminent.

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the annual value of zero rated transactions in the United Kingdom on those goods and services which are the subject of infraction proceedings before the European Court on the issue of whether or not they should be subjected to value added tax.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 December 1986, c. *467*]: I assume that the hon. Member is interested in expenditure giving rise to payment of VAT by a person or business unable to deduct it as input tax. On this basis annual expenditure on the goods and services in question is estimated to be of the order of £7 billion.

Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, in respect of the statistics kept and published by his Deparment, he will publish in the *Official Report* any changes since 1979 in *(a)* the statistical series which are published, including those which have been introduced and those which have been dropped, *(b)* the basis on which any elements in the statistics are estimated, calculated or presented, *(c)* the periods over which, and the dates on which the series are collected or published and *(d)* any other respects in the ways in which the statistics are collected, recorded, presented, evaluated, or published; and if he will explain the reasons for any such changes.

Mr. MacGregor: There are two major blocks of statistics which the Treasury publishes, public expenditure statistics and Civil Service manpower statistics.

The key document containing and describing the public expenditure statistics is the annual public expenditure White Paper, though figures are also given in the Autumn Statement, the summary and guide to the Supply Estimates, the Estimates booklets, the Appropriation Accounts and the Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Civil Service manpower statistics are published annually by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in "Civil Service Statistics".

Changes in the basis of compilation, presentation and publication of statistical series are made from time to time in response to requests from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee, the Government's requirements for statistical information, changes in the administrative systems on which some series are based, the development of new statistical techniques and technological developments affecting the compilation and dissemination of statistical data.

When such changes are made they are fully documented in the relevant statistical publications or in special articles such as those in *Economic Trends* in November 1983 and August 1985.

Family Incomes

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many families with children had incomes below the tax threshold; and how many of these were in working families at the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 November 1986, c. *82*]: Information on weekly income in the 1984 family expenditure survey suggests that about 1¼ million families with children in the United Kingdom had incomes after personal allowances and mortgage interest relief below the tax threshold. One or both parents were in full time work or self-employed in about a quarter of a million of these families.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Community Care

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the care in the community of former psychiatric and mentally handicapped patients.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) on 27 November at columns *360-62*.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, based on the current average levels of rents and rates in Great Britain, what are the current income levels at which housing benefit would cease to be payable for *(a)* single pensioners, *(b)* pensioner couples, *(c)* one-child family with one earner and *(d)* two-child family with one earner; and what are the current average earnings in each case.

Mr. Lyell: The information requested is shown in the table.

	Gross income level at which housing benefit no longer payable at November 1986 £	*Average Earnings (1984)* £
Single Pensioner	77·45	—
Pensioner Couple	100·20	—
Couple with one child and with one earner	134·66	177
Couple with two children and with one earner	151·85	201

Notes:

1. The following average rent and rate figures have been used

	Rent £	*Rates* £
Household without children	14·60	6·05
Household with one child	16·25	6·75
Household with two children	17·50	7·25

2. The minimum payment rule of 50p is taken into account.
3. Pensioners are assumed not to be in employment.
4. Average earnings are gross earnings and include employed and self-employed people. They relate to 1984, the latest date for which figures are available broken down by family group and are derived from the Family Expenditure Survey.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate the number of pensioners in Scotland who will lose housing benefit as a result of changes announced in October, indicating how many will be *(a)* up to £1 a week worse off, *(b)* between £2-3 per week worse off and *(c)* more than £4 per week worse off;

(2) if he will estimate the average loss to pensioners in Scotland as a result of the changes announced in housing benefit in October;

(3) if he will estimate how many pensioners in Scotland will lose housing benefit completely as a result of the changes announced in October;

(4) if he will estimate how many pensioners in Scotland will lose as a result of changes announced in October *(a)* some housing benefit and *(b)* all housing benefit; and of these how many of them in each case are (i) local authority tenants and (ii) private tenants.

Mr. Lyell: I regret that breakdowns of the estimates of the effects of increases in the housing benefit needs allowances, and the proposed increases in the housing benefit rent taper above the needs allowance, are not available separately for Scottish households.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish a table showing the total number and percentage of home owners in Great Britain receiving rate rebates, including former supplementary benefit payments towards rates, in each of the years from 1979 to 1986, the total cost of such payments and the average payment per recipient;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the total number and percentage of all *(a)* local authority tenants and *(b)* private tenants in Great Britain receiving means tested housing assistance, including housing benefit, rent rebates, rent allowance and supplementary benefit, in each of the years from 1979 to 1986, the total cost of such payments and the average payment per recipient.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Environmental Health Officers

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the cost of meeting the demands of environmental health officers following the removal of Crown immunity from hospital buildings, with regard to catering and health and safety; and what extra funds over what period he will provide to health authorities to meet this cost.

Mr. Newton: Central guidance has, for a number of years, indicated that health authorities are expected to establish working practices as if they were not immune from legal penalty. Complying with the requirements of sections 1 and 2 of the National Health Service (Amendment) Act 1986 should not therefore impose any new burdens on health authorities and we have no plans to allocate additional resources for these purposes.

Claims

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state, for each office of his Department covering the constituency of Leyton, the number of outstanding claims, broken-down into *(a)* single payment claims and *(b)* other claims, and the current average time for settlement of these, and the time involved in the current longest dozen outstanding claims for each office.

Mr. Lyell: Two of the Department's local offices serve the Leyton constituency, Leytonstone and Walthamstow, but their boundaries are not co-terminous. Some of the information requested is not available; the table sets out the figures which are:

	Leytonstone	*Walthamstow*
Single payments outstanding on 25 November	84	979
Other supplementary benefit claims outstanding on 25 November	94	334
Average clearance times for supplementary benefit claims, other than single payments, during the 4 weeks up to 18 November	3 days	10 days

Local offices do not routinely keep records of clearance times for single payments. Nor do they normally maintain records of the receipt of claims in date order.

However, in the case of these offices there is information available about claims which have been outstanding longest. These were as follows on the dates given:

Leytonstone

Other claims	*Single payments*
17 October 1986	2 June 1986
22 October 1986	9 September 1986
27 October 1986	29 October 1986
27 October 1986	6 November 1986
29 October 1986	10 November 1986
30 October 1986	11 November 1986
3 November 1986	11 November 1986
3 November 1986	11 November 1986
5 November 1986	13 November 1986
5 November 1986	18 November 1986
5 November 1986	18 November 1986
5 November 1985	20 November 1986

Walthamstow

Other claims	*Single payments*
24 September 1986	3 October 1986
25 September 1986	3 October 1986
13 October 1986	5 October 1986
17 October 1986	20 October 1986
21 October 1986	20 October 1986
23 October 1986	27 October 1986
27 October 1986	3 November 1986
27 October 1986	5 November 1986
27 October 1986	5 November 1986
7 November 1986	10 November 1986
7 November 1986	10 November 1986
10 November 1986	10 November 1986

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update to 1986 table 34.89 of the social security statistics for 1985.

Mr. Lyell: I refer the hon. Member to table 12.23 in the 1984 "Supplementary Benefit Annual Statistical Enquiry Tables" a copy of which is in the Library.

Amrinone

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will hold an immediate inquiry into the pharmaceutical firm Sterling-Winthrop in respect of its activities relating to the medical drug Amrinone;

(2) if he will publish the evidence received in the course of his inquiries into the activities of the pharmaceutical company Sterling-Winthrop regarding its activities with the medical drug Amrinone; and if he will make a statement;

(3) on how many occasions Dr. Wilmshurst requested his Department to investigate the pharmaceutical company Sterling-Winthrop under the Medicines Act 1968, for its actions on Amrinone; what replies he sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tony Newton: Dr. Wilmshurst requested an investigation of Sterling-Winthrop for its actions on Amrinone on three occasions, January 1983, October 1984 and February 1985, and communicated with the Department on detailed points at various other times. The Department mounted two full investigations one in 1983 and one in 1985 to determine whether Sterling-Winthrop Group Ltd was in breach of the Medicines Act 1968 and its subordinate legislation, or of any other provisions of the criminal law.

The Department took legal advice on the reports of these investigations but was advised that there was insufficient evidence to undertake a criminal prosecution. It was however clear that there had been confusion and misunderstanding between the company and the doctors at St. Thomas' about the basis of the clinical trials at the hospital. The company was given strict instructions regarding the improvements of these procedures in such trials, including the need for adequate communication with medical investigators, involved in a clinical trial, to ensure that they understand fully the situation. The company has undertaken to comply fully in future with all legal requirements.

Dr. Wilmshurst was advised in general terms of the outcome of both investigations, in October 1984 and in August 1985 respectively. Dr. Wilmshurst wrote again to my right hon. Friend on 30 August 1985 seeking a further investigation into his allegations. The text of the reply dated 4 November 1985 is as follows. A further letter from Dr. Wilmshurst dated 4 November 1986 has been received and is being studied.

It is not correct to suggest, as some have done, that the Department is unable to act against any pharmaceutical company which threatened doctors or acted fraudulently.

Where the evidence justifies it, we would not hesitate to use all available powers either under the Medicines Act or the general criminal law.

Dear Dr. Wilmshurst,

Norman Fowler has passed me your letter to him of 30 August and asked me to look into the matters you raised. You wrote about the activities of Sterling Winthrop Group Ltd. in relation to clinical trials, with specific reference to clinical trials of oral amrinone, and asked that the earlier investigations into Sterling Winthrop's behaviour be reopened.

In the light of your letter, Ministers initiated a thorough review of the whole matter. On the basis of that review I must advise you now at the outset, that I am satisfied that there is no basis for me to take the matter further.

I am advised that following your earlier complaints in January 1983 and the subsequent ones in October 1984 and February 1985, the Department mounted two full investigations to determine whether Sterling Winthrop Group Ltd, were in breach of the Medicines Act 1968 and its subordinate legislation, or of any other provisions of the criminal law. Medical researchers at all centres involved in the clinical trials of amrinone were seen by an experienced investigating officer who was accompanied, when necessary, by a doctor from the Department. A different investigating officer was used for each investigation and, among others, they saw both you and Dr. Webb-Peploe — who was the person who had dealt most directly with Sterling Winthrop — about the matter you raised.

The reports of these investigations were carefully studied by the Department. These reports, like those of prosecuting authorities in general, must remain confidential. But the clear conclusion reached was that the evidence available was not such as to enable the Department to undertake a criminal prosecution. The Department was, however, concerned about the lack of understanding by all participants in these cases about the responsibilities of those involved with clinical trials. The Department's Medicines Division has recently brought to the attention of all licence holders the need to ensure that all relevant evidence is submitted, and is considering whether any further action is needed.

I can assure you that the Department always conducts vigorous investigations into matters of this nature and is concerned to improve the understanding and effectiveness of the Medicines Act whenever there appears a need to do so.

Sincerely,

Ray Whitney

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what adverse reactions from the medical drug

Amrinone were reported to his Department; and if he will investigate the interpretation of the data provided by Sterling-Winthrop;

(2) what requests his Department received about a clinical trials certificate with oral Amrinone; what reply was sent; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what trials have been conducted in National Health Service hospitals with the medical drug Amrinone; how many patients suffered serious side effects; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what requests were made to his Department about licensing the medical drug Amrinone: what replies he sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Separate applications for product licences for Amrinone capsules and Amrinone injection from Sterling Winthrop were withdrawn by the company in, respectively, January 1984 and September 1985 before final decisions on them by the licensing authority. An application for an exemption from a clinical trail certificate for a clinical study of Amrinone capsules by one named doctor was approved by the licensing authority in November 1981; approval for further studies using the original protocol was given for two more named doctors in, respectively, December 1981 and January 1982. Two further applications for studies of Amrinone capsules by named doctors using new protocols were approved in, respectively, November 1981 and July 1982.

All the above clinical trial exemptions were terminated in August 1982 when other similar applications from the Company, received in July 1982, were also refused. In September 1982, Sterling Winthrop applied for clinical trials certificates for studies of Amrinone capsules by various doctors, but the company withdrew these applications in January 1984 before the licensing authority had reached final decisions on them.

A clinical trials certificate for studies of Amrinone injection at St. Thomas' hospital was issued in January 1980 but no application for a certificate or exemption to cover studies of Amrinone capsules at St. Thomas' was received by the licensing authority. Clinical trials of Amrinone injection were conducted at St. Thomas' and some patients received Amrinone capsules.

Clinical trials of Amrinone for which certificates or exemption were granted by the licensing authority were also conducted at Kings College hospital (capsules) and Freeman road hospital Newcastle-upon-Tyne (capsules and injection). Clinical trials involving Amrinone were also conducted by doctors on a named-patient basis at Hillingdon hospital (capsules and injection) and Leeds general infirmary (injection). Both the doctors at St. Thomas' hospital and Sterling Winthrop made procedural errors and there was a breakdown of trust between the two parties. However it is clear that the procedural irregularities did not expose these severely ill patients to additional risks.

A further examination of the interpretation of the data provided by Sterling Winthrop is not appropriate at present as a thorough examination was carried out of all the adverse reaction data when the product licence application was assessed in the Department and by the Committee on Safety of Medicines. A product licence has never been issued for Amrinone; nor is an application for such a licence currently with the Department. Under these circumstances, I do not consider any further investigation is warranted.

Sterling Winthrop has waived its right in this regard to commercial confidentiality of relevant information held by the Department on clinical investigations of Amrinone sponsored by the company.

Embryo Experiments

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his reply of 25 November, *Official Report*, columns *189-90*, about legislation to deal with the issues raised by the Warnock report he will, in the interim, implement a moratorium on experiments upon the human embryo.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so. I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on 2 December.

Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in respect of the statistics kept and published by his Department, he will publish in the *Official Report* any changes since 1979 in *(a)* the statistical series which are published, including those which have been introduced and those which have been dropped, *(b)* the basis on which any elements in the statistics are estimated, calculated or presented, *(c)* the periods over which, and the dates on which the series are collected or published and *(d)* any other respects in the ways in which the statistics are collected, recorded, presented. evaluated, or published; and if he will explain the reasons for any such changes.

Mrs. Currie: The Department keeps the content of statistical returns under continuous review and always seeks to end the collection of statistics no longer necessary. I shall let the hon. Member have a fuller reply as soon as possible.

Regional Medical Services

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what are the latest available figures for the number of references of claims for invalidity benefit and sickness benefit to the regional medical services; how many of these cases resulted in examinations; and what were the outcomes (i) where examinations took place and (ii) where they did not;

(2) what are the latest available figures for the number of references of claims for severe disablement allowance to the regional medical services; and how many of these cases resulted in examinations and what were the outcomes *(a)* where examinations took place and *(b)* where they did not.

Mr. Lyell: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. The latest available information relates to all claims referred to the regional medical services, including claims for invalidity benefit, sickness benefit and severe disablement allowance in the year to 31 December 1985, and is set out in the following table:

	England and Wales	*Scotland*	*Great Britain*
(i) Number of cases examined	248,382	40,413	288,795
Made up as follows:			
Found not incapable of work	36,696	7,365	44,061
Found incapable of work	179,677	28,701	208,378

	England and Wales	Scotland	Great Britain
Found incapable of normal occupation but capable of alternative work	32,009	4,347	36,656
(ii) Deemed incapable without examination	284,457	71,047	355,504
(iii) Did not attend	62,769	8,958	71,727
Total[1]	595,608	120,418	716,026

[1] ie all cases referred.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements are made for female claimants for invalidity or sickness benefit who wish to be examined by a female doctor.

Mr. Lyell: When women claimants to sickness benefit who are referred to the regional medical service express a wish to be examined by a female doctor then arrangements are made to meet their wishes. Because there are relatively few women doctors available to do this work there may be occasions when the claimant has to travel a greater distance than would normally be the case in order to achieve this. There may exceptionally have been instances where it has not been possible to meet the claimants' requests.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest figures for the number of regional medical officers employed by the regional medical services; and what is the age and sex breakdown of these officers.

Mr. Lyell: The Department's regional medical service employs thirty three full-time and one part-time regional medical officers. Only the part-time officer is female. Their ages range from 41 to 64 years (mean average 55·27 years).

In addition, medical examinations of claimants are conducted by part-time medical referees who are offered this work on a sessional basis. The regional medical service currently has available 248 part-time medical referees, 18 of whom are female. Their ages range from 37 to 75 years (mean average 62·88 years).

Invalidity Benefit (Medical Reports)

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average length of time taken for an examination of an invalidity benefit claimant by a regional medical officer in cases where the claimant is found *(a)* incapable of work, *(b)* incapable of normal occupation but capable of suitable alternative work and *(c)* not capable of work; what is the average length of time in each of these categories for completion of the medical examination; and what is the average length of time in each of these categories for completing the medical report.

Mr. Lyell: The last full year for which figures are available show that the Department's regional medical service held 33,335 sessions at which claimants to invalidity benefit were medically examined. A total of 206,824 claimants were examined at these sessions—an average of 6·2 claimants per session. A period of two and a half hours is allowed for each session but arrangements are flexible and this time is exceeded if necessary. This means that in the year in question, approximately 24 minutes were available to examine and report on each case. Figures for the amount of time spent on examination and completing reports are not kept separately. The time spent on individual cases will vary depending on their complexity. The time spent on cases classified by their outcome is not available.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for invalid care allowance have been made by *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married or cohabiting women in each month of 1986; for each group, how many decisions have been taken, and how many claimants have been successful; and what is the breakdown of the reasons for disallowance in the unsuccessful cases.

Mr. Major: The information to 21 November, the latest date for which information is available, is given in the following tables. I regret that it is not possible to provide separate figures for men and single women.

Table 1: Claims

Month	Men and single women	Married or cohabiting women
January 1986	774	1,367
February	855	1,272
March	755	1,132
April	681	1,013
May	782	3,463
June	738	3,200
July	1,735	7,925
August	1,561	7,904
September	5,522	29,257
October	4,037	15,135
November	2,752	6,996

Table 2: Decisions[1]

Month	Men and single women	Married or cohabiting women
January 1986	646	110
February	636	88
March	637	115
April	702	87
May	982	100
June	766	129
July	568	49
August	1,340	347
September	1,261	2,624
October	2,856	6,606
November	1,739	8,232

[1] Includes claims withdrawn by claimant and claims returned to claimant.

Table 3: Awards

Month	Men and single women	Married and cohabiting women
January 1986	401	0
February	333	0
March	369	0
April	461	0
May	623	0
June	464	0
July	381	0
August	984	113
September	603	1,708
October	1,328	5,133
November	1,066	6,367

Table 4 Reasons for disallowance

Reason for disallowance	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November
A. Men and single women											
Claimant caring less than 35 hours per week	2	1	1	5	9	2	3	0	1	3	6
Invalid person not severely disabled	89	141	103	85	125	123	66	168	118	193	135
ICA already in payment	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	3	2	3	0
Rival claim to ICA	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Claimant over 60/65 — no prior entitlement	17	12	18	9	19	7	17	47	66	474	147
Claimant under age 16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Claimant in full time education	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	2
Claimant married woman	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Claimant separated but maintained by ex-husband	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Claimant cohabiting with a man	0	0	0	1	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
Claimant gainfully employed	20	12	14	12	18	11	7	3	11	10	18
Death of invalid	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	22	2	1
Claimant not ordinarily resident in United Kingdom	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	2	0
Presence test not satisfied	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Entitled on return from abroad	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
Full overlapping personal benefit	53	66	80	77	102	81	66	89	52	152	143
Overlapping personal benefit reduced rate ICA payable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Full overlapping personal and dependents benefit	2	1	1	11	1	1	0	6	1	3	4
Overlapping adult dependent benefit reduced rate ICA payable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
B. Married or cohabiting women											
Claimant caring less than 35 hours per week	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Invalid person not severely disabled	37	22	42	28	34	62	20	126	241	407	230
ICA already in payment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	8
ICA already in payment in respect of another disabled person	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Claimant over 60/65 — no prior entitlement	32	35	30	24	44	56	22	98	213	405	1,295
Claimant gainfully employed	13	9	13	12	11	4	2	1	0	16	23
Death of invalid	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Full overlapping personal benefit	14	15	22	10	7	3	0	0	0	6	35

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* married or *(b)* co-habiting women have been awarded backdated invalid care allowance since the Government's decision to extend invalid care allowance to this group of people; and how much has been paid to each group.

Mr. Major: Up to 28 November, the latest date for which information is available, 13,500 married and co-habiting women had been awarded and paid invalid care allowance. No distinction is made in records between married and co-habiting women. Up to 28 November, the total amount of invalid care allowance paid to all beneficiaries since awards to married women began was £27·5 million. This sum includes arrears and current payments made to both men and women as a result of awards made in this period. I regret that it is not possible to distinguish payments of arrears to married and co-habiting women from the total figure.

Resettlement Units

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what organisations were consulted about membership of the new advisory steering group for the replacement of resettlement units as a result of his letter of 13 June; from the organisations which supported option two, how many suggested that at least 50 per cent. should be representatives from review teams and how many recommended that at least 50 per cent. should be from central organisations; how many of those responding suggested representatives from central organisations additional to those suggested in the consultation letter; and how many organisations recommended limiting the representation on the advisory steering group to one delegate for the six review teams covering the South of England.

Mr. Lyell: We consulted all major interests, including local authorities and the review teams. My main concern is to ensure that the advisory group makes best possible use of the expertise available. The bodies whom we consulted share this concern: one review team suggested

that 50 per cent. of the group should come from review teams, and six bodies suggested additional members from central organisations. None of the other views mentioned by the hon. Lady figured in the responses.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people will be affected by the Government's decision to abolish the middle rate of statutory sick pay from April 1987, and the decision to uprate the top rate of statutory sick pay by 10 per cent.; and what is the current real value of each rate of statutory sick pay compared with its real value before the last uprating.

Mr. Lyell: It is estimated that in a full year about 400,000 payments will be affected by the decision to merge the middle and lower rates of statutory sick pay (SSP). An estimated 4·8 million payments will be made at the standard rate.

As previous SSP rates have been uprated in line with the movement in the retail prices index since the previous increase, the current real value of each rate of SSP is the same as its real value before the last uprating, which took effect last April.

Mr. Stephen Vail (Appeal)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be making his decision on the appeal of Mr. Stephen Vail of 14 Livingstone road, Southsea, Hampshire, against the rejection of his complaint by the Hampshire family practitioners committee, case No. DS148.

Mrs. Currie: The Secretary of State has received the report of the oral hearing to Mr. Vail's appeal and expects to be able to issue his decision early in the new year.

Hearing Therapists

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total amount spent by his Department on posts of hearing therapists during the operation of the central funding scheme; if he is monitoring the number of posts now paid for by health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Allocations of revenue from central funds to the hearing therapist scheme are as follows:

	Non recurring, to cover costs during training (£ 000s)[1]	*Recurring*[2] *(£ 000s)*[1]
1978-79	25	Nil
1979-80	68	32
1980-81	81	88
1981-82	80	108
1982-83	110	104
1983-84	99	130
1984-85	124	112
1985-86	Nil	154

[1] At cost

[2] Each year's allocation has been built recurrently into Regional Health Authorities' cash limits.

It is for health authorities to decide on the number of posts that they wish to establish, and these are not formally monitored by the Department. We continue however to keep in close touch with the National Health Service training authority and the British Society of Hearing Therapists about the development of hearing therapy within the National Health Service.

Benefits

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the latest take-up estimates for supplementary benefit and one-parent benefit.

Mr. Major: The latest estimates by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys of the number of one parent families in Great Britain for each year from 1979 to 1984, suggest that the take-up rate of one parent benefit over that period is as follows:

	Per cent.
1979	70
1980	77
1981	78
1982	83
1983	89
1984	93

Notes:

(1) The take-up rate is of those families who stand to gain. Not all families can gain because one parent benefit is taken into account as income for supplementary benefit purposes.

(2) The increase in child benefit (one parent benefit) for a single parent family was introduced in 1977.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 4 December 1986

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Development Policy

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any proposals for reform of the Government's regional development policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My Department is carrying out a review of certain administrative aspects of our regional industrial policy in order to ensure that the schemes operate with the maximum effect and economy. Given the long time-span of private sector investment decision, it would be premature to launch into a fundamental review of the policy so soon after the last review was implemented.

Credit

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received about the availability of credit facilities to young people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: In the last year I have received some 22 letters expressing concern about consumer over-indebtedness, of which roughly one third have expressed particular concern about the availability of credit facilities to young people. I shall continue to keep the situation under review, but I do not believe it would be right to impose restrictions on the availability of credit to young people. However, the Consumer Credit Act imposes restrictions on the sending of circulars about credit to minors as well as providing a number of other valuable safeguards for all consumers entering into credit agreements.

Cigarettes

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the level of imports of cheap high-tar cigarettes into the United Kingdom in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the countries who have exported cheap high-tar cigarettes into the United Kingdom over the past three years; and what was the level of each country's exports.

Mr. Alan Clark: Available information is limited to total cigarette imports, as tar levels are not separately identified in the OTS. Major exporters of cigarettes to the United Kingdom for the past three years are as follows:

United Kingdom Imports of Cigarettes

	£ millions		
	1983	*1984*	*1985*
West Germany	7·3	28·9	46·1
Netherlands	18·0	9·4	11·3
Republic of Ireland	1·3	4·0	6·0
United States of America	1·4	4·2	5·5
Belgium	0·5	1·7	4·7
Others	2·4	3·2	2·9
Total	30·9	51·4	76·5

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom SITC. 122.2

Japanese Imports (Duty)

Mr. Rippon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will consider charging a duty on all Japanese imports equivalent to the duty they charge on Scotch whisky; what estimate he has made of the resulting revenue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: No. The European Community has launched a GATT article XXIII case against Japan on the discriminatory tax and duty treatment of imported alcoholic drinks. We are looking to the Japanese Government for urgent remedial action. If this is not forthcoming I shall press the Community to consider urgently how to pursue further its GATT rights.

Origin Marking

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he proposes to seek to introduce any changes regarding country of origin requirements in the labelling of manufactured goods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave on 1 December, at columns 434-35, to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

South Africa

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing the value of exports to and imports from the Republic of South Africa in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and what steps he is taking to increase the level of exports to South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: The figures requested are as follows:

United Kingdom Trade with Republic of South Africa

	£ million	
	Imports	*Exports*
1985	989·8	1,009·2
1 October 1985 to 30 September 1986	848·8	838·6

South Africa remains a major export market and my Department will continue to draw United Kingdom exporters' attention to the considerable opportunities which still exist there.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many trade missions have travelled to South Africa to promote exports in each of the most recent three years for which figures are available; and what missions are planned for 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: Our records list those trade missions which received BOTB financial support. The numbers of such missions visiting South Africa in the last three complete financial years were as follows:

	Missions
1983-84	16
1984-85	12
1985-86	11

In line with the agreement reached by Commonwealth Heads of Government at Nassau in October 1985, Government funding for trade missions visiting South Africa is no longer available. Accordingly, the BOTB has funded no trade missions to South Africa in 1986 and has no plans to do so in 1987. In other respects, the normal range of officials assistance to exporters continues to be available to British business men who visit South Africa at their own expense, either individually or as a group.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate he has made of the number of British jobs which are related to trade with South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: On the latest, but as yet incomplete, data for 1985, our best estimate is that about 90,000 full-time job equivalents may be involved in the export of goods and services to South Africa. This is a broad estimate based on the aggregate level of trade with that country, together with an assumption about the relationship between output and employment.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the restructuring of Sheffield Forgemasters.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government have agreed to give a guarantee for £10 million to the bankers of Sheffield Forgemasters, subject to formal approval of the arrangements by the company's shareholders and loan stock holders. The guarantee is given in respect of additional facilities which the banks will make available to the company, and is provided under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 for an initial sum of £10 million, reducing in stages and expiring on 30 September 1988.

The decision to give the guarantee, first sought by the company last year, follows a re-appraisal of the company's financial prospects carried out by the Department earlier this year after the industrial dispute at the company's works last winter had been settled.

I am pleased that agreement on this guarantee has now been reached with the company and its bankers, which should help the company to complete its restructuring programme. This should in turn help the company's return to profitability, which is the only way of securing job prospects for those who work at Sheffield Forgemasters.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Statistics

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of foreign nationals at present serving sentences in Her Majesty's prisons.

Mr. Mellor: The estimated sentenced population of foreign nationality, other than citizens of Commonwealth countries, Pakistan and the Republic of Ireland, in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales was about 700 on 31 August 1986. The recording of nationality for citizens of Commonwealth countries, Pakistan and the Republic of Ireland is not sufficiently reliable for estimates of their numbers to be given.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of prison adjudications for each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: Statistics of the number of offences punished in each of the last 11 years are published annually in "Prison statistics England and Wales" (table 9.1) of the latest issue for 1985, (Cmnd. 9903). More than one charge may be dealt with at the same adjudication and the numbers of adjudications are not recorded centrally.

Boards of Visitors

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to appoint legally qualified clerks to the board of visitors serving in Her Majesty's prisons.

Mr. Mellor: There are no such plans. The White Paper on the "Prison Disciplinary System in England and Wales", published on 23 October (Cmnd. 9920), proposes the creation of new local panels of lay adjudicators forming a single prison disciplinary tribunal. Our intention is that these panels should have access where necessary to legal and procedural advice; the necessary arrangements will be the subject of discussions with interested organisations.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Ground asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many cases were awaiting resolution by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at the end of each month since September 1981;

(2) how many cases were resolved by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board during each month since September 1981;

(3) how many staff were employed by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at the end of each month since September 1981.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the table:

Month	*Cases awaiting resolution at the end of each month*	*Cases resolved during each month*	*Staff in post (part-time staff being each counted as one half)*
September 1981	26,500	2,287	154
October 1981	27,000	1,798	153
November 1981	27,400	1,896	160

Month	Cases awaiting resolution at the end of each month	Cases resolved during each month	Staff in post (part-time staff being each counted as one half)
December 1981	27,300	1,729	161
January 1982	27,800	1,590	165
February 1982	28,300	1,877	165
March 1982	28,700	2,314	163
April 1982	29,000	2,061	161
May 1982	29,300	1,819	162
June 1982	30,100	1,761	160
July 1982	29,900	2,534	162
August 1982	30,500	1,654	163
September 1982	30,900	2,042	163
October 1982	30,400	2,851	165
November 1982	31,000	1,887	165
December 1982	30,700	2,350	163
January 1983	31,000	2,568	160
February 1983	31,500	2,034	163
March 1983	32,100	2,537	163
April 1983	31,700	2,819	165
May 1983	31,700	2,238	164
June 1983	31,600	2,667	164
July 1983	31,400	2,697	169
August 1983	32,200	1,906	175
September 1983	32,300	2,595	176
October 1983	32,600	2,339	184
November 1983	32,600	2,792	183
December 1983	32,700	2,125	185
January 1984	33,500	2,272	184
February 1984	34,300	2,248	182
March 1984	34,300	3,007	182
April 1984	34,600	2,273	180
May 1984	35,200	2,045	182
June 1984	36,000	2,017	180
July 1984	36,700	2,201	178
August 1984	37,600	1,970	175
September 1984	37,700	2,631	179
October 1984	38,400	2,425	180
November 1984	39,300	2,386	180
December 1984	39,600	1,879	179
January 1985	40,400	2,629	183
February 1985	41,100	2,477	186
March 1985	41,800	2,517	189
April 1985	42,500	2,347	187
May 1985	43,300	2,498	188
June 1985	44,000	2,595	189
July 1985	45,000	2,296	190
August 1985	45,900	2,164	194
September 1985	46,000	3,002	194
October 1985	47,100	2,644	197
November 1985	47,900	2,650	200
December 1985	48,100	2,142	201
January 1986	49,700	2,431	201
February 1986	50,700	2,620	201
March 1986	51,500	2,576	203·5
April 1986	52,800	2,683	202·5
May 1986	54,000	2,196	202·5
June 1986	55,500	2,326	202·5
July 1986	56,800	2,345	207·5

Month	Cases awaiting resolution at the end of each month	Cases resolved during each month	Staff in post (part-time staff being each counted as one half)
August 1986	58,200	1,682	210·5
September 1986	59,700	1,995	218·5
October 1986	60,600	2,815	211·5

Mr. Ground asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the backlog of cases awaiting resolution by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and the staffing of the board.

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to reduce the growing backlog of unresolved cases before the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Mr. Mellor: As announced in connection with the Government's autumn financial statement, substantial additional funds are to be provided for the criminal injuries compensation scheme over the next three years. The additional provision for Great Britain in 1987-88 will be £33 million, which represents an increase of some 65 per cent. on the previously planned provision, and larger additional sums are to be provided in later years. The additional money will allow the recruitment of more staff for the board, and will finance substantially increased numbers of compensation payments.

Prisons (Costs)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in which prisons the per capita costs per prisoner are *(a)* the lowest and *(b)* the highest in each of the past three years.

Mr. Mellor: Information on average weekly net operating costs per inmate for each penal establishment for 1984-85 and 1985-86 was published in the annual reports on the "Work of the Prison Department" for those years (Cmnd. 9699, appendix 2, table D, Cmnd. 11, appendix 2, table F). Equivalent information for 1983-84 was published in the "Prison Department Financial Report 1983-84", a copy of which is in the Library (see appendix 1, table 7).

The reports show that the establishments having the highest and lowest average weekly costs per inmate in these years are as follows:

	Highest	Lowest
1983-84	Albany	Kirkham
1984-85	Parkhurst	Rudgate
1985-86	Lindholme	Rudgate

Special factors affecting Albany's and Lindholme's costs were mentioned in the reports for the relevant years.

Race Relations

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the number of arrests arising from reported incidents of racial harassment in the Metropolitan police authority area, by borough, for each year since 1983, including the part year figures for 1986;

(2) what was the number of reported racial incidents in the Metropolitan police area by year since 1983, including the past year figures for 1986, by borough and by type of offence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the available information is as set out in the tables. Detailed breakdowns by borough for the years 1983 to 1985 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Reported racial incidents by borough 1983 to 1986: Number of incidents in which arrests were made by borough 1986

	Reported incidents				Incidents with arrests
	1983	1984	1985	1986[1] to 2 December	1986[1] to 2 December
No. 1 Area					
Waltham Forest including part of Epping Forest	29	20	66	55	9
Redbridge including part of Epping Forest	24	21	71	84	6
Islington	31	60	57	73	4
Haringey	9	11	34	29	1
Enfield including those parts of Welwyn Hatfield and Broxbourne within the MPD	30	34	48	31	1
No. 2 Area					
Hackney	31	29	37	43	2
Tower Hamlets	234	414	277	189	45
Havering	5	22	18	10	0
Barking and Dagenham	28	19	28	43	11
Newham	99	140	229	208	22
No. 3 Area					

	Reported incidents				Incidents with arrests
	1983	1984	1985	1986[1] to 2 December	1986[1] to 2 December
Southwark	28	29	49	34	4
Lewisham	2	17	16	9	1
Bromley	30	13	18	11	0
Greenwich	86	84	87	55	2
Bexley	30	18	41	21	1
No. 4 Area					
Lambeth	34	33	73	43	10
Merton	28	20	56	58	12
Croydon	51	40	71	46	4
Sutton including those parts of Epsom and Ewell, Reigate and Banstead within the MPD	8	13	36	21	3
No. 5 Area					
Wandsworth	74	60	67	36	1
Kingston including those parts of Elmbridge within the MPD	34	19	22	2	1
Houslow	56	62	79	48	13
Richmond including those parts of Spelthorne within the MPD	30	10	11	12	1
No. 6 Area					
Kensington/Chelsea	2	8	5	3	1
Hammersmith/Fulham	13	13	11	4	2
Ealing	72	62	67	88	11
Hillingdon	2	11	63	50	2
London Airport (parts of Spelthorne and Hillingdon)	4	3	0	1	0
No. 7 Area					
Camden	38	48	62	37	3
Barnet including that part of Hertsmere within the MPD	56	45	52	34	0
Brent	53	70	120	56	8
Harrow	14	51	58	37	3
No. 8 Area					
Westminster	11	16	16	10	1
	1,276	1,515	1,945	1,481	185

[1] Provisional. These figures may be subject to revision as late reports come in.

Number of Racial Incidents by Type of Offence and Number of Incidents in which Arrests were made

	Incident Type[1]									Total	Incidents with Arrests
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
1984	322	189	599	20	233	70	15	22	45	1,515	197
1985	350	243	606	20	520	100	20	24	62	1,945	286
1986 to 2 December[2]	207	230	476	25	413	47	27	15	41	1,481	185

[1] Incident Type
1. Serious assault
2. Minor assault
3. Criminal damage
4. Leafletting
5. Abusive etc. behaviour
6. Slogan writing
7. Racial discrimination
8. Disputes
9. Others

[2] Provisional. These figures may be subject to revision as late reports come in.

Immigration

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines are issued to immigration officers at ports of entry concerning questions of an intimate nature to arrivals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Instructions are that questioning should be tactful, particularly when dealing with a member of the opposite sex and that questions which might be taken as casting a doubt on passengers' morals should be avoided.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrivals from (i) India, (ii) Pakistan and (iii) Bangladesh who have been in possession of visas have been refused entry to the United Kingdom since the visa requirement was introduced.

Mr. Waddington: Up to and including 2 December, one Indian, two Pakistani and five Bangladeshi nationals in possession of visas have been refused leave to enter.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what race relations training is given to immigration officers based at ports of entry.

Mr. Waddington: Training in racial awareness is included in the courses given to all newly appointed immigration officers and existing staff in the Immigration Service. Emphasis is placed on the careful handling of interpersonal relationships and the need for courtesy and impartiality.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints from arrivals in the United Kingdom in the last year he has received concerning the behaviour of immigration officers at ports of entry.

Mr. Waddington: From 1 January to 2 December this year 131 written complaints were received which related wholly or in part to the behaviour of immigration officers at ports.

Homelessness

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents for each police district of the Metropolitan police area are recorded as involving people who sleep rough in the current year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that the information requested by the hon. Member could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish advice given to the local police stations in the Metropolitan police area concerning the treatment of homeless people who present themselves at police stations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that instructions are to be found in chapter 15 of the "Metropolitan Police Instruction Book", a copy of which is in the Library.

Police Manpower

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to increase the maximum permitted police strength in the county of Devon.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Devon and Cornwall police authority is responsible for determining the authorised establishment of the force, subject to my right hon. Friend's approval. An increase of 18 police posts was approved in January 1986, meeting in full the police authority's application. We are now considering an application from the authority for a further increase in 17 police posts in this financial year and hope to announce the outcome shortly.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place a copy of the finance and manpower code for the Metropolitan police in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Yes. I have arranged for the parts of the code that have been printed to be placed in the Library. The remaining parts will be added as they become available.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will detail those subjects covered by the Metropolitan police orders for each month since January.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The subjects covered in the Metropolitan police orders issued between January and October 1986 are shown in the table. The index of subjects covered by police orders issued in November has not yet been compiled.

TABLE

Metropolitan Police Orders, January to October 1986: Index of Contents

January

Branch Boards; Cadet; Civil Staff; Clothing and appointments; Collators; Commanders (appointment); Commendations and Awards; Competitions; Crime (crime prevention returns); Deputy Assistant Commissioner; Enquiries; Fire Brigade (assistance to); Forms; General Orders (amendments); Houses of Parliament; Leave (maternity leave); Legislation; Message Switching System; Metropolitan Police Directory; Metropolitan Police Law Committee; Metropolitan Police Office; Pay; Police Journal; Prisoners; Probationers; Promotion; Re-organisation of the Force; Sexual offences (victim examination suites); Stations and Section Houses; Telephones; Training, Volunteers; Welfare; Witnesses.

February

Aliens; Branch Boards; Bursaries, fellowships, etc.; Command and Control, Commanders (central service); Commendations and Awards; Competitions; Courts, Crime; Death; Deputy Assistant Commissioner (Retirement); Discipline; Drinking and Driving; Dog, Drugs; Fees (Translators); Fires; First Aid Competitions; Fixed Penalties; Forms, General Orders; General Orders and Supplement; Holidays; Identification; Immigration; Legislation; London Ambulance Service; Medical services and sick police; Memoranda; Message Switching System, Metropolitan Police Directory; Metropolitan Police Friendly Society; Metropolitan Police Horse Show and Tournament; Metropolitan Police Medical Centre Patients' Amenities Fund; Metropolitan Police Medical Centre Staff Amenities Fund; Metropolitan Police Office; National Identification Bureau; Photographs (Prisoners);

Police National Computer; Promotion; Public Order; Re-organisation of the Force; Revision of boundaries; Special Constabulary; Stations and Section Houses; Street collections; Street (Filming); Telephones Police; Traffic; Training Police, Volunteers.

March

Allowances (Bicycle); Branch Boards; Books and Pads; Cells (cleaning); Clothing and appointments; Competitions, Courts, Detention centres; Diplomatic privilege; Discipline; Dogs, police, Drinking and driving; Exhibits; Fingerprints; Force Suggestion Schemes; Forms, General Orders; General Orders and the Supplements; Holidays; Identification; Income Tax; Instruction Book; Legislation (non-traffic); Licensed premises; Medical Services and sick police; Memoranda; Metropolitan Police Directory; Motor vehicles, police; National Insurance; Passes; Pay; Police and Constabulary Almanac; Prisoners'; Prisoners Property; Promotion; Publications; Re-organisation of the Force; Special Constabulary; Special employment and special services; Street Collections; The Summer Time Order, 1982; Volunteers; Warrants.

April

Allowances (Bicycle); Blood Transfusion Service; Books and Pads; Branch Board (meetings); Clothing and appointments; Computers; Courts; Cycle Campaign; Discipline; Dogs; Forgery and Counterfeiting; Forms; General Orders; Greater London Council; H.M. The Queen's Birthday; Holidays; Leave; Legislation (non-traffic); Memoranda; Message Switching System; Metropolitan Police Office; Motor vehicles, police; Police Long Service and Good Conduct Medal; Prisoners' Property; Promotion; Re-organisation of the Force; Royal Wedding Office; Stations and Section Houses; Stone's Justices' Manual; Street Collections, Traffic; Training police; Truncheons; Valuables, Volunteers;

May

Allowances; Branch Boards (meetings); Buildings, police; Bursaries, fellowships etc; Charities; Commendations and Awards; Communications; Complaints and Discipline; Computers; Courts; Crime; Message Switching System; Metropolitan and City Police Relief Fund; Metropolitan Police Directory; Metropolitan Police Friendly Society; Metropolitan Police Horse Show and Tournament; Metropolitan Police Office; Motor vehicles; Motor Vehicles Police; Pay; Promotion; Public order; Police Journal; Re-organisation of the Force, Review of Police Structure; Revision of Boundaries; Season tickets; Sexual offences; Stations and Section Houses; Stores and Supplies; Street Collections; Telephones, police; Traffic; Training, police; Valuables; Volunteers; Despatch Van Service; Discipline; Duties; Expenses; Facsimile equipment; Firearms; Forms; Gardens; General Orders; Greater London Council; Holidays; Income Tax; Inland waterways; Instruction Book; Legislation (non-traffic); Legislation (traffic).

June

Accidents; Allowances; Books and Pads; Branch Boards (Meetings); Car pounds; Commander (Vacancy); Commendations and Awards; Competitions; Crown Prosecution Service; Deputy Assistant Commissioner (vacancy); Dogs, Police; Drinking and Driving; Expenses (witnesses); Firearms; Floods; Forms; General Orders; General Orders and Supplement; Income Tax; Inspectorate; Interviews; Legislation (traffic); Medical, Memoranda; Mentally disordered persons; Message Switching System; Metropolitan Police Directory; Metropolitan Police Office; Metropolitan Police Supports Fund; Motor Vehicles; Prisoners; Promotion; Public Order, Publications; Re-organisation of the Force; The Royal Tournment; Stations and Section Houses; Street collections; Traffic; Training, police; Volunteers.

July

Aliens; Allowances; Annual Qualification Reports; Books and Pads; Branch Boards (Meetings); British Heart Foundation; Colorado Beetle; Command and Control; Commanders (Retirements); Commendations and Awards; Competitions; Convictions; Courts; Crime; Dead Bodies; Forms; Fraud; Gardens; General Orders; General Orders and the Supplement; Hoisting of flags; Identification (Parades); Leave; Legislation (non-traffic); Licensed Premises; Medical; Medical Services and Sick Police; Memoranda; Metropolitan Police Office; Metropolitan Special Constabulary; Missing persons; Motor vehicles, police; Promotion; Railways and railway travel; Re-organisation of the Force; Retirement; Sexual offences; Ships; Social Security; Telephone, police; Traffic; Training, police; Volunteers, Wildlife; Women, police.

August

Accommodation, Allowances; Assistant Commissioner (Appointment); Branch Boards (Meetings); Buildings; Children and young persons; Civil staff; Clothing and appointments; Commanders (Promotions); Commissioner (Message); Communications; Computers, Deputy Assistant Commissioner (Appointment); Dogs; Enquiries; Firearms, First Aid; Fuel; Gardens; General Orders; General Orders and the Supplement; Greenyards; Health and Safety; Holidays; Imprests; Immunity, Income tax; Instruction Book; Interviews; Kidnapping; Legislation (non-traffic); Management (Exchange between forces); Metropolitan Police Directory; Metropolitan Police Office; Motor Vehicles; National Police Fund; Pay (Police cadets); Police Federation; Police Journal; Promotion; Publications; Registry (Security); Re-organisation of the Force; Street collections; Telephone Police; Traffic; Training police; Visiting Forces; Volunteers; Witnesses.

September

Accidents; Allowances; Branch Boards (Meetings); commanders (Promotions and transfers); Competitions; Convictions (Disclosure); Courts; Crime; Deputy Assistant Commissioner (Retirement); Diaries; Drink and driving; Duties; Fees and fines; Firearms; Fireworks; First aid competitions; Forms; Gardens; General Orders; Leave; Legislation (non-traffic); Legislation (traffic); London Transport; Medical Services and sick police; Message Switching System; Metropolitan Police Directory;, Metropolitan Police Law Committee; Metropolitan Office; Overtime; Police Long Service and Good Conduct Medal; Public Order; Re-organisation of the force; School Crossing Patrols; Special employment and special services; Stations and Section Houses, Stores and supplies; Street collections; Telephones, police; Traffic, Training, police; Volunteers.

October

Allowances; Animals; Branch Boards (Meetings); Civil staff; Clothing and appointments; Commanders (Appointment); Courts; Crime; Deputy Assistant Commissioner (Vacancies); Enquiries; Firearms; First Aid Committee; First aid competitions; Force Christmas cards 1986; Forms; General Orders; General Orders and the Supplement; Greenyards; Leave, Legislation (non-traffic); Legislation (traffic); Management (Exchange with outside organisations); Medals; Medical, Medical services and sick police; Memoranda; Metropolitan and City Police Orphans' Fund; Metropolitan Police Directory; Metropolitan Police Office Motor Vehicles; Motor vehicles (Police); Overtime; Police and Constabulary Almanac; Police Journal; Police National Computer; Prisoners; Promotion; Reorganisation of the force; Revision of boundaries; Special Constabulary; Sponsored events; Stations and Section Houses; Street collections; The Summer Time Act 1982; Traffic; Training, police; Veterinary Surgeons; Volunteers; Welfare.

September

Accidents; Allowances; Branch Boards (Meetings); Commanders (Promotions and transfers); Competitions; Convictions (Disclosure); Courts; Crime; Deputy Assistant Commissioner (Retirement); Diaries; Drink and driving; Duties; Fees and fines; Firearms; Fireworks; First aid competitions; Forms; Gardens; General Orders; Leave; Legislation (non-traffic); Legislation (traffic); London Transport; Medical Services and sick police; Message Switching System; Metropolitan Police Directory; Metropolitan Police Law Committee; Metropolitan Office; Overtime; Police Long Service and Good Conduct Medal;

Public Order; Re-organisation of the force; School Crossing Patrols; Special employment and special services; Stations and Section Houses; Stores and supplies; Street collections; Telephones, police; Traffic; Training, police; Volunteers.

October

Allowances; Animals; Branch Boards (Meetings); Civil staff; Clothing and appointments; Commanders (Appointment); Courts; Crime; Deputy Assistant Commissioner (Vacancies); Enquiries; Firearms; First Aid Committee; First aid competitions; Force Christmas cards 1986; Forms; General Orders; General Orders and the Supplement; Greenyards; Leave, Legislation (non-traffic); Legislation (traffic); Management (Exchange with outside organisations); Medals; Medical, Medical services and sick police; Memoranda; Metropolitan and City Police Orphans' Fund; Metropolitan Police Directory; Metropolitan Police Office Motor Vehicles; Motor vehicles (Police); overtime; Police and Constabulary Almanac; Police Journal; Police National Computer; Prisoners; Promotion; Reorganisation of the force; Revision of boundaries; Special Constabulary; Sponsored events; Stations and Section Houses; Street collections; The Summer Time Act 1982; Traffic; Training, police; Veterinary Surgeons; Volunteers, Welfare.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Judiciary (Disabled Persons)

Mr. Evennett asked the Attorney-General how many judges, masters or registrars are (i) registered disabled or (ii) registered blind; and what steps the Lord Chancellor is taking to encourage the appointment of disabled or blind judges, masters and registrars.

The Attorney-General: No records are kept of the number of registered disabled judges, masters or registrars. There are no registered blind judges, masters or registrars. No steps are taken either to encourage or to discourage such appointments. However, all judicial appointments are subject to the condition that the appointee must be physically capable of discharging judicial duties effectively.

Mr. Evennett asked the Attorney-General what action has been taken by the Lord Chancellor's Department to provide access to court buildings for the disabled and blind.

The Attorney-General: New and adapted or reconditioned court buildings provide, to the maximum possible extent, all the facilities required for the disabled, including ramps and lifts as necessary. Other buildings have had improvements incorporated where this has been feasible. Court staff are always available to give assistance to disabled and blind court users.

Mr. Evennett asked the Attorney-General how many magistrates are (i) registered disabled and (ii) registered blind; and what steps are being taken by the Lord Chancellor to encourage the appointment of disabled or blind magistrates.

The Attorney-General: The number of disabled magistrates so registered is not available. Provided that their disability does not interfere with the discharge of judicial duties, properly qualified persons have an equal chance of appointment. Unfortunately, the deaf and the blind are in practice disqualified, the deaf owing to their inability to hear oral evidence, the blind owing to their inability to study documents and plans and to observe the demeanour of witnesses.

Braille Transcripts

Mr. Evennett asked the Attorney-General what facilities are provided by the Lord Chancellor's Department or otherwise exist for the provision of braille transcripts of documentary evidence and court documents.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor's Department has no facilities for the provision of braille transcripts. The Royal National Institute for the Blind and a number of other voluntary or commercial organisations provide such a transcription service. It would be for the party concerned to make his or her own arrangements to utilise these.

State Security

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Attorney-General what decision the Government has taken in regard to appealing against the judgment of the High Court in Dublin in respect of the publication of the book "One Girl's War".

The Attorney-General: Having taken counsel's advice in Dublin, the Government have decided not to appeal against yesterday's judgment of the High Court in Dublin. This judgment, for reasons based primarily on the constitution of the Republic, rejected the Attorney-General's application for an injunction to restrain publication of the book by Joan Miller.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid has gone to (i) Nicaragua, (ii) Honduras and (iii) El Salvador in *(a)* 1984, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1986 and *(d)* 1987, projected.

Mr. Chris Patten: The latest available figures for gross British bilateral aid on a calendar year basis are as follows:

	1984 £	*1985* £
(i) Nicaragua	9,000	116,000
(ii) Honduras	3,446,000	3,653,000
(iii) El Salvador	205,000	103,000

These figures are for total gross public expenditure on aid, which includes development aid, disaster relief, technical cooperation and Commonwealth Development Corporation loans.

Complete figures for 1986 and projected figures for 1987 are not available.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Everth Marin

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the death of Everth Marin in Colombia on 10 October.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of expressions of concern about the circumstances of Sr. Marin's death from hon. Members and other individuals and organisations.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings Her Majesty's diplomatic representation has had with human rights groups in Colombia in the last year.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's diplomatic representatives in Colombia maintain regular contacts with the Permanent Committee for the Defence of Human Rights, the most active Colombian organisation in this field. They also have close contacts with the human rights section of the Attorney-General's office, a body independent of the Colombian Government, set up earlier in 1986.

Nicaragua

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of Her Majesty's Government's diplomatic representations in Nicaragua; and whether an ambassador will be appointed solely to Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: Our representation in Nicaragua is at ambassdorial level. The ambassador resides in Costa Rica, with a charge d'affaires resident in Managua. Diplomatic staffing levels at all our posts overseas are kept under regular review.

Belize

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions Her Majesty's Government have had with the Government of Guatemala about their territorial claims over Belize; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Since Belize became independent in 1981 discussion of the territorial dispute has been a matter for Belize and Guatemala.

Guatemala

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the level of Her Majesty's Government's diplomatic representation in Guatemala during the current year; and when full diplomatic relations will be restored.

Mr. Eggar: Consular relations between the United Kingdom and Guatemala were re-established on 19 August 1986. We hope for an early resumption of diplomatic relations.

El Salvador

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings Her Majesty's Government's diplomatic representatives in El Salvador have had with CODEFAM, Committee of Mothers of the Disappeared, UNTS and Fenastras in the last six months.

Mr. Eggar: As part of their normal duties our diplomatic staff accredited to El Salvador maintain contact with human rights organisations and trade unions, as well as with political parties and the Roman Catholic Church.

Indonesia

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the occasions since January 1985 when United Kingdom Government or military officials have visited Indonesia stating in each case the purpose of the visit.

Mr. Renton: The principal visits have been as follows:

April 1985

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister; and senior officials.

June 1985

My right hon. Friend, the then Minister of State for Trade, the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon); and senior officials.

October 1985

Myself (to chair a regional heads of mission conference in Jakarta); and senior officials.

September 1986

My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction; and senior officials.

October 1986

My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary (to attend the EC-ASEAN ministerial meeting); and senior officials.

October 1986

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; and senior officials.

Other visits at senior level have included the following:

January 1985

Head of Defence Export Services Chief of Air Staff (Goodwill visit).

December 1985

Head of Research and Technology Policy Division, Department of Trade and Industry (in connection with Science and Technology Agreement). Assistant Secretary, External Relations Division, MAFF (accompanying trade mission).

January 1986
Head of Defence Export Services.

July 1986
ODA/DTI mission to negotiate concessional loan facility.

TRANSPORT

Manchester Outer Ring Road

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions there have been between the Government and local authorities in Greater Manchester about disposal of soil from the Manchester outer ring road Portwood to Denton and Denton to Middleton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This Department held a series of discussions with the former Greater Manchester county council. We are now in contact with the minerals and waste disposal unit set up by the 10 Greater Manchester district councils. The Department is ready to hold any necessary further discussions with representatives of affected councils.

A1(M) Tunnel (Accidents)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied that all reasonable steps have been taken to secure the safety of drivers and passengers in the advent of an accident in the newly-completed A1(M) tunnel at Hatfield.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. Day-to-day safety as well as measures for dealing quickly and effectively with a range of emergency situations have been a paramount consideration in the tunnel design. They have been the subject of extensive consultation with the police and other emergency services who recently simulated a major accident to test and get to know the operational facilities.

Motorways

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate his Department has made of the cost to business and industry of regular delays to traffic on newly constructed motorways such as the M1 to M25 link, and the approaches to it; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Estimates of the cost to road users of delays to traffic are generally made only in the context of specific proposals which will affect traffic conditions. Such proposals include road improvement schemes and arrangements during major maintenance. For proposed motorways, estimates are therefore made of the benefits from faster and safer journeys compared with conditions which would have existed had the motorway not be built. These appraisals take account of peak traffic flows and the effects on traffic on the approach roads. For the south-west sector of the M25, conditions are busier than anticipated and studies of the benefits of widening and other improvements are currently being undertaken.

It is expected that increased driver familiarity with the M1-M25 slip roads layout will reduce delays.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will list any significant motorway lane closures or roadworks which have been necessary within two months of the opening of any new stretch of motorway within the last two years; what is the specific situation regarding recently opened sections of the M25; and what action has been taken to reduce the cost to public funds of any necessary remedial measures.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The only significant lane closures occurred on the M25 motorway between junction 14 and Palmers Moor bridge, where there have been five lane closures, totalling 19 days.

These closures were necessary to enable the contractor to complete certain minor works which, by agreement, had been left unfinished at the time the motorway was opened to traffic. Normally, remedial work during the 12 months following completion is at the contractor's expense.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on the traffic flow on the M1 and M25 motorways, especially between 7.30 am and 11.30 am and between 4 pm and 8 pm; to what factors he attributes the regular congestion in those periods; and what action he proposes to remedy the situation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The volume of traffic using certain sections and junctions of both M1 and M25 causes some localised peak hour delays. We have a number of measures already in hand to improve traffic flows and are currently looking to see what further action is required.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates of hourly traffic flow at peak periods were made by his Department when preparing for the direct link between the M1 and M25 motorways; what has been the actual outturn; and to what extent his traffic forecasts assume uninterrupted traffic flow at normal motorway speeds during peak periods.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the reason why traffic which had been flowing freely on the southbound carriageway of the M1 near to junction 11 at 10.58 am on 26 November had to come to an immediate halt in all three lanes without any prior warning; why the warning lights were not in operation to advise drivers to slow down in advance; and why serious congestion continued between junctions 11 and 9 at that time.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I know of no specific cause for the delays. Traffic flows on the southbound carriageway are normally high at this time of day and even a slight distraction for drivers could cause traffic to slow down and cause congestion which would take time to clear. Three accidents within the preceding two hours on the northbound carriageway, between junctions 9 and 10, may have had such an effect. It is for the police, who control the emergency signals, to decide whether they should be switched on. Automatic signals will be put on trial in the near future on the M1 northbound carriageway between junctions 10 and 19. These would, if successful, warn of congestion ahead. I will consider whether their use should, in due course, be extended or whether other forms of warning should be provided.

Carphones (Motorways)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to make it a criminal offence to use a hand held telephone whilst driving a car on a motorway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Current legislation places a responsibility on drivers to maintain proper control of their vehicles at all times. A motorist who fails to do so as a result of distraction or lack of concentration is liable to prosecution. The revised "Highway Code", to be published in January, advises drivers not to use a hand held telephone while their vehicle is moving, except in an emergency.

Traffic Congestion (Newbury)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what measures his Department is taking to relieve traffic congestion on the A34 at Newbury pending the public inquiry about the possible route of the bypass and its construction.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Proposals to improve traffic conditions at Robin Hood roundabout are under consideration. Additional data are being obtained to enable a more detailed assessment of all aspects of the traffic problem to be made.

Newbury Bypass

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport why a public inquiry into the possible route of the Newbury bypass cannot be held in less than the currently estimated six to nine months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Objections may be made until 29 January 1987. Thereafter, sufficient time will be needed to consider them and to evaluate any alternative routes proposed by objectors. Experience suggests that six to nine months is a reasonable estimate. The inquiry will be held as soon as possible.

Helicopters

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether there have been any further developments in respect of provision of search and rescue helicopters since 3 November.

Mr. Moore: The United Kingdom SAR committee endorsed the report of its working group at a meeting on 1 December. The report, a copy of which I am placing in the Library, contains some important recommendations, the most significant of which are:

that standard criteria should be agreed for the provision of SAR helicopter coverage around the UK for civil marine and aviation purposes

that provision be made for a new SAR helicopter facility with an all weather-night capability in north-west Scotland and based in the Outer Hebrides

that provision be made to keep a SAR helicopter in the Solent area and for this key facility to be upgraded to a full all weather-night capability

The report also recommends that the Ministry of Defence be requested to advise on the implications of shortening, for SAR purposes, call out times of Sea King helicopters at Prestwick and Culdrose; as well as other matters relating to types and capabilities of aircraft.

I welcome the report and will study its recommendations urgently.

My Department and the Ministry of Defence will carry out a joint review of the arrangements for SAR coverage around the United Kingdom coast, in the light of the report.

In the meantime, a helicopter will be provided in north-west Scotland as soon as possible and we are considering urgently with MOD how best to do this.

Goods Vehicles (Operator Licensing)

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether the review of the environmental provisions of the goods vehicle operator licensing system has been completed; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. I have placed a copy of the report of the review in the Library.

The review considered responses from about 50 individuals and organisations representing the industry, local authorities, environmental groups and the licensing authorities. A wide range of views was expressed, ranging from those who wished the scope of the environmental provisions to be substantially increased to those who wished to see them abolished. We concluded that the provisions seem to be striking a fair balance between the interests of people affected by goods vehicle operating centres in their neighbourhood and those of the road haulage industry. No major changes are therefore suggested. We propose, when the opportunity arises, to amend the legislation in order to:

clarify the law on the extent to which the environmental effects of traffic on roads within the vicinity of a centre is relevant consideration;

limit the use of operating centres by operations with centres in more than one traffic area;

extend the range of activities involving authorised vehicles at an operating centre that may be subject to conditions imposed by a licensing authority;

allow parish councils to make environmental representations;

reduce the need for operators to advertise their applications in all cases.

The Department will be consulting interested parties on specific proposals in due course.

Blackwall Tunnel

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to improve the lighting and general appearance within the Blackwall tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following my right hon. Friend's assumption of responsibility for Blackwall tunnel last April, he appointed consultants to advise him and his agents, the London borough of Greenwich, on its condition, maintenance and operation. Some changes to the lighting, ventilation and operating procedures have already been put in hand. We aim to make further improvements over the next few years.

Design (Consultancy Scheme)

Mr. Rathbone asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to encourage better understanding among senior managers in industry and commerce of the value of good design and, particularly, of his Department's funded consultancy scheme.

Mr. Butcher: I have been asked to reply.

As part of helping industry and commerce to improve international competitiveness the Department has a strategic interest in promoting the message that good design, together with related factors such as quality and marketing, are important ingredients for success in the market place. We have supported and contributed to a wide range of activities to spread awareness of this message among senior management in industry.

Last year we supported a series of design management seminars in four sectors—textiles, vehicles, information technology and leisure. As one of our many contributions to Industry Year we attracted top industrialists from over 60 major UK companies to design commitment conference, and encouraged them to spread the message further by holding design seminars with their suppliers. We are supporting a major conference on design management to be held on 8 December by the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers. We are supporting the Design Council's efforts to improve management awareness through major advertising campaigns.

The Department also offers practical help through the funded consultancy scheme, re-named support for design. With the longer-term aim of changing attitudes in industry towards design, this is targeted at small and medium-sized firms, giving them the opportunity to use expert design advice at reduced rates. Since its inception in 1982 the scheme has been successful in attracting nearly 7,000 applications for assistance and 3,000 projects have been completed. Successful case histories from the scheme are publicised as part of our management awareness effort.

PRIME MINISTER

Fixed-term Parliaments

Q140. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government will introduce legislation to provide for fixed-term Parliaments; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister when Sir Robert Armstrong first discussed with *(a)* her, *(b)* the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, *(c)* the then Secretary of State for Defence and *(d)* Mr. Bernard Ingham the letter from the Solicitor-General of 7 January to the then Secretary of State for Defence protesting at the leak of his letter of 6 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 17 November, at columns 49-50.

Jerusalem

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to support the establishment of a United Nations peacekeeping force for Jerusalem; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

State Security

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister whether she will set up an inquiry to establish whether Lord Rothschild had revealed information confidential to the security services to Mr. Ian Black, a journalist, in 1980 and 1981.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General gave to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 26 November, at column 268.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister if she will establish an inquiry into allegations that members of the security services conducted surveillance on Government Ministers in the 1970s under the code name Oatsheaf.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister how many days in advance of the broadcast on 16 July 1984 of the Granada TV "World in Action" programme, "The Spy Who Never Was," Her Majesty's Government were informed that the programme was to be screened; and what information was sought from Her Majesty's Government by Granada.

The Prime Minister: It would be inappropriate for me to comment on matters which may arise in the proceedings concerning the Peter Wright case in Australia while those proceedings continue. I also intend to follow the precedent set by previous Prime Ministers of not commenting on security matters.

Pensions

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Prime Minister when pension arrangements for those with service in security services were last reviewed; and whether such pensions are inflation-proofed.

The Prime Minister: The last major review of public service pension schemes was in 1972. Pensions under those schemes are increased in line with the retail prices index in accordance with the provisions of the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 December.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of the Netherlands.

THE ARTS

News International

Mr. Greenway asked the Minister of the Arts what action he proposes to take regarding the banning of News International newspapers in public libraries in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I am watching the situation closely. The three authorities involved in the High Court proceedings, Camden, Ealing, and Hammersmith and Fulham, lifted

the ban following the judgment, as have 14 others: Barnsley, Birmingham, Greenwich, Hackney, Harringey, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Knowsley, Manchester, St. Helens, Sheffield, Southwark, and Waltham Forest. Six other authorities lifted the ban before the judgment: Coventry, Doncaster, Kirklees, Salford, Sandwell and Staffordshire.

I understand that only two authorities are currently not providing News International newspapers. These are Brent and Newham. News International has indicated that it may institute proceedings against authorities which do not lift the bans. It would not be sensible for me to take further action while News International action is pending, not least because of the additional costs to ratepayers if legal action is duplicated.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Children's Medicines

71. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice his Department gives to manufacturers of children's medicines regarding the use of non-essential food colourants.

Mrs. Currie: Advice to manufacturers on the use of colouring matters permitted in medicinal products is given in Medicines Act leaflet No. 60 (MAL 60), a copy of which is available in the Library.

Benefits

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the increase in the value in real terms of housing benefit needs allowance since 1979-80 to the current year, and that projected so as to include the changes to take effect in April 1987, in respect of *(a)* single persons *(b)* couples/lone parents, *(c)* couples, both handicapped, *(d)* the dependent child addition and *(e)* single handicapped persons; and how this compares with changes in the retail price index in each case.

Mr. Lyell: The table shows such information as can readily be calculated: the first three columns show the needs allowance levels for the various categories requested at November 1979, July 1986 and April 1987. It is not possible to make a reliable projection of the real value of the needs allowance when uprated in 1987 since retail price index forecasts are not available in sufficient detail.

The needs allowances are not increased in line with the retail price index as they are only one component used in the calculation of housing benefit. The other main elements are the claimant's actual rent and rates, 60 per cent. of which are automatically reflected in the benefit calculation. For this reason the normal formula for uprating the needs allowances is linked not to the retail price index but to the level of the supplementary benefit long-term scale rate, plus 40 per cent. of average rents and rates, plus average water rates. In addition, wage earners benefit from an earnings disregard which we introduced in November 1979 and which has increased by nearly 350 per cent. since then. The retail price index increase over the relevant period is 61·8 per cent. and the percentage changes are set out in column 4 but, for the reasons stated, the comparison is inappropriate.

Housing Benefit: Needs allowances

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*
	Needs allowance levels			*Percentage change column 2 over column 1 (1979-86)*
	November 1979	*July 1986*	*April 1987*	
	£	£	£	
Single person	31·05	48·10	48·90	54·9
Couple/lone parent	45·55	70·85	72·15	55·6
Couple, both handicapped	50·80	79·00	80·45	55·6
Dependent child addition	7·70	14·60	14·75	89·6
Single handicapped person	34·60	53·65	54·60	55·1

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were dependent on supplementary benefit in London, broken down into local authority boroughs, in 1979 and on the latest available date.

Mr. Lyell: Information is not available in the precise form requested. Only details of the number of people dependent on supplementary benefit in the area previously covered by the Greater London council can be provided but these will take time to collate.

I shall let the hon. Member have a further reply as soon as this information is to hand.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library a copy of the circular he has sent to local offices on the April 1987 uprating of benefits.

Mr. Lyell: A copy of circular S24/86, which was issued to local offices on 3 November, is already in the Library.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those offices of his Department which have yet to complete the July 1986 uprating of benefits.

Mr. Lyell: The following offices have yet to complete the July 1986 uprating of supplementary benefit:

Finsbury Park, Hackney, Stoke Newington, Hendon, Canterbury and Thanet.

The uprating of other benefits has been completed in all offices.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his latest estimate of the cost of the housing benefit scheme; how many people received housing benefit in 1985; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the latest estimate of the cost of the housing benefit scheme currently met by *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local government; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he proposes to increase the proportion of the cost of the housing benefit scheme met by local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current level of outstanding payment of housing benefit by the Department of Health and Social Security due to each housing authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let my hon. Friend and the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of housing benefit claims are initially incorrectly assessed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: Administration of housing benefit, including assessment of claims, is the responsibility of local authorities who administer housing benefit, and information is not available centrally on the number of incorrect assessments.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications he has received in each of the years 1977 to 1985 for the treatment of a claim for supplementary benefit as a claim for *(a)* attendance allowance and *(b)* invalid care allowance pursuant to Regulation 9(5) of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations; and how many such applications were successful in each of those years.

Mr. Major: I regret that information is not kept in the form requested. The available information relates to requests for a claim to supplementary benefit to be treated as a claim also for attendance or invalid care allowance under Regulation 9(5) of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1979, and to requests to treat a document as a claim to attendance or invalid care allowance under Regulation 4 of those regulations. The available information is as follows:

Period	*Applications made*		*Successful applications*	
	Attendance allowance	*Invalid care allowance*	*Attendance allowance*	*Invalid care allowance*
June 1983 to December 1984[1]	590	59	190	52
January 1985 to December 1985	407	98	109	85

[1] Records were not kept prior to June 1983. This period cannot be further separated into calendar years.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria apply in determining whether to accept or reject applications made under Regulation 9(5) of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations for the treatment of a claim for supplementary benefit as one also made for *(a)* attendance allowance and *(b)* invalid care allowance.

Mr. Major: There must exist a claim for supplementary benefit made on or after 29 August 1977 on which there is a clear indication that the person was likely to satisfy the conditions for attendance allowance or invalid care allowance respectively. If the supplementary benefit claim is accepted by the Secretary of State as a claim also for attendance or invalid care allowance, the claim is then subject to adjudication in the normal way in accordance with the legislation applying to those benefits.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time, in weeks, currently taken to determine a request received under Regulation 9(5) of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations from the date of receipt.

Mr. Major: About eight weeks.

Asian Mother and Baby Campaign

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the operation of the Asian mother and baby campaign.

Mrs. Currie: The campaign is a pilot project involving 16 district health authorities in 10 different areas. Its main feature is the employment of "link-workers", women conversant in English and at least one Asian language, whose role is to help overcome linguistic and cultural barriers between pregnant women from the Indian sub-continent and health professionals. The first link-worker scheme began in November 1984 and the most recent in April 1986 and for the first two years salaries are paid from special central funding. Although the professional evaluation will not be completed until mid-1988, early reports are encouraging and several authorities have already decided to continue the scheme when central funding ends. We hope others will consider developing similar schemes.

Population Statistics

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the 30 English non-metropolitan districts which have shown the greatest percentage growth in their electorate since 1981; and what has been the percentage growth and actual figures in each case.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is as follows:

Non-metropolitan County District (ranked by percentage growth)	Electorate		1981-86 growth	
	1981 Register	1986 Register	Increase in electorate	Percentage increase
Milton Keynes	85,323	109,031	23,708	27·8
Wokingham	80,764	98,416	17,652	21·9
Crawley	56,123	65,231	9,108	16·2
Thamesdown	106,500	121,751	15,251	14·3
Bracknell	57,792	65,350	7,558	13·1
Redditch	46,689	52,650	5,961	12·8
Wimborne	54,753	61,659	6,906	12·6
Peterborough	94,205	105,382	11,177	11·9
East Hampshire	65,884	73,579	7,695	11·7
Basingstoke and Deane	92,905	103,724	10,819	11·6
Huntingdonshire	84,665	94,453	9,788	11·6
Northampton	114,933	127,957	13,024	11·3
Hart	53,130	58,935	5,805	10·9
Eastleigh	69,280	76,716	7,436	10·7
Fareham	64,989	71,958	6,969	10·7
Caradon	51,088	56,498	5,410	10·6
Poole	90,523	100,042	9,519	10·5
South Staffordshire	71,374	78,659	7,285	10·2
Selby	59,844	65,841	5,997	10·0
South Cambridgeshire	78,209	86,031	7,822	10·0
Maldon	35,373	38,904	3,531	10·0
Christchurch	31,914	35,067	3,153	9·9
Test Valley	66,111	72,617	6,506	9·8
Daventry	41,997	46,120	4,123	9·8
West Oxfordshire	57,483	63,103	5,620	9·8
New Forest	113,148	124,119	10,971	9·7
Cherwell	73,493	80,615	7,122	9·7
Richmondshire	27,724	30,378	2,654	9·6
Chelmsford	103,361	113,044	9,683	9·4
Mid Bedfordshire	73,050	79,882	6,832	9·4

NHS (Property Sales)

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are taken to ensure that the proceeds from sales of institutions emptied by the community care policy are transferred to those services which are becoming responsible for the care of their former patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) on 29 October at column *183*.

Family Statistics

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many families with children were dependent on supplementary benefit in 1979 and on the latest date available; and how many of this category had been on supplementary benefit for a year or more.

Mr. Lyell: The information is as follows:

Numbers of families with dependent children under 19

	1979 (thousands)	1984 (thousands)
Total	488	1,057
Number on benefit for a year or more	296	686

Source: Annual statistical enquiries.

Disabled People

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consultations he intends to undertake with voluntary organisations of and for disabled people before bringing the various sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 into force or issuing guidance to local authorities and health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Appropriate voluntary organisations will be consulted before regulations are made under section 1 of the Act. We will consider separately whether or not it is necessary or appropriate to consult voluntary organisations on the implementation of other sections of the Act in each particular case.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to lay commencement orders for sections 5 and 6 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Major: It was originally thought, on the basis of discussions with the local authority associations during the passage of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill through Parliament that sections 5 and 6 would not carry significant resource implications for local authorities. We had therefore hoped that these sections could be included amongst those parts of the Act which could be implemented quickly. The associations have however, in the light of further inquiries now produced some figures which suggest that implementation of these sections will indeed have significant resource implications. We have asked for urgent discussions with the associations to clarify this matter and these are now being arranged. Until this issue is resolved, I am unable to say when commencement orders might be laid to bring sections 5 and 6 into effect.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when he intends to lay a commencement order for section 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986;

(2) when he intends to lay commencement orders for sections 4, 8, 9 and 10 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Major: As I said in reply to the hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 26 November at column *289*, we hope it will be possible to implement sections 4, 8, 9, 10 and 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 by 1 April 1987.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received seeking implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 26 November at column *289*.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider lifting the 31 December bar for those eligible for invalid care allowance following the European Court ruling.

Mr. Major: No.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what new steps he intends to take to advertise the eligibility for invalid care allowance following the ruling of the European Court.

Mr. Major: We have issued a new edition of leaflet NI 212 which includes full details of the extension of ICA to married women. We have written individually to 400,000 attendance allowance beneficiaries asking them to alert their carers to the extension of ICA. We have advertised the extension in the national press and journals, including women's magazines.

Up to 21 November, we had received some 85,000 claims from married women and new claims arrive at about 2,000 a week. We have no plans for any further publicity.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of claims he expects to be lodged for the invalid care allowance following the ruling of the European Court; and if he will estimate the number of those claimants drawing supplementary benefit.

Mr. Major: The number of claims received to 21 November from married and co-habiting women is 85,000. We continue to receive claims at the rate of around 2,000 a week. We expect, therefore, to have received about 97,000 claims by the end of the year. It is not known how many of these claimants are in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what factors have led to recent delays in the processing of awarded claims for invalid care allowance to married women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Once invalid care allowance is awarded by the adjudicating authorities, payment is usually processed the following week. There are no substantial delays in processing awarded claims.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent the appointment of additional consultants will be one of the special efforts to reduce hospital waiting lists, for which extra money was announced in the Chancellor's "Autumn Statement."

Mr. Newton: It will be for each regional health authority to decide what bids it wishes to make against the waiting list fund to make a significant impact on their waiting list or waiting time problem. It has already been made clear that the money will be carefully targeted and could be used, for instance, on extra staff, supplies or equipment.

Junior Hospital Staff

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the ratio of junior hospital staff up to and including senior registrars to consultant staff, excluding associate specialists, in each of the recognised specialties in each of the English health regions in the year for which the latest figures are available.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have the information that can be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what measure he proposes to correct the imbalance between the numbers of junior hospital doctors in training and the numbers of consultant posts available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Proposals to correct the imbalance in the hospital medical staffing structure, agreed between Health Ministers, chairmen of regional health authorities, and the Joint Consultants Committee, were published in July in the consultative document "Achieving a Balance", a copy of which is in the Library. The period of consultation has recently ended. In the light of the replies received, Ministers will be holding further discussions with health authorities and with the medical profession to develop detailed plans to put these proposals into effect.

Board and Lodging Allowances

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much has been paid out in board and lodging allowances in his Department's offices covering the Brighton, Kemptown and Brighton, Pavilion constituencies since 1979; how many claimant units received payment; and what is the average payment.

Mr. Lyell: I regret that information on amounts and numbers of supplementary benefit board and lodging allowances is not collected by individual local offices and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hypothermia

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many deaths from hypothermia related causes were registered in the Newham borough since 1979, by month of registration.

Mrs. Currie: The table shows the number of deaths registered in the Newham Registration District (which is coterminous with Newham London borough) with any

mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, irrespective of whether it did or did not appear as the underlying cause of death, by month of registration from January 1979 to 14 November 1986.

Number of deaths registered with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, in Newham London Borough, by month of registration, 1979-1986

Year	Months of registration											
	January	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*
1979	—	1	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
1980	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1981	—	1	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
1982	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1983	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1984	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1985	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
1986[1]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[2]—	n/a

[1] Figures for 1986 are provisional.
[2] To week ending 14 November.
n/a Not available.

Single Payments

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single payments have been paid out by his Department's office in Brighton for each month since January.

Mr. Lyell: Information is not available in the precise form requested. For each four week period since January 1986 the numbers of single payments made by the Department's Brighton office were as follows:

Four weeks ending	*Number*
14 January 1986	434
11 February 1986	659
11 March 1986	798
8 April 1986	855
8 May 1986	967
3 June 1986	919
1 July 1986	876
29 July 1986	798
26 August 1986	586
23 September 1986	572
21 October 1986	542
18 November 1986	591

Homeless People

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice his Department gives to family practitioners committees concerning the registration of homeless people with general practitioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Everyone normally resident in the United Kingdom is entitled to receive general medical services. If a person experiences difficulty in registering with a general medical practitioner, the family practitioner committee has a duty to assign him to a doctor's list. If a doctor refused to accept a person on his list he would still be obliged to provide any immediately necessary treatment for up to 14 days or until the patient was accepted by another doctor, whichever occurs sooner.

In 1985 FPCs were asked to indicate in their 1985-86 annual programmes whether there were any difficulties in their area in terms of people with no settled way of life obtaining general medical services. The results are currently being studied.

This year in response to special needs identified in parts of London two pilot schemes have been established, one in Tower Hamlets and the other in Camden. These schemes are taking primary health care to homeless people in the places where they congregate. The longer term objective is to encourage people to register on the list of a general medical practitioner wherever this is practicable.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, how many homeless people are estimated as not registered with a general practitioner in the current year; and what were the comparable figures for 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mrs. Currie: The statistics which the hon. Member seeks are not collected.

Embryo Research

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *189*, the proposed consultative document on the issues raised by the Warnock Report will include the suggested alternative draft clauses for future legislation to which he referred.

Mr. Newton: No. The document will indicate that when the Government bring forward comprehensive legislation on these issues they will offer Parliament alternative draft clauses on human embryo research.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Sport and Leisure Park

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the funding arrangements for the sport and leisure park proposed by the Joe Lindsay memorial youth group in west Belfast.

Dr. Mawhinney: A maximum grant of £207,925 is available from March 1986 to February 1987 in respect of the proposed Park and is made up as follows:

	£
Wages	180,769
Administration and premises	19,656
Feasibility study	7,500

Disabled People

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations he is undertaking on the extension to Northern Ireland by Order in Council of the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Consultations have already begun with interested Government Departments in Northern Ireland. This process of consultation will be carried through as quickly as possible.

ENERGY

Marine Pollution

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken in the last three years to ensure that marine pollution by drilling mud and drilling cuttings from production and exploration of oil and natural gas platforms in the North Sea under the United Kingdom's jurisdiction, is avoided where practicably possible.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: In October 1984 the Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971 was amended to include control of the use, on the United Kingdom Continental Shelf, of refined oils used to formulate oil based drilling muds.

In accordance with criteria agreed within the Paris Commission exemptions under the 1971 Act for the use of oil based muds may be issued. These exemptions prohibit the discharge of whole muds, require analysis of oil on cuttings, and for multi-well sites require the operator to carry out sediment monitoring before, during and after drilling.

In general no significant pollution risk arises from the discharge of water-based drilling muds and associated cuttings.

In some particularly sensitive locations the discharges of any muds and cuttings would not be permitted.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy at what intervals oil and natural gas platforms within the United Kingdom's jurisdiction are inspected to ensure compliance with regulations for the prevention and reduction of oil pollution.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Offshore oil production platforms on the United Kingdom Continental Shelf are inspected at least once each year by inspectors from the Department of Energy specifically to ensure compliance with regulations for the prevention and reduction of oil pollution. Other inspectors make more frequent visits and should they, helicopter pilots, or masters of offshore support vessels observe significant oil contamination of the sea, they report it to the Department of Energy.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if permits issued by Her Majesty's Government to companies wishing to explore and exploit petroleum and natural gas include mandatory requirements to prevent, on the basis of the best available technology, marine pollution through technical and organisational measures.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: All licences issued to allow companies to explore and exploit petroleum and natural gas on the United Kingdom continental shelf state that the licensee shall not carry out any operation, authorised by the licence, which will interfere unjustifiably with the conservation of the living resources of the sea.

Before any development is approved, the Secretary of State for Energy must be satisfied that the licence operator will employ the best practicable means to minimise oily discharges.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what proportion of the consumer price for a unit of nuclear electricity is set aside for paying the cost of dealing with the waste occasioned by the generation of that unit;

(2) what will be the total estimated cost in 1986 money per unit of electricity generated of supervising the disposal of nuclear waste.

Mr. Goodlad: The Central Electricity Generating Board's Accounts for 1985-86, the latest year for which figures are available, include provision for the costs of nuclear waste treatment totalling around £70 million.

When averaged over the total electricity generated, these costs represent about 0·03p per unit. The electricity industry does not distinguish in its prices between nuclear and non-nuclear generation, but as a proportion of the overall price paid by consumers in England and Wales, these costs represent less than 1 per cent. of the total price of electricity.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the latest relative total unit costs of the different types of electrical generation in the United Kingdom per unit, taking account of the cost of disposing of waste products.

Mr. Goodlad: The latest available comparative generation costs are those published by the Central Electricity Generating Board in its booklet "Analysis of Generation Costs 1983-84 Update", a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what training exercises for emergencies have been held at Heysham 2 nuclear power station in the presence of one or more inspectors of Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate; what was the date and nature of each exercise; and what reports have been made by inspectors;

(2) what training exercises for emergencies have been held at Dungeness B nuclear power station in the presence of one or more inspectors of Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate; what was the date and nature of each exercise; and what reports have been made by inspectors;

(3) what training exercises for emergencies have been held at Hartlepool nuclear power station in the presence of one or more inspectors of Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate; what was the date and nature of each exercise; and what reports have been made by inspectors.

Mr. Goodlad: Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate requires emergency exercises to be demonstrated to their satisfaction before fuel loading, and at least annually thereafter, at all operational nuclear power

stations. Formal comments are made by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate to licensees after each exercise.

Heysham 2 is approaching the fuel loading stage of commissioning. A team of inspectors from Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate observed exercises demonstrating its emergency arrangements on 18 July 1986 and 6 November 1986. The first exercise did not satisfy Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate, which required a second exercise. This was successful.

The most recent exercises of emergency arrangements at Hartlepool and Dungeness B nuclear power station took place on 19 November and 21 November 1986 respectively.

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the present stage of commissioning of each reactor at *(a)* Dungeness B, *(b)* Hartlepool and *(c)* Heysham 2; what problems have been encountered with each unit during commissioning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: This is a matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information other than educational and professional qualifications is provided in respect of named persons by a nuclear site licensee for Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate to judge whether a person is fit for his duties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: For any person to be appointed as a duly authorised person at a licensed nuclear site, Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate is notified in writing of the function to which the person is appointed, together with the person's qualifications and relevant experience.

British Nuclear Fuels

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, in the light of the recent study by Don Popplewell of the National Radiological Protection Board, he will now direct British Nuclear Fuels to release to independent scientists all its autopsy findings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: This is a matter for the management of BNFL. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Inspectors (Salaries)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the current salary scales of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in England, together with the number of these inspectors on each salary grade.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is as follows:

Grade	*National Salary Scale* £	*Number in Grade on 1 December 1986*
Her Majesty's Inspector (Grade 6)	18,020 to 24,302	375
Staff/Divisional Inspector (Grade 5)	23,730 to 27,065	65
Chief Inspector (Grade 4)	28,975 to 30,475	7
Senior Chief Inspector (Grade 2)	41,500 to 43,500	1
		448

Student Grants

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the changes in rights to higher education grants for mature students over the last five years, and give the dates of orders whereby these were effected.

Mr. Walden: The Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations do not define a mature student. Students aged 26 or over may be eligible to receive an older students allowance in addition to their basic grant if they satisfy certain conditions. One change has been made to those conditions in the last five years. Until 1 September 1986 students were eligible for the allowance if they had been in full-time employment for three of the six years immediately preceding the start of their course: but students commencing a course after that date must have earned sums totalling at least £12,000 at any time during the three years prior to the course in order to be eligible. This change was effected by the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations 1986 (SI No. 1306) which were laid before Parliament on 1 August 1986 and came into operation on 1 September 1986.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many mature students will lose their eligibility to statutory right to a grant for higher education as a consequence of changing the criteria to include remuneration as well as three years of employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: Students aged 26 and over may be eligible to receive an older students allowance in addition to their basic grant if they satisfy certain conditions. No students who were receiving the allowance under the arrangements operating before 1 September 1986 will lose their entitlement. Information about the number of students entering higher education since that date who would have qualified for the older students allowance under the previous criteria but who are not now eligible is not available. A number of students who were not eligible before will be under the new arrangements.

Mr. Stanbrook asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the terms of reference for his inquiry into the funding of undergraduate student support; if they include part-time students; and when he expects it to be completed.

Mr. George Walden: The terms of reference of the student support review are:

> To review the present arrangements for the financial support of students studying at first degree level or equivalent in Great Britain and to consider the future basis for such support, having regard to:

(i) the situation and the maintenance needs of students, and the extent to which it is appropriate that those needs should be supported from public funds;
(ii) other actual and possible sources of support which would allow the removal of students from the social security system — including the case for a system involving loans as well as grants, and the contribution of sponsorship to the needs of students on vocationally oriented courses;
(iii) the Government's stated policies for higher education and access to it; and
(iv) arrangements made in other countries with developed systems for the financial support of students.

The review will consider the support of part-time students who are studying at first degree level. Its work is expected to be completed next year.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers in post in England and Wales are drawn from ethnic minority groups; and what proportion of these are currently employed on the Burnham scale 1 or 2.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not collected by the Department.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female teachers are currently employed in England and Wales; and how many (i) male and (ii) female teachers are on the Burnham scale 1 and 2.

Mrs. Rumbold: The latest information is for 31 March 1985 and is as follows:

	Full-time teachers[1]	*Of which, number on Burnham scales 1 and 2*
Male	165,380	68,170
Female	242,610	177,510

[1] The figures are provisional and cover full-time teachers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England and Wales.

WALES

Housing Associations

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will clarify how much of the additional resources being made available for housing associations in Wales for 1987-88 is conditional on being used for restricted specific projects; and how much is by way of general increase to expand the normal activities of housing associations in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The additional resources are in part being made available to enable the Housing Corporation to make limited grants in support of specific projects to provide rented housing with private sector finance. Substantial additional resources will also be devoted to the conventional Housing Association grant-funded programme. The precise distribution of resources will be decided when we have considered the Housing Corporation's detailed proposals for its approved development programme in 1987-88 which we expect to receive shortly.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those local housing authorities in Wales which have registration schemes for houses in multiple occupation in their areas as confirmed by him under sections 346 to 351 of the Housing Act 1985.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: They are Cardiff city council and Swansea city council.

Council House Sales

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many council house tenants in Wales bought their houses under the right-to-buy provisions of the Housing Act 1980 and subsequent legislation in the financial year 1980-81 and each subsequent year for which figures are available; and what are his estimates for such sales in future years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The number of council house tenants in Wales who bought their dwellings under the right-to-buy legislation is shown in the table:

	Local authority	*New towns*
1980-81	265	38
1981-82	11,219	506
1982-83	14,145	1,074
1983-84	7,258	456
1984-85	5,086	316
1985-86	4,833	277
1986-87 (Estimate)	5,000	[1]10

Estimates for future years are not available.
[1] Estimate only includes Newtown. Cwmbran figures have been amalgamated with those for Torfaen since April 1986.

Hill Farming

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the present state of hill farming in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The annual review of the hill and uplands is not yet complete but an announcement will be made shortly.

Wales Tourist Board

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to give extra financial aid to the Wales tourist board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Details of the funds to be made available to the Wales tourist board for the financial year 1987-88 will be contained in the Supply Estimates usually published in March.

Schools Inspectors

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if there has been any change in the salary scales of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in Wales since March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roberts: Yes. The following salary scales became effective from 1 April 1986:

Grade 4 (HM Chief Inspector)
£
28,350

29,100
29,850

Grade 5 (HM Staff Inspector)

£
23,730
24,741
25,754
27,065

Grade 6 (HM Inspector)

£
18,020
18,872
20,356
22,044
24,302

The Grade 4 scale was further revised with effect from 1 July as follows:

Grade 4 (HM Chief Inspector)

£
28,975
29,725
30,475

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools currently employed in Wales who have had no experience of teaching in primary schools; and how this figure compares with that on 18 March.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Fifty; this is an increase of three since 18 March 1986. I also refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him on 24 March 1986 at columns *347-48*.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will arrange for the forward programme of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in Wales to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. A particular value of reports by Her Majesty's inspectors is that they reflect the realities of educational practice, and this value would be reduced if programmes were published in advance.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current number of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in Wales who have had no experience of teaching in schools; and how this compares with the figure on 24 March.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Five; there has been no change since 24 March 1986.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the figures for 1985 pertaining to the median waiting time and the maximum waiting time before admission to Singleton and Velindre hospitals for a cervical carcinoma.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Disabled People

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) when he intends to lay commencement orders for sections 4, 8, 9, and 10 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986;

(2) when he intends to lay a commencement order for section 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security to the hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 26 November at column *289*.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Wales what consultation he intends to undertake with voluntary organisations of and for disabled people before bringing the various sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 into force or issuing guidance to local authorities and health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Appropriate voluntary organisations will be consulted before regulations are made under section 1 of the Act. We shall consider whether it would be appropriate to consult voluntary organisations on the implementation of other sections of the Act as the need arises.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to lay commencement orders for sections 5 and 6 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We are not yet able to say when commencement orders might be laid to bring sections 5 and 6 into effect.

Junior Hospital Staff

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the ratio of junior hospital staff, up to and including senior registrars to consultant staff, excluding associate specialists or sub-consultants, in each of the recognised specialties in each of the Welsh regions for which those figures are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The whole-time equivalents of junior and consultant hospital staff are:

Junior hospital staff and Consultant staff as at 30 September 1986 (whole-time equivalents)[1]

	Clwyd		*East Dyfed*		*Gwent*		*Gwynedd*		*Mid Glamorgan*		*Powys*		*South Glamorgan*		*West Glamorgan*		*Pembrokeshire*		*Wales*	
	[2]*J.S.*	[2]*C.S.*	*J.S.*	*C.S.*	*J.S.*	*C.S.*	*J.S.*	*C.S.*	*J.S.*	*C.S.*	*J.S.*	*C.S.*	*J.S.*	*C.S.*	*J.S.*	*C.S.*	*J.S.*	*C.S.*	*J.S.*	*C.S.*
Accident and Emergency	11	1	7	2	3	2	5	0	5	2	—	—	14	2·2	13	0	3	1	71	10·2
Anaesthetics	16	11·8	6	10·8	13	15	8	8·1	12	13·5	0	0·1	42·8	20·6	21	15	4	5	122·8	99·9
Blood transfusion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	2	—	—	—	—	0	2
Cardiology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	14·8	2·5	1	1·7	—	—	15·8	4·2
Cardio-thoracic surgery	0	0·1	—	—	0	0·1	—	—	0	0·1	—	—	11·6	2·8	—	—	—	—	11·6	3·1
Chemical pathology	0	2	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·7	1·6	0	1	—	—	4·7	5·6
Child and Adolescent psychiatry	1	6	1	1·7	1	2·7	0	2	0	3	0	0·4	1	3	0	2	0	0·3	4	21·1
Clinical genetics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·2	0·5	—	—	—	—	2·2	0·5
Clinical pharmacology and Therapeutics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·6	1·1	—	—	—	—	0·6	1·1

	Clwyd		East Dyfed		Gwent		Gwynedd		Mid Glamorgan		Powys		South Glamorgan		West Glamorgan		Pembrokeshire		Wales	
	[1]J.S.	[2]C.S.	J.S.	C.S.	J.S.	C.S.	J.S.	C.S.	J.S.	C.S.	J.S.	C.S.	J.S.	C.S.	J.S.	C.S.	J.S.	C.S.	J.S.	C.S.
Clinical physiology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	2	—	—	—	—	0	2
Dermatology	1	0·8	0	0·9	1	2	0	1·2	1	1·3	0	0·1	6·2	2·4	1	1·8	0	0·2	10·2	10·7
Ear, Nose and Throat	5	3·8	5	2·1	6	3	2	2·1	7	3	0	0·2	9	3·5	7	3·6	0	0·3	41	21·6
Endocrinology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0	0	1	—	—	1	1
Forensic psychiatry	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	1	—	—	—	—	0	1
Gastroenterology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	1	—	—	2	2
General medicine	23	8·8	17	5·9	30	9·9	15	5·3	35	12	1	0·6	32·2	10·7	20	5·5	1	1·9	174·2	60·6
General pathology	—	—	—	—	4	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0	—	—	—	—	5	0
General surgery	19	6·9	15	6·3	22	8·8	15	6·1	22	9·1	0	0·5	38·3	9·2	21	7·3	8	4	160·3	58·2
Genito-urinary medicine	0	0·3	0	0·1	0	0·7	0	0·7	—	—	—	—	1	0·3	0	1·8	0	0·1	1	4
Geriatrics	14·5	4·9	10	2·9	10·5	2·8	8	4·1	22	7·4	0	0·3	28·6	5·9	10·2	3·9	3	1	106·8	33·2
Gynaecology and Obstetrics	13	5·9	7	3·3	18	7	6	3·2	24·6	7·8	0	0·5	22·8	6·6	21	5·5	4	2	116·4	41·8
Haematology	0	2	0	2	0	3	0	2	0	3	—	—	8·9	4·3	1	2	0	1	9·9	19·3
Histopathology	0	5	0	3	1	4	0	2	1	4·2	—	—	—	—	0	4	0	1	10·5	29·4
Medical microbiology	0	0·5	—	—	0	1	0	1	0	1·1	—	—	—	—	0	1	0	1	6·2	10·2
Mental handicap	0	0·3	1	0·6	3	1·9	0	0·6	0	1·9	0	0·2	1·6	2·5	0	0·3	0	0·2	5·6	8·5
Mental illness	14	7·1	8	6·4	11	10	4	1·6	23	8·7	4	3	25·5	11	11	8·5	0	0·7	100·5	57
Nephrology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	1	—	—	0	1
Neurology	0	0·9	0	0·1	—	—	0	0·3	0	0·5	—	—	8·4	2·4	3	1·9	—	—	11·4	6·1
Neuropathology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0·5	—	—	—	—	1	0·5
Neurosurgery	0	0·4	—	—	0	0·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	4·4	1·9	6	1·9	—	—	10·4	4·3
Occupational health	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Ophthalmology	4	3	4	3·4	5	4	2	1·9	6	4	0	1·3	8	4	6	3	0	0·4	35	25
Oral surgery	3	1·5	0	0·3	3	2	1	0·5	4	2	—	—	16·4	4·3	3·2	1·6	0	0·1	30·6	12·3
Orthodontics	1	1·4	0	0·8	0	1	0	1·5	0	1	0	0·2	6·5	2·3	0	1·2	0	1	7·5	10·4
Paediatrics	7	4	3	2·3	9	4	5	2	20	5·9	0	1·2	24·3	7·8	12	3·7	3	0·9	83·3	31·8
Paediatric dentistry	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·8	1	—	—	—	—	3·8	1
Paediatric neurology	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	1	—	—	—	—	0	1
Paediatric surgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	—	—	—	—	2	2
Plastic surgery	0	0·1	0	0·2	7	3·4	—	—	0	0·1	—	—	—	—	0	0·1	—	—	7	3·9
Psychotherapy	0	0·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0·6
Radiology	0·6	7·7	0	5·5	1	7·6	0	5·1	0	11·3	0	0·7	17·3	12·6	1	7	0	2	19·9	59·5
Radiotherapy	0	1	0	0·2	0	0·1	0	0·5	0	0·2	0	0·1	12	6·5	2	2·7	—	—	14	11·3
Rheumatology	0	1	0	0·2	0	1	—	—	2	3	—	—	6·1	3·5	2	2·8	—	—	10·1	11·5
Restorative dentistry	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13·6	3·6	—	—	—	—	13·6	3·6
Thoracic medicine	4	0	0	0·1	—	—	0	1·1	0	0·4	0	1·8	17·3	3·2	2	0	—	—	23·3	6·6
Traumatic and Orthopaedic surgery	10	4	6	3·8	11	4·7	3	2·5	23	6·8	0	0·3	17	4·5	11	6	2	2	83	34·6
Urology	—	—	—	—	4	1	—	—	1	1	—	—	8·2	2	0	2	7	0	20·2	6
All specialities	148·1	93·8	90	64·9	—	—	74	55·4	208·6	114·3	5	11·5	448·8	170·6	176·4	101·8	35	26·1	1,360·4	742·3

[1] Includes House Officers, Senior House Officers, Registrars and Senior Registrars.
[2] Junior staff.
[3] Consultant staff.

Teachers

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many teachers are currently employed in Wales; and how many of them are Welsh-speaking.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There were 27,952 teachers in full time equivalent terms in service in maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools at January 1986. Information on the total number who are Welsh speaking is not available.

However, a survey of secondary school teachers, carried out in 1984, revealed that nearly 4,400 or 30 per cent. of the total full-time and part-time teachers in maintained secondary schools regarded themselves as reasonably or fully fluent in oral Welsh.

Students (Financial Support)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that there is available for all full-time students in Wales undertaking courses at technical and further education colleges, a maintenance grant at least as great as the benefit they would receive if they were unemployed and dependent on supplementary benefit.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have been asked to reply.

Grants to students in non-advanced further education in England and Wales are made at the discretion of local education authorities; in addition the parents of full-time students up to age 19 receive child benefit. Support for students on degree level courses is under consideration by the student support review.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Telephone Calls

Mr. Roger King asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will make a statement on the arrangements for hon. Members to make international telephone calls from the Palace of Westminster: what record is kept of the number, length and destination of such calls; and what are the provisions for charging hon. Members for such calls made by themselves or their staff.

Mr. Biffen: Under arrangements approved by the Services Committee, hon. Members may make international calls from extensions on the Palace of Westminster exchange which must be booked through the House of Commons telephone operators. Records of international telephone calls are maintained for accounting purposes and hon. Members are billed by the Fees Office.

ENVIRONMENT

Houses (Multiple Occupation)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide in respect of houses in multiple occupation information on *(a)* the total number of notices served by all local housing authorities in England under section 147 and schedule 24 to the Housing Act 1980 (now sections 366 and 368 Housing Act 1985) in respect of means of escape from fire for each of the following years: 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985 and *(b)* the total amount of special grants made by all local housing

authorities in England towards the costs of means of escape from fire, including both mandatory and discretionary grants made for each of the above years.

Mr. Tracey: Information on the number of notices served is not available for all authorities. The following table gives information for England and Wales published by the Institution of Environmental Health Officers:

Year	*Number of notices served*	*Number of authorities making returns*
1981-82	2,889	85
1982-83	2,346	84
1983-84	2,301	82
1984-85	3,197	80

The Department's postal survey gave a figure of 3,853 notices served in 1983-84, the difference being probably accounted for by the higher response rate (96 per cent.).

The following table gives information for England on special grants (both mandatory and discretionary) for the provision of means of escape from fire:

Year	*Number of grants*	*Total amount of grant £000*
1982	1,130	1,604
1983	1,380	2,532
1984	1,830	4,303
1985	1,820	4,421

Marine Pollution

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the policy of his Department with regard to level of proof required that pollution is having harmful effects on the marine environment before appropriate action is taken; what criteria are used to decide when proof is sufficient and when damage becomes irreversible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom's regulatory authorities do not require absolute proof of environmental damage before appropriate action is taken. Where monitoring and research activities indicate trends which are likely to become unacceptable, action is taken by the appropriate authorities. Increasingly the United Kingdom is operating within a framework of nationally and internationally agreed quality standards into which safety factors are built and kept under continuous review.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the information which his Department has, within the last three years, exchanged with any other North sea states on *(a)* low waste/non-waste and low emission/non-emission technologies, *(b)* waste management, *(c)* the protection of aquatic environment, *(d)* substitutes and economic incentives and *(e)* technical suggestions with regard to solutions which render the disposal of wastes at sea unnecessary, namely recycling, reprocessing and waste disposal on land.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom exchanges information with other North sea states on a regular basis through the Oslo and Paris commissions and their working groups, as well as through the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, OECD, the EC and the international North sea conference. Such exchanges cover inputs, monitoring and related research, and waste management, recycling and alternative disposal options. Preparations for the international North sea conference are also considering the scope for applying cleaner technologies to discharges.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what initiatives his Department has proposed within *(a)* the London dumping convention, *(b)* the Oslo commission, *(c)* the Paris commission and *(d)* the EEC during the last three years to ensure that appropriate measures for the prevention of marine pollution are prepared and implemented as soon as possible.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government take their obligations in the European Community and as a contracting party to the London, Oslo and Paris conventions, seriously and conscientiously. Within the London and Oslo conventions the United Kingdom has instigated or been party to a number of collective initiatives in recent years, including a review of industrial waste disposal practices, the further improvement of controls over the disposal of persistent plastics at sea, and the elaboration of new guidelines for the disposal of dredged materials at sea. In the Paris commission and the EC we have in particular pressed for attention to be paid to the problems or organotins in marine anti-fouling paints.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions within the last three years his Department has exchanged information on national arrangements for monitoring and licensing discharges into the North sea with other North sea states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom contributed to a paper prepared by the Germans for the 1984 Bremen North sea conference on the "Licensing and Monitoring Practices of Discharges in the Riparian States of the North Sea". The paper has subsequently been updated and discussed by the Paris Commission. The United Kingdom will participate in a comparison undertaken by the Paris commission of discharges from both sewage treatment works and industrial plant.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's Government have made all the results of national pollution monitoring programmes available to parties of both the Oslo and Paris commissions to assist the joint monitoring programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom participates fully in the joint monitoring programme of the Oslo and Paris commissions. The commissions agree on the work to be carried out under the programme and the United Kingdom supplies the relevant national data. In addition, the Government make available any other monitoring data relating to subjects under discussion within the two commissions.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department has conducted or commissioned in the last three years into the potentially hazardous nature of black and grey list substances entering the North sea within the framework of the Oslo commission, the Paris commission and the EEC.

Mr. Waldegrave: In addition to the information given in my replies to the hon. Member's questions on 27

November, at columns 311-17, about research relevant to the effects of organic synthetic compounds in the North sea, my Department has commissioned research during the last three years on the following grey list substances:

— boron, vanadium, sulphide, ammonia, iron, inorganic tin, copper nickel, zinc and arsenic.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the research papers commissioned or completed for Her Majesty's Government in the last three years examining the effects of nutrients from United Kingdom sources on the North sea.

Mr. Waldegrave: Within the last three years my Department has commissioned a research contract on the fate of fertiliser nitrogen in marine waters. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has commissioned a number of studies which include assessments of the effects of nutrients in the marine environment. While none of these is specifically directed to the North sea, it is expected that the knowledge gained will be of general application.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what new measures Her Majesty's Government have introduced in the last three years to protect the North sea from pollution of anthropogenic origins.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to his questions of 27 November, at columns 311-17. In addition, the enactment of part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 has further improved the controls exercised by my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland over the disposal of waste at sea.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list any recommendations currently being considered by his Department concerning the acceptable level of list I and list II substances in dredged materials to be disposed of in the North sea.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to his question of 27 November, at column 314.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what reviews Her Majesty's Government have carried out within the last three years of methods employed by their environmental scientists to determine sediment contamination of the North sea by list I and list II chemicals with a view to achieving international comparability.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom is playing a leading role in the studies of sediment contamination through the marine sediments working group of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea and the joint monitoring group of the Oslo and Paris commissions. This has included intercalibration of sampling and analytical procedures for a range of metals.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to *(a)* prevent, *(b)* reduce and *(c)* monitor the input of potentially hazardous synthetic organic compounds into the North sea in the last three years.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave him on 27 November, at columns 311-17.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what research Her Majesty's Government have commissioned or completed in the last three years into the effects on marine, estuary and freshwater biota of the 129 potential list I substances mentioned in the communication of 22 June 1982 from the European Commission to the European Council on hazardous substances within the meaning of list I of European Council directive 76/464/EEC.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have carried out exploratory surveys of the concentrations of some of the 129 substances and plan to continue this work. We have a major research exercise into the effects of organo tin compounds. We have reviewed the available date on toxicity, persistence and bio-accumulation and we have sponsored research aimed at the setting of quality standards for the several important uses of fresh and marine waters.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on national monitoring and research efforts currently being conducted to establish the environmental state of the North sea.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to his questions of 27 November at columns 311-17. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food undertakes a considerable programme of monitoring and research on marine environmental and fisheries matters in support of its statutory responsibilities. The level of resources committed to this programme is kept under review.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the research programmes Her Majesty's Government have established in the last three years to examine and improve knowledge on sedimentation processes and accumulation as well as on remobilisation of hazardous substances in the aquatic environment.

Mr. Waldegrave: Research on the movement and accumulation of sediment and on the mobilisation of metals has been commissioned by the Department as part of the ongoing work of the laboratories of the National Environmental Research Council, the Water Research Centre, and the Hydraulics Research Centre for the past six years. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has a programme concerned with sediment processes, accumulation and remobilisation of heavy metals in the aquatic environment.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek powers to require statutory water authorities in the United Kingdom to review periodically environmental quality objectives in relation to ongoing national and international research into the possible effects of list I and list II substances on the aquatic environment.

Mr. Waldegrave: Details of the standards laid down nationally in the United Kingdom for managing water quality were given in my replies to the hon. Member's questions on 27 November at columns 311-17. The standards are subject to review and may be revised by my Department in the light of experience of the water authorities or fresh scientific evidence.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how frequently he reviews environmental quality objectives in relation to ongoing national and international research into marine pollution.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department will review the quality standards set nationally for list II substances when it considers this necessary in the light of experience or fresh scientific evidence.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied that the current state of knowledge of the marine, freshwater and estuaries ecosystems is sufficient to ensure complete protection of these ecosystems from pollution from anthropogenic sources.

Mr. Waldegrave: While complete protection of all ecosystems is unattainable, and while there is always further progress to be made, I am satisfied that the research being carried out to improve our knowledge of aquatic ecosystems is adequate and that the main priority areas are being tackled.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent the environmental quality objectives adopted as a means of managing water quality take into account both the latest scientific data and the best technical means available to industry to reduce potentially harmful emissions.

Mr. Waldegrave: Information about the standards laid down in the United Kingdom for managing water quality was given in my replies to the hon. Member's questions on 27 November, at columns 311-17. The standards are subject to review and may be revised by my Department in the light of experience or fresh scientific evidence.

Quality standards are based on the effect of a substance upon the receiving environment; they are unrelated to technology-based emission standards. However, in setting consent conditions for individual discharges, water authorities may take account of the technology available to the firm concerned as well as the need to meet the quality standard in the receiving water.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what precautionary measures Her Majesty's Government have introduced within the last three years aimed at promoting the use of the best available technology to reduce emissions of airborne pollutants from United Kingdom industrial point sources.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the last three years Her Majesty's industrial air pollution inspectorate has issued six notes on the best practicable means for reducing emissions of airborne pollutants from scheduled processes. These were for cement works, mineral works, lead works, and the production of sulphuric acid, chlorine and ammonia.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken in the last three years to reduce the discharge of substances on the grey list in particular of specific heavy metals-metalloids, to rivers and estuaries discharging into the North sea.

Mr. Waldegrave: Information on the steps the Government have taken in the last three years to reduce the discharge of substances on the grey list, was given in my replies to the hon. Member's questions on 27 November, at columns 311-17.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to improve protection of the marine environment from pollution by mercury and its compounds with regard to mercury discharges from non-industrial services, in particular *(a)* thermometers, *(b)* batteries, *(c)* dental health establishments, *(d)* analytical laboratories, *(e)* electronic appliances and instruments and *(f)* chloralkali products for example sodium hydroxide.

Mr. Waldegrave: Advice on the storage, handling and recovery of mercury is contained in my Department's "Waste Management Paper No. 12", on mercury-bearing wastes. My Department has held discussions with representatives of the dentists' associations on the discharge of mercury from dental health establishments. As regards the use of mercury in analysis, my Department has suggested formally in its circular on implementation of EC directives on dangerous substances to water, that water authorities advise that mercury be used as little as possible in analysis and that discharges should not be disposed of to water. In addition, analytical methods for the determination of chemical oxygen demand which do not require the use of mercury are being introduced.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what detailed plans he has to deal with emergencies and accidents at sea involving the accidental release of oil or other noxious substances.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.

The Department of Transport's marine pollution control unit, created in 1979, is permanently on call and is dedicated entirely to contingency planning for dealing with oil and other toxic substances spilt from ships at sea and to the direction of such counter-pollution operations as may be necessary. The unit has under contract a variety of resources at various locations around the United Kingdom coast which can be activated at short notice *(a)* to mount clean-up activities at sea in the event of pollution threatening the United Kingdom coastline or other marine interests, and *(b)* to assist local authorities with their onshore clean-up activities.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all oil pollution incidents reported by oil corporations to Her Majesty's Government within the last three years from vessels, production or drilling pipelines operating within the United Kingdom's jurisdiction.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have been asked to reply.

In 1984, 47 spills from offshore installations on the United Kingdom continental shelf, totalling 130 tonnes of oil, were notified to the Department of Energy; 85 spills, in all 308 tonnes of oil, were notified in 1985. To date this year 148 spills, a total of 550 tonnes of oil, have been reported.

This figure does not include the oil spilt from the Flotta-Piper pipeline on 26 and 27 November 1986.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek powers to ensure that oil companies, wherever they use oil-based muds, reduce the residual oil cuttings using the best available solid control technology.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have been asked to reply.

A condition of all exemptions, issued under the Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971, for the use of oil-based drilling muds, is that the operator shall install and operate efficient solids control equipment and continue to operate it at all times in such a manner as to reduce the oil content of the discharged cuttings to a minimum.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken in the last three years to seek to keep to a minimum the use of oil-based mud on oil exploration and drilling platforms in the North sea.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have been asked to reply.

Drilling operators are permitted to discharge drilling cuttings contaminated with oil-based mud only within the conditions of an exemption from the Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971. Applications for such exemptions are accepted only where the use of oil-based muds is essential for geological, safety or economic reasons as agreed within the Paris Commission.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what toxicity test systems Her Majesty's Government have established in the last three years to classify oil-based muds as either low-toxicity or diesel-based.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have been asked to reply.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Fisheries research laboratory has developed marine toxicity test methods, involving measuring effects on brown shrimp, for both base-oils and oil-based drilling muds. The tests allow the discrimination of products with acute toxicities similar to diesel oil and diesel-based muds from those products of sufficiently low toxicity to be accepteable for use on the United Kingdom continental shelf under the provisions of the revised Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what research Her Majesty's Government have commenced or completed in the last three years to develop alternative substances for base oils which are biodegradable and of low-toxicity as well as into the ecological impact of drilling muds based on diesel and alternative low-toxicity based oils.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have been asked to reply.

The Department of Energy in consultation with the Fisheries Departments operates toxicity standards for oil used in formulating drilling muds. The oil industry and its suppliers use these standards when developing new base-oils and oil-based muds.

Government and oil industry scientists have conducted studies on the environmental impact of the discharge of oil contaminated drilling cuttings. This work has shown that the base oils used are highly biodegradable and that any environmental impact is localised.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Environment for what period of time nuclear waste will require to be supervised, given present technology.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government's regulatory authorities will expect facilities to be designed so that safety is not dependent on long-term supervision, but

recognise that near-surface disposal of low level waste may require control of land use for some decades after the repository is closed.

Deep disposal of intermediate-level waste will require supervision only for the period before the repository is closed.

Homelessness

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his Department's current estimates of homelessness per London borough and the comparable figures for 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Tracey: The following table gives for those authorities responding to our questionnaire the number of households which, after due inquiry, were found to be homeless and for which the authority either accepted a reponsibility for securing accommodation or provided advice and assistance.

	1st half 1986		*1st half 1985*		*1st half 1984*		*1st half 1983*	
	Accep-tances	*Advice and Assistance*	*Accep-tances*	*Advice and Assistance*	*Accep-tances*	*Advice and Assistance*	*Accep-tances*	*Advice and Assistance*
City	25	16	22	14	22	12	38	11
Camden	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	582	71
Hackney	[2]	[2]	[1]301	[2]	[1]335	[2]	[2]	[2]
Hammersmith	[1]250	[2]	[1]286	[1]595	529	876	474	474
Haringey	[1]428	[1]409	863	795	727	498	992	655
Islington	1,310	164	1,034	143	1,044	119	1,048	82
Kensington	[1]149	[1]86	167	384	219	92	236	159
Lambeth	[2]	[2]	788	0	613	0	836	0
Lewisham	[2]	[2]	805	46	711	44	[1]264	[1]32
Newham	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	375[1]	[2]
Southwark	[1]407	[1]231	726	392	751	321	701	393
Tower Hamlets	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	424	53	[1]189	[1]62
Wandsworth	532	514	478	339	355	233	344	69
Westminster	820	458	567	282	[1]264	[1]129	553	696
Barking	[1]51	[1]13	[1]57	[1]7	169	60	110	23
Barnet	183	145	169	115	181	68	143	53
Bexley	[1]71	[1]54	146	9	152	42	136	53
Brent	[1]351	[1]400	823	800	719	948	941	727
Bromley	306	206	209	109	168	80	155	51
Croydon	410	[1]0	404	0	336	21	278	15
Ealing	588	927	589	710	560	307	554	187
Enfield	400	176	266	159	320	175	257	169
Greenwich	764	151	637	151	334	68	252	69
Harrow	173	189	152	147	177	188	160	173
Havering	[1]72	[1]181	112	191	80	205	89	194
Hillingdon	[2]	[2]	[1]86	[2]	133	22	[2]	[2]
Hounslow	305	339	353	276	363	305	278	251
Kingston	102	17	84	2	47	6	55	13
Merton	[1]86	[1]52	155	90	82	105	431	80
Redbridge	168	34	144	36	146	26	123	27
Richmond	139	23	113	36	106	71	106	35
Sutton	174	228	156	182	155	184	116	68
Waltham Forest	[1]162	[1]32	341	104	[2]	[2]	352	124

Notes:
[1] Means that the authority responded only for one quarter in the half year.
[2] Means that the authority failed to respond for either quarter.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many hostel places per London borough are available for homeless people in each London borough and what are the comparable figures for 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Tracey: The Department does not collect this information. However, I refer the hon. Member to the series "Homlessness Statistics, Actuals" published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, and to the report "Single Homelessness in London 1986" by the Single Homelessness in London Working Party. These give, respectively, information for successive financial years on hostel places available for homeless families and single people in hostels for which individual authorities are responsible and information for 1981 and 1985 on direct access, specialist and non-specialist places available for homeless single people in a wider range of accommodation including hostels. Copies of the CIPFA publications ar in the Library; the main relevant table from the working party's report is as follows:

TABLE 5

Bedspaces available for single homeless people in London—Comparison of 1981 and 1985 figures

Borough	Direct Access 1981	Direct Access 1985	Non-specialist 1981	Non-specialist 1985	Specialist 1981	Specialist 1985	Total 1981	Total 1985
Inner London								
City of London	225	—	13	—	—	—	268	—
Camden	1,927	774	71	96	211	234	2,209	1,104
Hackney	28	—	5	98	—	204	33	302
Hammersmith & Fulham	160	—	31	159	9	42	200	201
Haringey	—	—	—	36	95	68	95	104
Islington	534	—	13	129	72	255	619	384
Kensington & Chelsea	592	218	36	57	83	370	711	645
Lambeth	718	570	19	119	228	283	965	972
Lewisham	700	590	21	44	12	249	733	883
Newham	—	—	—	56	39	42	39	98
Southwark	1,992	620	36	122	152	245	2,180	1,057
Tower Hamlets	1,623	818	—	179	310	87	1,933	1,084
Wandsworth	54	—	—	84	20	296	74	380
Westminster, City of	2,516	1,110	17	135	14	67	2,547	1,312
Outer London								
Barking & Dagenham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barnet	—	—	—	—	87	92	87	92
Bexley	—	—	24	16	20	71	44	87
Brent	236	170	—	45	52	225	288	440
Bromley	—	—	—	—	39	89	39	89
Croydon	15	15	—	11	66	136	81	162
Ealing	100	—	19	35	50	151	169	186
Enfield	—	—	—	—	19	71	19	71
Greenwich	36	—	4	39	27	35	67	74
Harrow	60	—	—	—	10	20	70	20
Havering	—	—	—	—	16	36	16	36
Hillingdon	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hounslow	—	—	—	18	41	52	41	70
Kingston-upon-Thames	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Merton	—	—	—	—	—	10	—	10
Redbridge	—	—	—	—	—	7	—	7
Richmond-upon-Thames	—	—	—	7	12	84	12	91
Sutton	—	—	—	17	19	42	19	59
Waltham Forest	—	—	21	37	20	91	41	128
Total	11,546							
Less commercial hotels + working people's hostels	1,795							
Comparable totals	9,751	4,835	330	1,539	1,723	3,654	13,579	10,078

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice his Department gives to local housing authorities concerning the provision of an address for homeless people for the purposes of obtaining medical care and registration with a general practitioner.

Mr. Tracey: Arrangements for ensuring appropriate access to medical services are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Rates

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all services, subsidies, grants and other payments made by London boroughs in 1986-87 which are offset against contributions to the London rate equalisation schemes, giving details of the criteria used to determine which expenditure shall be allowed to be offset in this way.

Mr. Ridley: In determining the contributions of the City of London and the City of Westminster to the London rate equalisation scheme in 1986-87 I had regard to the following expenditure which I considered those authorities were likely to incur:

Contributing authority	*Service or function supported*	*Expenditure in 1986-87 £'000*
City of London	Museum of London	800
	Greater London Record Office	1,450
City of Westminster	English National Opera and London Festival Ballet	2,200

I did so because I considered that this expenditure would be incurred in carrying out functions for the benefit of some or all of the other rating authorities in Greater London.

Local Government Reorganisation

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish details of all services, subsidies and expenditure previously undertaken by the Greater London council which were transferred to *(a)* the Sports Council and *(b)* Thames water, showing for each body the details of services transferred and the total expenditure in 1986-87 on those services;

(2) if he will publish details of all services, subsidies and expenditure previously undertaken by the Greater London council which were transferred to *(a)* the Arts Council,

(b) regional arts associations, *(c)* the South Bank board, *(d)* the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, *(e)* the City of London, *(f)* the Inner London education authority, *(g)* English Heritage and *(h)* other institutions, showing for each body the details of services transferred and the total expenditure in 1986-87 on those services.

Mr. Ridley: The destinations of functions formerly carried out by the GLC were set out in my Department's circular No. 8/86, issued on 18 March 1986. A copy is available in the Library.

I shall write to the hon. Member about his other questions.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total current expenditure of each London borough in 1985-86 and 1986-87 (budgets) showing what part of the 1986-87 budget is attributed to services inherited from the Greater London Council.

Mr. Ridley: The latest information provided to the Department by each London borough on its total current expenditure for the years 1985-86 and 1986-87 is as follows:

	1985-86 £ *million*	*1986-87 (budgets)* £ *million*
City of London	57·789	74·558
Camden	87·072	104·741
Greenwich	60·334	84·249
Hackney	72·160	89·856
Hammersmith and Fulham	48·631	63·827
Islington	57·039	80·646
Kensington and Chelsea	34·591	47·631
Lambeth	86·380	113·821
Lewisham	61·749	88·007
Southwark	88·766	106·653
Tower Hamlets	59·254	80·575
Wandsworth	60·836	82·745
Westminster	66·351	94·287
Barking and Dagenham	56·345	72·963
Barnet	103·684	125·153
Bexley	76·416	90·848
Brent	149·517	180·611
Bromley	92·260	119·017
Croydon	111·948	141·128
Ealing	120·934	148·022
Enfield	88·091	116·525
Haringey	119·561	156·223
Harrow	70·734	83·804
Havering	84·650	102·742
Hillingdon	85·799	106·482
Hounslow	81·490	103·991
Kingston-upon-Thames	45·256	56·058
Merton	53·376	65·577
Newham	122·831	145·769
Redbridge	76·674	93·297
Richmond-upon-Thames	53·164	67·822
Sutton	54·523	69·287
Waltham Forest	100·700	120·012

The 1986-87 figures include expenditure on ex-GLC services as well as on other services. I have no information on how much is attributable to ex-GLC services.

Leased Plant

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from *(a)* local government, *(b)* leasing companies, *(c)* motor vehicle suppliers and manufacturers, *(d)* computer suppliers and manufacturers, *(e)* lift manufacturers and *(f)* central heating engineers on his proposals to count the value of leased plant against local authorities' capital allocations.

Mr. Ridley: I have received a number of representations from local authorities and leasing companies. I shall consider these representations, and consult the local authority associations prior to laying regulations before the House.

Local Authority Expenditure

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the estimates of local authority gross expenditure and income, excluding double counting of flows, for England in *(a)* 1985-86 and *(b)* 1986-87 using breakdowns consistent with those in table 1 of the Department of the Environment publication "Local Government Financial Statistics, England 1984-85".

Mr. Ridley: This information is not yet available.

Mrs. Roe asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in the light of the report by the Public Accounts Committee on the control of local authorities' capital expenditure, he will now review the project control system for housing schemes.

Mr. John Patten: My Department has today sent to the local authority associations a consultation paper, prepared jointly with the Welsh Office, proposing the abolition of project control for new building and renovation schemes as from 1 April 1987, and its replacement by a system of unit cost limits which will not require the submission of schemes to the Department.

This change will reduce work both for local authorities and for the Department, and allow authorities to plan and implement their capital programmes more efficiently. It will also clarify their responsibility for achieving value for money in their housing schemes. To promote value for money the Department will be improving the statistics available on costs of schemes, and commissioning an in-depth study of a sample of recent schemes. The Audit Commission will also be providing guidance for local authority auditors on value for money issues.

Existing procedures will continue to apply where a local authority proposes to buy houses or land for housing.

I have placed copies of the consultation paper in the Library and the Vote Office. The local authority associations have been asked to comment by January 30 so that, if they are approved, the new arrangements can come into effect in 1987-88.

Urban Development Grants

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department is carrying out into the outcome of a representative sample of urban development grant-aided projects; which housing projects have been included in the sample, and how these were selected; according to what criteria the outcome of these projects is being evaluated; and when his Department intend to publish the full findings and recommendations of this piece of research.

Mr. John Patten: My Department has commissioned Aston university to research into the performance and impact of the urban development grant programme covering the period September 1982 to June 1985. The

researchers are expected to report in two or three months' time. The research is based on a representative sample of projects, including housing projects. The individual projects are not being identified in the research report. The basis of the evaluation of housing projects will include the leverage of private sector investment, improving housing conditions and housing choice, jobs provided, bringing land and buildings into use, and environmental improvement.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all housing projects for which urban development grant aid has been approved within the last 18 months; and if he will specify for each project *(a)* any capital receipt obtained by the local authority, *(b)* the level of grant aid per unit of accommodation provided, *(c)* the profit element included in developers' costs, *(d)* whether the units of accommodation provided were for sales or for letting at market rents and *(e)* any marketing element included in the developers' costs.

Mr. John Patten: Details of housing projects, which in a few cases are combined with other uses, approved for urban development grant since 1 June 1985 are as follows. For reasons of commercial confidentiality it is not the practice to disclose details of developers' costs or profits, though these are, of course, a central part of the UDG appraisal process. Information on capital receipts is a matter for the relevant local authority. All the schemes listed provide housing for sale except The Parade, Ladywood, Birmingham, which provides lettings on assured tenancies.

Housing projects approved for UDG since 1 June 1985

Project name	*Local authority*	*Number of housing units*	*Grant £ million*	*Private investment £ million*
Leopold Street/Vaughton Street	Birmingham	73	0·38	2·24
Spark Street/Cooksey Road	Birmingham	36	0·18	1·01
The Parade, Ladywood	Birmingham	72	0·54	1·18
Hillview Court	Bolton	10	0·08	0·27
Mortfield Gardens	Bolton	26	0·14	0·57
Sloan Square	Bradford	150	1·00	1·91
Lower Cheltenham Place	Bristol	18	0·10	0·62
61-75 Bank Parade	Burnley	8	0·06	0·16
Kingfield Road	Coventry	62	0·57	1·38
Park Road/Dunslade Crescent	Dudley	11	0·05	0·35
Napier Road	Gateshead	5	0·02	0·11
Brunswick Grove	Hartlepool	24	0·26	0·47
Former Courtaulds Warehouse, King Street	Hull	28	0·24	0·61
Former 54/62 and 172/175 and various, Coltman Street	Hull	101	0·95	1·68
Former 79/82 Coltman Street	Hull	28	0·14	0·29
Fish Street	Hull	24	0·14	0·53
Kempsell Walk, Halewood	Knowsley	28	0·16	0·50
Dock Street	Leeds	121	1·38	2·48
Bagthorpe Green, Basford	Nottingham	182	0·46	4·75
Former Solarite House, Arundel Avenue, Wednesbury	Sandwell	12	0·06	0·22
Edge Lane	Sefton	86	0·16	1·83
Ascot Court, Farringdon	Sunderland	28	0·16	0·39
Keates Avenue	Sunderland	3	0·01	0·04
Laura Avenue, Phase 2	Sunderland	8	0·06	0·17
Lanesfield Housing, Bilston	Wolverhampton	424	2·15	11·81

Housing (Improvement for Sale)

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all local authority improvement for sale schemes for which Exchequer subsidy has been paid during the last six years; and if he will specify for each scheme *(a)* the number of units of accommodation improved for sale, *(b)* whether these units were acquired by the local authority for improvement for sale, or previously let by the local authority under secure tenancies, *(c)* the level of subsidy paid per unit included in the scheme, *(d)* the capital receipt to the local authority from the sale of the properties and *(e)* the value per unit of improvements.

Mr. Tracey: I shall answer this question shortly.

Council House Sales

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all disposals of council housing during the last six years where the local authority obtained less than best consideration reasonably obtainable for the property; and if he will specify for each disposal *(a)* the consideration obtained by the local authority, *(b)* the best consideration considered reasonably obtainable and *(c)* why special consent was granted for the disposal.

Mr. Tracey: Disposals of council dwellings at a discount for owner-occupation are authorised by general consents and do not normally come before the Department. Disposals of housing land worth £100,000 or more for which individual consents have been granted since June 1981 are as follows. It was a condition of consent that the reduction in the land price should be passed on to purchasers within defined priority categories in the form of reduced prices for their houses or plots. The further details requested could be provided only at disproportionate expense.

(1) Sales of housing land for self build schemes

Vendor authority	*Date of consent*	*Market value of land* £	*Sale price or percentage discount* £
Broxbourne borough council	12 July 1982	300,000	[1]
South Buckinghamshire district council	2 March 1983	370,000	259,000
Harlow district council	21 May 1984	257,600	180,320
Suffolk Coastal district council	6 June 1984	206,500	[1]
Bracknell district council	13 March 1985	351,500	300,500
South Buckinghamshire district council	13 August 1985	260,000	182,000

[1] Not more than 30 per cent.

(2) Sales of housing land for other low cost home ownership schemes

Vendor authority	*Date of consent*	*Market value* £	*Sale price* £
Havant borough council	14 May 1982	132,000	[1]29,190
Havant borough council	9 August 1983	390,000	[1]65,664
Reading borough council	9 September 1983	100,000	12,000
Bromley London borough	1 November 1983	260,000	130,000
Reading borough council	3 July 1984	330,000	230,000
Reading borough council	3 September 1984	195,000	105,000
Havant borough council	21 December 1984	176,000	[1]16,176
Havant borough council	13 May 1985	160,000	112,000

[1] Plus profit sharing arrangement.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all disposals of council housing to housing associations during the last six years; and if he will specify for each disposal *(a)* the consideration obtained by the local authority, *(b)* the outstanding debt charges on the property and *(c)* whether the properties were subsequently (i) let at fair rents, (ii) sold under a lowest homeownership scheme and (iii) sold on the open market.

Mr. Tracey: The information is not readily available. The Secretary of State has granted a general consent for disposals of council housing at current market values for improvement and resale into owner occupation. Information about other sales to housing associations, under individual consents, is not held centrally and could be collected only at disproportionate expense.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has received concerning *(a)* the requirement that where empty council houses are sold, the disposal must be for owner-occupation, *(b)* the requirement that where council houses are disposed of to housing associations, the transfer price shall be set at the local authority's outstanding loan debt where that is below the market value; (i) what specific issues have been raised, and (ii) which bodies have expressed themselves in favour of a relaxation of the requirement that empty council houses can be sold only for owner-occupation.

Mr. Tracey: The local authority associations and other interested bodies have commented on a consultation paper issued in September on the review of the general consents to the disposal of council houses and land by agreement. The proposals, which would include consent for the disposal of empty council houses for purposes other than owner-occupation, have generally been welcomed, but reservations have been expressed about the proposal that all disposals to housing associations should be at market value. The responses are under consideration.

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will raise the limit of £25,000 on discount under the right to buy.

Mr. John Patten: Yes. My right hon. Friend intends shortly to make an order setting a new limit of £35,000 in order to take account of inflation since 1980, when the present limit was set.

Sport (South Africa)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government regarding the extent to which the governing bodies of sport and individual sportsmen themselves decide whether or not to participate in contacts with sportsmen of South African nationality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Decisions on whether or not to participate in sporting contacts with South Africa are for the

governing bodies of sport and individual sportsmen to make. The Government meet their obligations under the Gleneagles agreement by withholding public support for and discouraging such contacts.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent information he has obtained about the application of apartheid in sport in South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: This Department receives information on this and related topics from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and a number of other independent sources.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has offered to the rugby football authorities about the current visit to the United Kingdom of a group of South African students; whether he treats this group of students as an official South African team; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: No specific advice has been given to the rugby football authorities about the tour of a team known as the Hedgehogs. The Government remain committed to the Gleneagles agreement. All governing bodies of sport have been advised of our policy.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants employed by his Department and engaged primarily on regional matters are based in *(a)* Yorkshire and Humberside, *(b)* the north-east and *(c)* the north-west.

Mr. Ridley: The number of staff in my Department in each region at 1 December 1986 is as follows:

	Number
(a) Yorkshire and Humberside	98
(b) North East	95
(c) (i) North West	153
(ii) Merseyside Task force	50

Home Security

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking to promote improvements to home security; and how much money is estimated to be spent during 1987-88 on these purposes.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 December 1986]: The Department is seeking to promote improvements to home security in a variety of ways. Among the most important are the following:

The estate action team is encouraging local authorities to improve security on rundown council estates as part of a strategy to revitalise them. A significant proportion of estate action's £75 million resources for 1987-88 will be spent on improvements to security, and on measures to reduce crime and vandalism.

The Department's priority estates project will be publishing a handbook of estate management shortly, which will include advice on improving security and reducing crime through better management.

The Department funds a number of crime prevention projects through the urban programme. Some £2·5 million is likely to be spent this year on projects directly related to home security.

It is not possible at this stage to estimate how much we will spend directly on home security measures in 1987-88, but the activities I have outlined illustrate the importance we attach to this subject. In addition to our own direct spending, we shall also be encouraging all those involved in housing, whether local authorities, housebuilders or owner-occupiers, to take security fully into account in the design and management of their houses.

Tributyl Tin Paint

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will immediately take steps to ban the manufacture and use of tributyl tin paint in British estuarian waters, in light of evidence on sex change in marine snails;

(2) if in the light of research by Dr. P. Gibbs and Dr. G. Bryan of the Marine Biological Association laboratories at Plymouth as to effects on marine life of the percentage content of copolymer in tributyl tin paint, he will now reduce still further the permitted percentage copolymer levels in the paint's content; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what assessment he has made of the effects on marine life of the use by yachtsmen of tributyl tin anti-fouling paints on the bottoms of boats.

Mr. Waldegrave: Extensive research and monitoring programmes, and co-ordination of other work going on in the United Kingdom were elements of the package of measures announced by the Government on 24 July 1985. These programmes are described in pollution paper No. 25, copies of which were placed in the Library when it was published in September. The results are assessed as they become available, and possible actions considered.

A full review of all the available information will be carried out during 1987 with a view to deciding what further actions may be necessary. The results of the research carried out by Dr. Gibbs and by Dr. Bryan will be considered as part of that review. The monitoring results for the current year indicate that water quality is still unacceptable in several areas but that, in estuarine waters for which comparative data are available, there has generally been a reduction in concentrations of organotin compounds.

My statement of July 1985 indicated that the permitted level or organotin compounds in copolymer paints supplied to the retail market would be further reduced in the coming year in line with advances in paint technology. Regulations will be introduced shortly which reflect these advances. In addition, all anti-fouling paints will become subject in the provisions of part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 on 1 July 1987. My right hon. Friend has at present no plans for any further legislative action, but we shall keep the situation under review.

Water

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the numbers and grades of staff presently employed in the water legislation division of his Department; and if he will give an estimate of the estimated expenditure in 1985-86 and 1986-87 on *(a)* staff and *(b)* other costs incurred by his Department in producing the White Paper (Cmnd. 9735) and subsequent preparations for water legislation.

Mr. Ridley: Work on the preparation of the White Paper (Cmnd. 9734) cannot be exactly separated out from other related work, but might amount to about 20 per cent. of the staff cost in 1985-86.

The expenditure of the two DOE divisions, whose main work is preparing the policies and legislation announced in the White Paper, is estimated as follows:

	Staff £	*Other* £
1985-86	156,609	103,561
1986-87	370,000	1,300,000

The staff in the water legislation division number 16 at the present time. They comprise one grade 5, four grade 7, seven executive and four clerical staff.

These figures do not include certain other costs, such as accommodation, which was borne centrally.

DEFENCE

Trident Missiles

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the year by which the research, development, engineering and testing of nuclear warheads for the Trident D5 missiles will be completed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The programme to develop the warheads for Trident will fully support the Trident in-service date of the mid-1990s.

Chemical Weapons

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if provision for the storage of chemical weapons in the United Kingdom in time of crisis has already been made.

Mr. Stanley: There are no chemical weapons based in the United Kingdom and we have received no requests for such basing from the United States.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any equipment necessary for the storage of chemical weapons has been delivered to Royal Air Force stations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley: No.

Bigeye Bombs

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has agreed to stockpile the casings for Bigeye bombs in the United Kingdom either now or in time of war.

Mr. Stanley: No.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the F111 aircraft based at Lakenheath or Upper Heyford would be used as delivery platforms for Bigeye bombs in the event of war.

Mr. Stanley: No such request has been received. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) on 15 May at columns *545-6*.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence if there are any plans to use Royal Air Force aircraft as delivery platforms for Bigeye bombs in the event of war.

Mr. Stanley: No.

Binary Weapons

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has agreed to stockpile any of the precursors for binary weapons in the United Kingdom either now or in time of war.

Mr. Stanley: No.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied that all reasonable steps are taken to secure the safety of local residents when nuclear weapons are transported along the A1(M) in Hertfordshire.

Mr. Stanley: For security reasons, it has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on the routes or methods used to move nuclear weapons. I can, however, assure my hon. Friend that the most stringent safety precautions are taken whenever it is necessary to move nuclear weapons.

Departmental Codification Section

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the transfer of the codification section in the Ministry of Defence in Harrogate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Codification is one of many Ministry of Defence activities the management of which is subject from time to time to review. The most recent examination of codification has concluded that in the present circumstances the location of the codification section in the Ministry of Defence at Harrogate should remain unchanged.

RAF North Luffenham

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to receive the report of the inquiry into the future of RAF North Luffenham; and what representations he has received.

Mr. Freeman: The study into the future of RAF North Luffenham is continuing, and it is still too early to anticipate when the report will be completed. Since my noble Friend, the then Minister of State for Defence Support, met my hon. Friend and representatives of the Rutland district council on 30 April, I have received a submission from the council concerning the perceived effects of closure of the station on the local community. A reply will be sent very shortly.

Stand-off Missile

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the jointly developed long-range stand-off missile is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The NATO staff target to which studies are being directed is for a conventional weapon and does not include a nuclear option.

Defence Establishments

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the locations of all Ministry of Defence establishments and facilities in Wales.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the locations of all Ministry of Defence establishments and facilities in Scotland.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the locations of all Ministry of Defence establishments and facilities in the north-west of England;

(2) if he will list the locations of all Ministry of Defence establishments and facilities in the north-eastern region of England;

(3) if he will list the locations of all Ministry of Defence establishments and facilities in the south-eastern region of England;

(4) if he will list the locations of all Ministry of Defence establishments and facilities in the south-west region of England.

Mr. Freeman: I shall write to the right hon. and hon. Gentlemen.

Tucano

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the Tucano to be in service with the Royal Air Force as its basic trainer; what was the date originally planned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I shall answer shortly.

Belize

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence what non-United Kingdom forces have had use of British facilities in Belize over the last three years.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

Officers (El Salvador)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many serving officers of the armed forces of El Salvador have received training or briefing at Ministry of Defence establishments in the United Kingdom over the past year.

Mr. Freeman: One member of the Salvadorean armed forces is currently undergoing training at a Ministry of Defence Establishment in the United Kingdom. No other training or briefings have been provided during the last year.

Royal Dockyards

Mr. Stevens asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future management of the royal dockyards.

Mr. Younger: I am now satisfied that there exists the basis for an advantageous contract to be placed for the future operation of Rosyth dockyard with Babcock Thorn Ltd. Under the arrangements that have been negotiated to date, a contract could offer the possibility of saving some £38 million over the seven-year term contract, with the prospect of annual savings exceeding £15 million thereafter under any subsequent contract. The contract would encourage improvements in efficiency and enable the contractor to compete for commercial and naval work with no possibility of cross-subsidy from the core programme of naval refitting. I have provided further information to the trade unions in a response to their paper of 24 November, and do not intend to take a final decision on the placing of a contract until I have taken account of any further trade union views and have satisfied myself that the continuing process of consultation with the trade unions has fully met my obligations under the Dockyard Services Act.

Negotiations for a contract for the operation of Devonport are continuing, and I expect to be able to make a further announcement shortly.

A copy of my letter to the trade unions has been placed in the Library of the House.

CIVIL SERVICE

Vacancies (Greater London)

Mr. Evans asked the Minister for the Civil Service how many vacancies presently exist at clerical officer and clerical assistant level, respectively, in the Civil Service in the Greater London area.

Mr. Luce: Responsibility for recruitment to the grades of clerical officer and clerical assistant rests with Government Departments individually. Information on the number of vacancies in these grades is not held centrally and I regret that the information requested could not be obtained by the Cabinet Office (Management and Personnel Office) without incurring disproportionate expenditure.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of people subject to special employment and training measures at the latest available date for the Islington, South constituency; and what are the measures and the numbers affected in each case.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to give a precise total figure because of the various bases on which local information is collated. The number of people participating in the following employment measures and training in the Islington, South constituency on 31 October was:

	Number
Community Industry	99
YTS	387
Voluntary Projects Programme	10
Adult Training	179

In addition, in the area covering the boroughs of Hackney, City, Islington, Tower Hamlets, Camden, Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, and Hammersmith and Fulham, which includes the Islington, South constituency, there are 4,954 people on the community programme and 637 people receiving the enterprise allowance. In London and the south-east 4,308 people were participating in the new workers scheme. A further breakdown for these schemes for the Islington, South constituency is available only at disproportionate cost.

Tobacco Industry

Mr. Parry asked the Paymaster General how many workers were employed in the tobacco industry at the latest date; and what was the figure in June 1979.

Mr. Lee: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Rooker asked the Paymaster General if he will list the schemes run by his Department which are available to long-term unemployed males who are not eligible for benefit due to their partner working with an income above supplementary benefit levels.

Mr. Lee: The main schemes run by my Department and the Manpower Services Commission which are available to long-term unemployed males who fall into this category are as follows:

New Workers Scheme
Voluntary Projects Programme
Community Industry
YTS
Training for Enterprise
Wider Opportunities Training Programme
Access to Information Technology
Job Training Scheme
Jobclubs
Travel to Interview Schemes
Open Tech Programme
Career Development Loans[1]

[1] This is a pilot scheme which is running for a three-year period from April 1986 in Aberdeen, Bristol/Bath, Greater Manchester and Reading/Slough.

In addition, all long-term unemployed people who are signing on at a benefit office for credit of national insurance contributions will be eligible for and called to a restart interview.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the number of people unemployed in each district council ward for the borough of Brighton and *(b)* the number of those people without a job for more than one year; and what percentage they constitute of the total number of people unemployed.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants at 9 October 1986 in each electoral ward in the Brighton local authority district, and the number of those who have been unemployed for over one year.

	Total unemployed	*Unemployed over one year*	*Percentage of total*
Elm Grove	466	169	36·3
Falmer	696	349	50·1
Hanover	466	167	35·8
Hollingbury	427	158	37·0
King's Cliff	644	272	42·2
Lewes Road	558	196	35·1
Montpelier	742	303	40·8
Moulsecoomb	400	157	39·2
Patcham	201	58	28·9
Pier	836	366	43·8
Preston	377	116	30·8
Preston Park	389	136	35·0
Queen's Park	591	253	42·8
Regency	1,068	428	40·1
Rottingdean	235	76	32·3
St. Nicholas	477	174	36·5
St. Peter's	396	134	33·8
Stanmer	353	127	36·0
Warren	580	225	38·8

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Paymaster General (1) how many claims for unemployment benefit were held at the adjudication office in Birmingham on 31 October 1985; (2) how many claims under consideration at the adjudication office in Birmingham on 31 October had been held there for more than three months.

Mr. Lee: The number of claims under consideration was 5,482. Information is not readily available about the number outstanding for more than three months, and this could be obtained only at disproportionate expense.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Permanent Secretaries (Pensions)

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average *(a)* lump sum and *(b)* annual pension entitlement to which a retiring permanent secretary has been entitled over the past five years; and what has been the highest sum in each category.

Mr. Brooke: Civil Service penions are based on salary at the time of retirement and the length of reckonable service; the lump sum is three times the amount of the annual pension. The information requested is shown in the table. The average pensions and lump sums shown are based on the average reckonable service of those in grades 1 and 1a who retired in the years concerned and the average salary in payment to these grades over the year to 31 March. The maxima are those for a grade 1 with the maximum length of reckonable service of 40 years at age 60.

	Average		*Maximum*	
	Pension £	*Lump sum* £	*Pension* £	*Lump sum* £
1981-82	14,946	44,838	16,585	49,755
1982-83	15,491	46,473	18,875	56,625
1983-84	19,018	57,054	20,531	61,593
1984-85	18,916	56,748	22,322	66,966
1985-86	20,999	62,997	25,771	77,313

Shares

Mr. Baldry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many individuals it is estimated owned shares in 1983; and what is the estimated number now.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Precise figures are not available, but survey evidence suggests that the number of individual shareholders is now around 7 million, double the 1979 figure.

Tax Havens

Mr. Dubs asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the annual loss of revenue to the Exchequer through tax havens.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it is not possible to provide such an estimate.

Tobacco (Taxation)

Mr. Parry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the current level of taxation on cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco and hand-rolled tobacco in each of the European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Brooke: As the information on this subject is lengthy, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Mr. Parry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the revenue from taxation on *(a)* cigarettes, *(b)* cigars, *(c)* pipe tobacco and *(d)* hand rolling tobacco in each of the last seven financial years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: For information on the revenue yield of the exise duty on tobacco products I refer the hon. Member to table 23 on page 45 of the "Report of the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise" for the year ended 31 March 1986. There is a copy in the Library of the House. Statistics on the revenue from pipe tobacco are not compiled separately, but pipe tobacco represents the bulk of the category "other smoking and chewing tobacco."

Estimates of the VAT revenue from these products are made on the basis of consumers' expenditure data, which do not provide disaggregated information for each of the categories mentioned. The table that follows shows the estimated VAT yield from tobacco products:

	Cigarettes (£ million)	*Other tobacco products* (£ million)
1979-80	390	60
1980-81	550	80
1981-82	620	100
1982-83	660	110
1983-84	700	110
1984-85	750	120
1985-86	800	120

Mr. Parry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the European Economic Community concerning tax harmonization policies on tobacco; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: No formal representations have been made since June 1986, when agreement was reached at the Council of the European Communities to an indefinite postponement of the next stage of the Commission's proposals for further harmonisation of cigarette taxation.

Income Tax

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage share of tax paid by the top five, 10 and 20 per cent., of income earners for the years 1978-79 and 1985-86.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost in the 1987-88 financial year of introducing a reduced rate tax band of *(a)* 25 per cent. and *(b)* 20 per cent. on the first £1,500 of taxable income; and what would be the effect on the net income of (i) a single person, (ii) a couple where the wife is not working, and (iii) a couple where the wife is working and paying tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let my hon. Friend and the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Charities

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he now intends to lay the regulations governing payroll giving to charities under the Finance Act 1986.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 6 November, at column 518.

Mortgages

Mr. McCrindle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning mortgage interest tax relief for joint unmarried borrowers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Value Added Tax

Mr. McCrindle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the European Commission concerning the extension of value added tax to new commercial buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The EC Commission's challenge on certain of the United Kingdom's zero ratings is a legal matter. As is normal in these cases, correspondence has been exchanged with the Commission and written pleadings have been lodged with the European Court. These procedures are preparatory to the oral hearing before the court (for which a date has yet to be set). The Government have publicly stated several times that they will defend their case robustly. In this connection I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment in reply to the Summer Adjournment debate on this subject on 25 July, at columns 923-26.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he plans to seek to extend value added tax to goods and services, not already covered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: No. I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget speech on 19 March 1985, at column 796.

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the percentage change in real personal disposable income for each year since 1970.

Mr. MacGregor: This information is published in table 3.16 of the 1986 edition of United Kingdom national accounts (the Central Statistical Office "Blue Book") which is available in the Library of the House of Commons.

Personal Incomes

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make an estimate of the number of taxpayers earning less than two thirds of median male earnings in 1986-87; and what proportion this group represents of all taxpayers;

(2) how many *(a)* working families with children and *(b)* childless people in work had incomes below the tax threshold at the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon possible.

Income Tax and National Insurance

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)*

the proportion in percentage terms, *(b)* the amount in current prices and *(c)* the amount in constant 1985-86 prices of personal income taken by income tax and national insurance in 1986-87 for those at 2,000 per cent. of average earnings on the same basis as his reply of 26 March to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), *Official Report*, column 530-36.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The figures are in the table.

Income tax and NIC at 2,000 per cent. of average earnings in 1986-87

	£ per week	*£ per week at 1985-86 prices*	*Percentage of gross income*
Single			
(i) Income tax	2,381·99	2,312·78	55·8
(ii) NIC	25·65	24·90	0·6
(iii) (i) plus (ii)	2,407·64	2,337·69	56·4
Married no children			
(i) Income tax	2,366·76	2,297·99	55·5
(ii) NIC	25·65	24·90	0·6
(iii) (i) plus (ii)	2,392·41	2,322·90	56·1
Married couple both earning			
(i) Income tax	2,203·18	2,139·17	51·6
(ii) NIC	51·30	49·81	1·2
(iii) (i) plus (ii)	2,254·48	2,188·98	52·8
Married couple with 2 children			
(i) Income tax	2,366·76	2,297·99	55·3
(ii) NIC	25·65	24·90	0·6
(iii) (i) plus (ii)	2,392·41	2,322·90	55·9

Notes:

1. Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that households have no other tax relief apart from the standard allowances. Earners, including working wives are assumed to pay Class 1 National Insurance contributions at the contracted-on rate. The figures for National Insurance contributions are financial year averages .
2. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence.
3. The married couple with both working is assumed to have joint earnings of 2,000 per cent. of average earnings. In calculating disposable income it is assumed that the joint earnings are split between husband and wife in the ratio 60:40.
4. For the married couple with two children, the percentage column expresses taxes etc. as percentages of gross earnings plus child benefit. For this purpose, financial year averages are used for child benefit.

Commercial Bills

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what index is now his preferred indicator of the competitiveness of British manufacturing industry.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 November 1986, c. *398*]: For a complete assessment of the competitiveness of United Kingdom manufacturing it is necessary to consider measures of cost and price competitiveness and the effects of non-price factors.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

3. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many staff are currently employed in the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service; and how many were employed in June 1979.

Mr. Jopling: There are currently 4,390 staff in ADAS. Five thousand and four hundred and sixty eight were employed in June 1979.

Consumer Representation

13. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to improve consumer representation on food matters.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I believe that current arrangements in general allow for an appropriately wide range of representation by consumer interests on food matters.

Land Use

14. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his plans for alternative land use and the rural economy.

15. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish a White Paper on land use policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I have made a number of statements about my policies for the future of agriculture, including alternative land use and the implications for the rural economy, most recently at the annual conference of the society for responsible use of resources in agriculture and on the land on 24 September this year.

I shall continue to use all appropriate means to promote the Government's policy for agriculture and the reform of the common agricultural policy and to keep the industry informed of our thinking.

Cereals

16. **Sir John Farr** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect of an imposition of quotas on cereal production.

Mr. Gummer: In my view cereal quotas would stifle initiative, strike hardest at the most efficient producer, lead to pressure for higher support prices and pose enormous administrative difficulties.

25. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many producers are currently liable to the cereals co-responsibility levy.

Mr. Gummer: Producers are intended to bear the impact of the levy, but are not themselves normally liable to pay it, as it is collected at the stage of processing, export, or sale into intervention.

26. **Mr. Jackson** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made in introducing a scheme to divert land from cereals production.

Mr. Gummer: Our ideas on the diversion of land from cereals production stimulated a constructive discussion among Community Agriculture Ministers at the informal Council meeting in September. Since then useful detailed discussions have taken place with officials of the Commission and other member states. We will continue to encourage the Commission to come forward with proposals for a scheme that can be applied to the whole Community.

28. **Mr. Cockeram** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reaction there has been to his proposals to divert land from cereals production.

Mr. Gummer: Our ideas on cereals land diversion received a constructive reception from other Agriculture Ministers in September and we are pursuing with the Commission the points made in discussion. Representations on our ideas have been received from many different sources.

32. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to discourage criminal or improper activity in regard to the storage of surplus cereals.

Mr. Gummer: Inquiries are made into the reliability of prospective storekeepers. Their contractual responsibilities are closely prescribed and enforced and there is regular monitoring of their financial status and of the stocks they hold.

41. **Mr. Andy Stewart** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards the introduction of any scheme of quotas for cereals.

Mr. Gummer: I remain totally opposed to the introduction of any scheme of quotas for cereals.

54. **Mr. Key** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on his proposals for cereals land diversion.

Mr. Gummer: Representations on our ideas have been received from many different sources.

57. **Mr. Ralph Howell** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards proposals for compulsory restriction of cereals production.

Mr. Gummer: I am firmly opposed to such a policy.

69. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what policies he intends to use to tackle the surplus of cereals.

Mr. Gummer: I shall continue to press in the Council of Ministers for a package of measures based on restricting the level of support to producers, complemented by the diversion of land away from cereals production.

Productivity and Wages

17. **Miss Maynard** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the increase in productivity in the agriculture industry in each of the last three years; and what was the increase in real terms in the wages of agricultural workers in each year.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information is as follows:

Total productivity, labour productivity and average earnings (in real terms) in agriculture—1983 to 1985

Year	*Total productivity in agriculture[1] (United Kingdom)*		*Labour productivity in agriculture[2] (United Kingdom)*		*Average weekly earnings of all hired men in agriculture in real terms (Great Britain)[3]*		*Average hourly earnings of all hired men in agriculture in real terms (Great Britain)[3]*	
	Index 1983 = 100	*Per cent. change over previous year*	*Index 1983 = 100*	*Per cent. change over previous year*	*Index 1983 = 100*	*Per cent. change over previous year*	*Index 1983 = 100*	*Per cent. change over previous year*
1983	100	−2	100	−4	100	+6	100	+5
1984	108	8	117	+17	100	0	101	+1
1985	(fc)108	(fc)0	(fc)114	(fc)−3	103	+3	103	+2

[1] The measure of total productivity compares changes in the volume of gross agricultural output with those in the volume of productive inputs employed, namely labour, capital items and materials inputs.

[2] Labour productivity is defined as gross agricultural product at constant prices per whole-time man equivalent. The total number of man-equivalents is calculated from the numbers of farmers, partners, directors, and their spouses, salaried managers and full-time, part-time and seasonal or casual workers recorded at the June census, weighted according to their estimated annual hours worked.

Source: Table 24 of the White Paper of the "Annual Review of Agriculture 1986".

[3] Average weekly and hourly earnings of all hired men working full-time in agriculture.

Source: Employment Gazette, July 1986.

Forestry

18. **Mr. Adley** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set out those matters relating to forestry for which he is responsible.

Mr. Donald Thompson: As a Forestry Minister my right hon. Friend has a general responsibility for forestry matters in England and, acting jointly with the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales, for forestry policy in Great Britain.

Common Agricultural Policy

19. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the policies for reform of the common agricultural policy which he will be pursuing.

Mr. Jopling: The policy of the Government is to press for reform of the CAP, through price restraint and appropriate complementary measures, in order to tackle the problem of surpluses and their associated budgetary costs.

51. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the anticipated cost of the common agricultural policy in the European Economic Community draft budget for 1987; and what is the percentage change from the cost in 1985.

Mr. Jopling: The 1987 Community draft budget, as amended by the Budget Council on 26 November, provides 24,174 mecu for expenditure under the common agricultural policy. This is 17·6 per cent. higher than expenditure in 1985.

Beef

20. **Dr. Roger Thomas** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the beef variable premium scheme.

Mr. Jopling: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) earlier today.

59. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the present state of the beef industry.

Mr. Gummer: The beef market has remained weak. Although slaughterings have been lower than last year, total supplies have been similar as a result of increased imports, particularly from the Irish Republic. A high level of intervention stocks continues to overhang the market. Nevertheless, producer returns have so far this marketing year averaged about 95·5 per cent. of the target price.

63. **Mr. Marland** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what alternative methods of disposal are currently being considered for surplus beef stocks.

Mr. Gummer: Commission proposals for reform of the beef regime are currently under consideration in the Council of Ministers. The Government are pressing for the regime to be more market-orientated so reducing reliance on intervention and the consequent build-up of stocks. While surplus stocks remain, the Government support their disposal by the most cost-effective means. Intervention beef is available under a wide range of sales for both domestic and export markets.

68. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has plans for further encouragement for beef producers in the less-favoured areas.

Mr. Gummer: Beef producers in the less-favoured areas benefit from the wide range of support measures under the Community beef regime and also from the arrangements for the payment of hill livestock compensatory allowances, which for beef cows amount to some £50 million this year. I expect to make an announcement shortly on the rates of these allowances to apply in 1987.

Dairy Industry

21. **Mrs. Shields** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning dairy farming in Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I receive frequent representations on the subject of dairy farming in Yorkshire and more generally. The House debated the subject on 1 December and I also refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave this afternoon to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on the subject of charging.

24. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many dairy farmers have applied to take part in his new outgoers scheme.

Mr. Gummer: By 21 November 62 producers had submitted applications to take part in the Milk (Community Outgoers) Scheme throughout the United Kingdom, representing some 10·6 million litres of quota.

29. **Mr. Knox** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement about milk quotas.

Mr. Gummer: Surpluses in the dairy sector continue to be of grave concern. The Council of Agriculture Ministers is currently considering a package of measures aimed at tightening up the quota system and further reducing quota levels.

43. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress over the milk outgoers scheme.

Mr. Gummer: By 21 November 62 producers had submitted applications to give up some 10·6 million litres of quota under the Milk (Community Outgoers) Scheme in the United Kingdom.

45. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on the European Communites new proposals for milk quotas.

Mr. Gummer: I support the Commission's efforts to reduce dairy surpluses and restore balance to the market. However, I strongly favour a policy of price restraint and direct action on quotas rather than measures which will render the quota system more inflexible.

Pesticides

22. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he proposes to take to control the residues of pesticides in agricultural products.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The safety screening of pesticides under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 takes account of their likely residues in agricultural products, and requires any residue to be safe. In addition, the Government proposed on 30 October to fix statutory limits for certain residues. I recommend my hon. Friend to consider the proposal, which I have placed in the Library of the House as a consultative document.

Inspection Charges

23. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the proposed charge for statutory visits for milk and dairy inspections; and what are the criteria that were taken into consideration in assessing the level of this charge.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham).

Grassland and Forage

27. **Sir Peter Mills** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to assess the potential of grassland and forage in relation to the needs of British farming.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I fully recognise the important contribution which grassland and forage make to our livestock industry.

The current research and development effort on production and utilisation of grassland and forage amounts to £23 million. This is an indication of the high priority which the Government attach to this work.

Fishing Industry

30. **Mr. Allen Adams** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to strengthen the British distant water fleet.

62. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the amount and planned structure of the British fishing fleet.

Mr. Gummer: The development of the distant water fleet is a matter for the commercial judgment of the vessel owners concerned, but they will be guided by the provisions of new Community measures, which were agreed in principle earlier today by the Fisheries Council, to improve and adapt structures in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

64. **Mr. Austin Mitchell** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for encouraging the expansion of the Grimsby fishing fleet.

Mr. Gummer: A number of measures already exist to encourage the expansion of the fishing fleet at Grimsby and other ports. These measures will be continued in the new fisheries structures regulations which were agreed in principle earlier today by the Fisheries Council. They will provide a sound framework for future development of the fisheries sector over the next decade.

Lamb Sales (France)

31. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to resolve the dispute with France over lamb sales.

Mr. Jopling: We made very strong representations to the French Government at the time of the interference with our lamb exports during October. That interference subsequently ceased. Various measures have been proposed within the European Community to deal with the situation on the sheepmeat market. We shall resist any measures which discriminate against British producers or traders.

36. **Mr. Torney** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take retaliatory action against France if any tax or duty is imposed upon British sheep entering France.

Mr. Jopling: The treaty provides for the Commission and for member states to take proceedings against any member state which may be in breach of its treaty obligations.

Fertilisers

33. **Mr. Favell** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will extend the sampling of fertilisers by trading standards officers to cover intermediate bulk containers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Yes. An amendment to the Fertilisers (Sampling and Analysis) Regulations 1978 to allow sampling of intermediate bulk containers by trading standards officers will be laid before Parliament shortly.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

34. **Dr. Marek** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he now expects the first management agreements to be secured in environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Jopling: I expect to invite farmers in the designated areas to apply to join the environmentally sensitive area schemes early next spring.

Horticulture

35. **Sir David Price** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set up an independent inquiry into horticultural marketing.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We have no plans to set up such an inquiry.

Agriculture (White Paper)

37. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he intends to publish a White Paper on agriculture during the current Session of Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The annual review of agriculture is taking place as usual and I expect to publish the resulting White Paper early next year. I have made several statements in speeches and debates in recent months about the future of agriculture. In this way the agriculture industry is kept informed of developments in the Government's thinking, but I keep in mind all possible means of promoting and explaining our policy.

Departmental Expenditure

38. **Mr. Forth** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the expenditure plans for his Department over the next three years in the light of the Chancellor's autumn statement.

Mr. Jopling: In the autumn statement the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the new planning totals for expenditure on Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are:

£ million

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Total	2,550	2,680	2,780
Comprising			
IBAP and other EC expenditure	[1]1,660	1,780	1,880
Domestic agriculture, fisheries and food	[1]880	900	900

[1] Do not sum due to rounding.

For 1987-88 and 1988-89 respectively this represents an overall increase on previously planned expenditure of £90 million and £180 million. Much of this increase is accounted for by expected additional expenditure on market support under the CAP. This will be incurred by the Intevention Board for Agricultural Produce, mainly in respect of the cost of taking agricultural produce into intervention. This expenditure is unavoidable under present Community policies although most will be recovered when intervention stocks are sold.

Other expenditure for which Agriculture Departments are responsible will increase by some £50 million in 1987-88 and £60 million in 1988-89 which represents the net effect of a number of changes. The majority of these will result in higher expenditure on capital works. These changes include some £30 million additional local authority expenditure to reflect more closely the level of

precept payable to water authorities to fund flood defence works; £6 million in specific grants to water authorities to reduce the risk of flooding from the sea on the east coast and in Seaford, Sussex; and £10 million in 1987-88, but with diminishing sums in the other future years, largely to meet commitments under present capital grants policy.

A detailed commentary on the plans will appear in the public expenditure White Paper to be published early next year.

North Sea Fisheries (Mesh Sizes)

39. **Sir Walter Clegg** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the North sea mesh size which will be operative from 1 January 1987.

Mr. Gummer: The general mesh size in the North sea will increase from 80mm to 85mm on 1 January 1987. This is a first stage in increasing the mesh size to 90mm, which will take effect on 1 January 1989. The existing derogation for vessels under 300bhp fishing for sole will be retained and larger vessels fishing for sole will be able to continue to use 80mm meshes provided they have at least 15 per cent. sole on board and no more than 20 per cent. of cod, haddock, whiting and saithe combined.

Beam Trawling

40. **Mr. Charles Wardle** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on beam trawling in the EEC.

Mr. Gummer: The package of technical measures which was agreed at the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 23 September included significant new provisions to control beam trawling in the Community. The measures of particular interest to the United Kingdom fishermen are, of course, those which will apply within 12 miles of our coast and I am pleased to say that we have succeeded in improving upon the exising rules.

With effect from 1 January 1987 it will not be permitted to derate the engines of new beam trawlers nor newly installed engines in existing beam trawlers to meet the power restriction of 221 kw (300bhp). Permitted derating of engines in existing vessels will be limited to those of which the maximum power is not more than 300 kw (407bhp). Furthermore, no new beam trawler exceeding 24m length overall will be permitted to operate within 12 miles. In addition, the maximum aggregate length of the fishing beam permitted within 12 miles will be 8m.

These provisions, which are set out in Council regulation (EEC) 3094/86, will apply to all vessels including those of other member states with rights to fish in some parts of our 12-mile zone.

Animal and Plant Diseases

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to prevent cross-Channel shoppers introducing serious animal and plant diseases to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I reminded cross-Channel Christmas shoppers in a message issued in October of the risks of introducing serious animal and plant diseases into the country and appealed to them to consider the position of Britain's farmers and growers. There are strict limits on the amounts of meat and plant material which overseas shoppers may bring back, and some products are totally prohibited. We take every opportunity of publicising the need for the public to follow the rules and so avoid disease risk to our animals and crops.

Food Labelling

Mr. Waller asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce his proposals relating to the labelling of fats and other nutrients.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We are still in the process of considering the many comments made on the proposed Fat Labelling of Food Regulations and on the guidelines for fuller nutrition labelling. We hope to be able to make a further announcement shortly.

Farm and Countryside Initiative

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made in the farm and countryside initiative.

Mr. Jopling: The farm and countryside initiative is making excellent progress. In its first 10 months of operation 85 projects have been approved by the Manpower Services Commission's area manpower boards, creating 1,604 jobs for long-term unemployed people. Backed by the initiative, high quality projects are now coming forward which are of clear benefit to rural communities.

I am also glad to report that the National Westminster Bank has just confirmed that substantially increased national sponsorship funds will be provided in 1987. The bank has agreed that £100,000 will be available for England and Wales.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

48. **Dr. Mark Hughes** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the principal results of his period as President of the Council of Agriculture Ministers.

Mr. Jopling: My priority has been to focus the attention of Agriculture Ministers on the urgent need for reform of the common agricultural policy, particularly in the beef and dairy sectors, to which the Council will return next week. A number of specific decisions have been taken, of which the more important are:

Continued access for New Zealand butter in 1987 and 1988.
Establishment of a vineyard register.
Restructuring of vinegrowing in Portugal.
Implementation of the agreement with the United States on maize imports.
Arrangements for testing meat for residues.
Regulations concerning the protection of forests from fire and from atmospheric pollution.

Trent Grain Company

49. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if there hs been any stock loss of grain by the Trent Grain Company.

Mr. Gummer: A checkweighing operation at Uttoxeter, in premises previously occupied by the Trent Grain Company, has disclosed shortfalls in intervention stocks of wheat and barley. In view of the possibility of legal proceedings, I am not in a position to give details.

Inshore Fishing

50. **Dr. Godman** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he will be taking to improve the profitability of the inshore English and Welsh fishing treaty.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the new structures regulation which was agreed in principle earlier today by the Fisheries Council will provide the long-term framework within which the inshore industry can plan ahead with confidence.

Confectionery Industry (Butter)

52. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the value of subsidised European Community butter which has been made available to the United Kingdom confectionery industry in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The amount of subsidy paid by the European Community on butter used in the United Kingdom for the manufacture of cakes, pastry goods, biscuits and sugar confectionery in each of the years since 1979 is as follows:

	£ million
1979	10·40
1980	13·75
1981	7·02
1982	15·21
1983	26·46
1984	24·90
1985	29·23
1986[1]	15·30

[1] up to 30 June 1986.

Fish (Marketing)

53. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is satisfied with the Sea Fish Industry Authority programme for the marketing of British fish.

Mr. Gummer: In my reply to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 6 November I announced that the possibility of further Government funding for the sea fish industry development programme was under consideration. I am pleased to be able to say that following the recent public expenditure survey discussions, the Government have now agreed to provide a further sum of £4 million towards the cost of this programme over the next two years, up to the end of March 1989. I am confident that this additional funding will enable the authority to build on the considerable steps it has so far taken to improve the promotion and marketing of fish.

We shall be notifying the Commission of this proposed funding, as required by article 93(3) of the European Community treaty.

Food From Britain

55. **Mr. Conway** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the operation of Food From Britain.

Mr. Gummer: On 22 September, Ministers announced new appointments to the council of Food From Britain. The appointments are designed to give the food and agriculture sectors contributing to Food From Britain a more direct influence over its operating strategy. The restructured council met for the first time on 19 November. Food From Britain is appointing boards for the home and export markets to draw up operational plans and budgets.

Sheep Scab

56. **Mr. Cash** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what success there has been in measures to eradicate sheep scab.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Following a record 157 outbreaks of sheep scab in 1983, a concentrated effort has been made to control and ultimately eradicate the disease. This has involved, in particular, compulsory dipping nationally twice a year. The results have been encouraging, with 131 outbreaks in 1984, 74 in 1985 and only 46 so far this year. Complete eradication is attainable only with the continued co-operation of the sheep industry.

Farm Incomes

58. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on current levels of farm incomes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The annual review of agriculture 1987 is in progress. A White Paper will be published early in 1987 which will contain the information sought.

Common Fisheries Policy

61. **Sir Michael Shaw** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is being taken to enforce the common fisheries policy in the European Community.

Mr. Jopling: It is, of course, the responsibility of each member state to enforce Community fishery rules in the waters under its fisheries jurisdiction and in respect of its own fishermen. Each member state has a national fisheries inspectorate to carry out this task. In addition, the Community established general rules on inspection, monitoring, record keeping and a Commission Inspectorate of Inspectorates to ensure even-handed enforcement throughout the Community.

As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State reported on 6 November, the Council of Ministers has now decided to strengthen these control arrangements and for the first time agreement has been reached to penalise overfishing. We have given priority to obtaining these improvements and are delighted to have obtained them during our presidency.

Food Additives

60. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom system of control of food additives.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Food Act 1984 and regulations made under it provide a comprehensive system of control over food additives in England and Wales. Similar legislation applies in Scotland and Northern Ireland. This legislation is kept under review.

Independent advice to Ministers on the need for and safety of food additives is provided by the Food Advisory Committee and the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment. Further details of the United Kingdom's system of control are contained in information sheets in my Department's food facts series. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Country Landowners Association

65. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the Country Landowners Association; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Jopling: I met the president of the Country Landowners Association formally on 2 October 1986. We had a wide-ranging discussion about matters of mutual interest.

Fish Stocks

66. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken within the European Economic Community to seek to conserve fish stocks.

Mr. Gummer: We have attempted to develop and build upon the provisions of the common fisheries policy which were agreed in 1983. Each year we seek to agree total allowable catches and quotas for all the commercially important stocks to avoid quantitative overfishing. In support of these quantitative restrictions there is a raft of technical conservation measures concerning minimum mesh and fish sizes, closed areas and restriction on the use of certain gear.

I am delighted to say that during the first half of our presidency we succeeded in getting the Council of Ministers to agree a complete revision of the technical conservation regulation which represents major improvements in the conservation regime. It is also of paramount importance that these measures are all effectively enforced throughout the Community and, as I reported on 6 November, I was very pleased to have been able to steer the Council of Ministers towards reaching agreement on a regulation designed to strengthen the Community enforcement measures.

Agricultural Land

67. **Mr. Philip Oppenheim** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received on the rating of agricultural land.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Recently, my Department has received only two representations on the rating of agricultural land, one urging the retention of derating and the other calling for an extension of derating to the keeping and breeding of all horses. Responsibilities for rating policy rest with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Sheep (Radioactive Contamination)

Mr. Strang asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the number of sheep which still have radioactive contamination levels above that acceptable for human consumption and following the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Jopling: I regret that information is not available in the form requested, but only about 1.5 per cent. of sheep in the United Kingdom remain subject to the restrictions introduced following the Chernobyl accident and our live monitoring of sheep leaving the restricted areas shows that only a proportion of them show radio caesium levels above the acceptable level.

Prawn Fishery

44. **Mr. Beith** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the prawn fishery off the north-east coast of England.

Mr. Gummer: Departmental scientists regularly monitor this fishery. Their last report submitted to me in September 1985, and which was also communicated to the industry, suggested that yields could be increased if the minimum mesh size were to be increased or if fishing effort were reduced. An increase in the minimum landing size, which I know is favoured by some fishermen, would have no effect on the conservation of the stock and, indeed, would result in increased discarding which is already high. Subsequent monitoring by our scientists has so far confirmed their 1985 report but studies are continuing.

SCOTLAND

Forestry

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the potential for forestry in lowland farming areas.

Mr. John MacKay: The Government recognise the considerable potential for forestry in lowland farming areas. This is already encouraged through the Forestry Commission's forestry grant scheme and broadleaved woodland grant scheme, and we are considering ways in which it might be further promoted.

Hairdressing

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland under what industry heading the standard industrial classification of hairdressing was included for the purpose of compiling 1984 and 1985 employment statistics.

Mr. Lang: Hairdressing is classified as activity heading 9820 of the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification. 1984 and 1985 employment statistics were compiled on this basis.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the most recent estimate provided to him of the current underspend of the Scottish Development Agency in 1986-87.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Development Agency does not currently expect to underspend its budgetary provision for 1986-87.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the level of long-term unemployment in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: On 9 October 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed claimants aged under 25 in Scotland totalled 134,774. The figure for December 1979 is not available, but on 11 October 1979 the corresponding figure was 71,271. This information, shown on a quarterly basis, is available in the Library. The figures are not comparable due to the various changes which have taken place in the compilation of the statistics over the period.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the latest unemployment levels in Scottish constituencies.

Mr. Lang: On 9 October 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of claimants who have been unemployed for one year or more in Scotland totalled 146,390.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the level of unemployment in Glasgow at the latest date; and what were the figures in December 1979.

Mr. Lang On 9 October 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed claimants in each parliamentary constituency within Scotland was as shown in the table. This information is available in the Library. Unemployment rates are not calculated for parliamentary constituencies.

Unemployed claimants in Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies

Constituency	*Unemployed claimants*
Aberdeen North	4,427
Aberdeen South	4,105
Angus East	4,200
Argyll and Bute	3,777
Ayr	5,003
Banff and Buchan	3,753
Caithness and Sutherland	2,367
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	6,632
Central Fife	5,622
Clackmannan	4,692
Clydebank and Milngavie	4,676
Clydesdale	5,004
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	4,921
Cunninghame North	5,352
Cunninghame South	6,146
Dumbarton	5,404
Dumfries	3,901
Dundee East	7,887
Dundee West	6,523
Dunfermline East	5,073
Dunfermline West	3,713
East Kilbride	5,187
East Lothian	3,995
Eastwood	3,424
Edinburgh Central	5,490
Edinburgh East	4,580
Edinburgh Leith	6,852
Edinburgh Pentlands	3,503
Edinburgh South	4,377
Edinburgh West	2,592
Falkirk East	5,197
Falkirk West	4,674
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	3,923
Glasgow Cathcart	4,492
Glasgow Central	7,506
Glasgow Garscadden	6,212
Glasgow Govan	6,093
Glasgow Hillhead	5,767
Glasgow Maryhill	8,153
Glasgow Pollock	7,525
Glasgow Provan	8,848
Glasgow Rutherglen	6,853
Glasgow Shettleston	6,688
Glasgow Springburn	8,477
Gordon	3,222
Greenock and Port Glasgow	8,574
Hamilton	6,624
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	6,299
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	5,479
Kincardine and Deeside	2,769
Kirkcaldy	5,085
Linlithgow	5,954
Livingston	5,280
Midlothian	4,537
Monklands East	6,138
Monklands West	5,019
Moray	4,156
Motherwell North	6,673
Motherwell South	5,459
North East Fife	2,537
North Tayside	2,985
Orkney and Shetland	1,653
Paisley North	5,379
Paisley South	5,381
Perth and Kinross	4,070
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	3,832
Ross and Cromarty and Skye	4,862
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	1,918
Stirling	3,924
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	3,757
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,800
Western Isles	2,284

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the measures to reduce long-term unemployment in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: On 9 October 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed claimants in the Glasgow travel-to-work area was 113,412. The number of registrants at jobcentres in the Glasgow travel-to-work area on 6 December 1979 totalled 52,602. This information is available in the Library. The figures are not comparable due to the various changes which have taken place in the compilation of the statistics over the period.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the level of youth unemployment in Scotland at the latest date; and what were the figures in December 1979.

Mr. Lang: The restart programme and the community programme are the two principal measures designed to assist the long-term unemployed.

In the restart programme, which was introduced nationwide on 1 July 1986, Scottish figures show that 89 per cent. of the client group identified to date have been contacted, with 71 per cent. being either counselled or excused counselling. An offer of assistance was made to 91 per cent. of those interviewed. 75 per cent. of interviewees accepted the offer.

On 31 October 1986 there was a total of 32,121 filled places on community programme projects in Scotland. During the year to 30 September 1986 there were 38,976 entrants to the community programme, of whom 58·2 per cent. had been unemployed for 12 months or more.

These figures provide a good indication of the high proportion of long-term unemployed people in Scotland now benefiting from Government employment measures.

Disabled People

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when he intends to lay a commencement order for section 13 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Represention) Act 1986;

(2) when he intends to lay a commencement order for section 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986;

(3) when he intends to lay commenecement orders for sections 4, 8, 9 and 10 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986;

(4) when he intends to lay commencement orders for sections 12, 14 and 15 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986;

(5) what consultation he intends to undertake with voluntary organisations of and for disabled people before bringing the various sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 into force or issuing guidance to local authorities and health boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My written answer of 14 July, at column *380*, to the hon. Member confirmed that decisions on implementation of different provisions of the Act will be taken in the light of consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and other factors. This also dealt with our proposals to issue guidance as and when particular provisions of the Act are due to be commenced.

The convention has recently submitted substantially increased estimates of the costs involved in implementing the Act as a whole and these are to be the subject of further discussion with my Department in the very near future. Whatever the outcome of these discussions, I am hopeful that almost all the sections referred to by the hon. Member can be introduced during 1987-88 and I shall be seeking the convention's specific views on this possibility. Section 15 of the Act now appears as part of section 5(1) of the National Health Services (Amendment) Act 1986 and is already in force.

My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to consult voluntary organisations on the implementation date for provisions though there are certainly facets of particular provisions (including section 1 on the appointment of authorised representatives) on which he will wish to consult when implementation is in prospect.

Dairy Industry

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has sought improvements to the milk outgoers scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The Community milk outgoers' scheme is founded on Community legislation, which requires that it is operated on a United Kingdom basis. While the administration of the scheme might have been simpler if it had been set up on a regional basis, it is our intention to try to ensure that a disproportionate amount of quota is not extinguished in Scotland as a result of the scheme.

Historic Buildings and Monuments

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are employed in the historic buildings division of his Department; and if he will set out their responsibilities and job titles.

Mr. Rifkind: The historic buildings division of the historic buildings and monuments directorate of the Scottish Development Department comprises the following staff:

	Number
Deputy Director (part-time) Grade 5	1
Personal Secretary (part-time)	1
Principal (part-time)	1
Principal	1
Senior Executive Officers	2
Higher Executive Officers	5
Executive Officers	6
Clerical Officers	8
Clerical Assistants	9
Full time equivalents	32½
Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings	1
Inspectors of Historic Buildings (1 Post vacant at present)	6
Assistant Inspectors of Historic Buildings	5
	44½

The division is responsible for the listing and conservation of historic buildings, and the payment of grants towards their upkeep.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the numbers, rank, and responsibilities of those employed within the ancient monuments inspectorate of his Department.

Mr. Rifkind: The ancient monuments inspectorate is part of the ancient monuments division of the historic buildings and monuments directorate of the Scottish Development Department. Its staffing is as follows:

	Number
Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments	1
Inspectors of Ancient Monuments	7
Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments	1
Curatorial Officers Grade E	3
Conservation Officer Grade E	1
Senior Photographers	2
Graphics Officer	1
Higher Executive Officer	1
Clerical Officers	2
Clerical Assistant	1
	20

The inspectorate provides professional advice to the division on the maintenance and presentation and the development of the management of (i) the ancient monuments within the care of the Secretary of State and (ii) the Palace of Holyrood house.

The inspectorate is also responsible for the management of the directorate's archaeological programme.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many grants were awarded by him in respect of historic buildings and monuments in each year from 1979 to the latest available date;

(2) how many applications for grants for historic buildings and monuments were refused by him in each year from 1979 to the latest available date.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested in respect of historic buildings grants is contained, for the years 1979-80 to 1984-85, in the annual reports of the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland; copies are available in the Library. In 1985-86, 108 grants were offered and accepted, and 39 applications refused.

Grants to owners of ancient monuments are made under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Information on grants awarded before 1983 is not available. In 1983-84, 11 grants were awarded totalling £67,274; in 1984-85, nine grants totalling £46,222; in 1985-86, eight grants totalling £36,480.

Voluntary Bodies

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has now received a letter from Mr. Alistair Lang, chairman of the Strathclyde urban aid action group, dated 20 November, requesting an early meeting; and when he hopes to arrange to receive a deputation from representatives of the voluntary bodies.

Mr. Ancram: Mr. Lang's request is presently under consideration.

Scottish Sports Council

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total cost and unit cost of printing, production and distribution of the Scottish Sports Council's annual report; and what is the grant provided by his Department to the Scottish Sports Council.

Mr. John MacKay: Final costs are not yet available. The estimated total and unit costs are respectively £9,040 and £5·02. Grant-in-aid to the Scottish Sports Council is expected to amount to £4·585 million in 1986-87.

Local Authority Officers

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the guidance given to local authority officers regarding standards of professional conduct in carrying out their duties.

Mr. Ancram: Guidance on this subject would be a matter for local authorities themselves, and for relevant professional associations. No such guidance has been issued centrally.

Commissioner for Local Administration

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any proposals for legislation in this Session in relation to the functions of the Commissioner for Local Administration in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. The Local Government Bill will include proposals to amend part II of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1975 so as to enable the commissioner to investigate complaints arising from the administrative actions of licensing boards, to provide him with wider discretion to accept and investigate complaints which are made "out of time", and to give him discretion to delegate to his staff the function of making reports. These changes, and others which have previously been made, will ensure that the powers and duties of the commissioner remain broadly in line with those of the local ombudsmen in England and Wales. Proposals for more fundamental changes in the commissioner's powers were included in the recent report of the Widdicombe committee. It would, however, be premature to consider legislation on any of those more radical proposals while the Widdicombe committee's recommendations are still the subject of consultation.

Housing

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what public expenditure provision he intends to make for capital expenditure on housing in 1987-88.

Mr. Rifkind: Public expenditure provision for capital expenditure on housing in Scotland in 1987-88 will be £548 million. This compares with provision of £458 million in the present year and represents an increase of 20 per cent. Public expenditure figures are net of capital receipts. When forecasts of those receipts are taken into account, gross expenditure is expected to be at least £720 million.

Council of Fisheries Ministers

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Council of Fisheries Ministers meeting held on Wednesday 3 December.

Mr. Gummer: I have been asked to reply.

Together with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland I represented the United Kingdom at the meeting of the Council of Fisheries Ministers on 3 and 4 December, under the Presidency of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

I am very glad to report that, pending the receipt of an opinion from the European Parliament, the Council reached a common position, subject to reserves by three member states, on a presidency compromise in respect of the Commission's proposals on fisheries structures. The proposals covered a range of measures designed to improve the structure and associated facilities of the fishing fleet over the next five years.

This marks a major success for the presidency. It means that the British fishing industry will be able to claim 50 per cent. grants for modernisation of boats. There will also be effective measures for reducing the catching capacity of the Community fleet and these fit well with the conservation measures agreed by the Council this year.

The package included provision for grants for the construction and modernisation of fishing vessels and permitted the rates of grant to be supplemented by national Governments up to the levels applying under the previous scheme. There is also provision for laying-up grants, grants for exploratory voyages, aids to aquaculture and assistance to improve port facilities. These measures, if finally approved, will be of considerable importance to the fishing industry.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 5 December 1986

TRANSPORT

M1 (Accident)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the incident that occurred prior to 8.30 am on Friday 28 November north of junction 16 on the M1 motorway between London and Wakefield and which caused severe congestion.

Mr. Moore: Severe traffic congestion was caused on M1, and throughout Northamptonshire, on 28 November as a result of a fire on an articulated lorry carrying cans of oil. The vehicle stopped on the northbound hard shoulder immediately north of junction 17 (M45). The fire quickly spread to the vehicle's load, and became extremely intense. Burning oil spread over three lanes of the motorway, badly damaging the road surface. Emergency services promptly brought the fire under control.

The motorway was initially closed to northbound traffic, which was diverted via A45 and A5. Later some traffic was able to use the motorway while the road was resurfaced, though other traffic continued to be diverted. A short delay to southbound traffic was caused by smoke from the burning oil.

Transport Conference

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the outcome of the conference, "Transport Without Handicap, A Priority for Europe" on 1 and 2 December.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This conference, which was organised by the Department of Transport as one of the initiatives to mark the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community, brought together nearly 500 people from 13 countries of Europe to discuss recent developments and future needs in the field of transport for disabled people. Delegates and speakers included representatives of transport operators, local and national Governments, voluntary sector groups and a large number of disabled transport users.

The conference provided a forum for an exchange of experience and expertise on a Europe wide basis and an opportunity to identify priority areas for future initiatives at both national and international levels.

Disabled People

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to make available to a larger proportion of disabled people the facilities currently available through the mobility advice and vehicle information service.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department of Transport's mobility advice and vehicle information service provides advice and guidance to disabled people on driving and car adaptations. MAVIS was established a year ago, initially on a two-year pilot basis. Its operations are being closely monitored to establish the most effective way to make such advice available to disabled people throughout the country. The results of the monitoring and recommendations for future developments will be made in 1987.

In addition, the Department of Transport will be holding the third mobility road show on June 12, 13 and 14 1987. This major international motor show for disabled people has, in previous years, attracted many thousands of disabled people from all over the United Kingdom and Europe to look at and test drive a wide range of vehicles.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many civil servants employed by his Department and engaged primarily on regional matters are based in *(a)* Yorkshire and Humberside. *(b)* the north-east and *(c)* the north-west.

Mr. Moore: The total number of officers employed by the Department at our regional offices in Leeds (Yorkshire and Humberside region), Manchester (north-west region) and Newcastle (northern region) was 353 on 1 October 1986. This figure includes 16 local government officers working full time for the Department. The details are as follows:

	YHRO	*NWRO*	*NRO*
Civil Servants	143	145	49
Local Government Officers	14	2	nil
Total	157	147	49

Motorists (Eye Tests)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he proposes to introduce legislation to require motorists to take regular eye tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Current legislation already places the responsibility on motorists to meet, at all times when driving, a standard of visual acuity equivalent to an ability to read a vehicle number plate from a distance of 75 ft for characters 3½ in high or 67 ft for characters 3⅛ in high. The number plate test is one that motorists can take for themselves at any time and can be readily used by the police for enforcement purposes. Motorists who have any doubts about their ability to satisfy the test should consult an optician for further advice.

Research studies have not identified poor eyesight as a significant factor in accidents. There is no evidence to suggest that the present arrangements are failing to meet the requirements of road safety.

Roads

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations he has received concerning the construction of new roads on stilts above railway lines; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consideration is being given to the construction of a motorway on stilts between central London and Gatwick airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received suggestions from time to time but have no proposals for such schemes.

An assessment study into transport related problems in the broad corridor between central London and Gatwick is under way. The consultants have been identifying the problems in this corridor. I hope to publish their report soon.

Motorways (Signs)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport what qualifications for those employed by temporary signing contractors on Britain's motorways are necessary to meet the road safety requirements of his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Detailed guidance on safety for both workmen and road users is contained in the various Departmental publications listed in trunk road management and maintenance notice 9/85, a copy of which is in the Library. Contractors are responsible for ensuring that the requirements are met and that their employees are trained accordingly.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the companies who tendered for temporary signing work on motorway contracts in Buckinghamshire during 1984, the level of each tender, and the price of the tender from the successful bidder.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's agent, Buckinghamshire county council, did not invite separate tenders for temporary signing work on motorway contracts in 1984. Traffic management arrangements at major works were part of the responsibility of the main contractors.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the standard of the work carried out under the temporary signing contract on the Buckinghamshire section of the M1 during the 1984 major works.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The employer for these works was Buckinghamshire county council, the agent authority for this part of the M1. The temporary signing was sub-contracted by the main contractor. I understand that the county engineer was satisfied with the standard of work.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the Association of County Councils concerning the regulations regarding the tendering by local authorities for signing work in respect of major works on motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am not aware of recent representations from the association on this matter.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether local authority repair and maintenance agencies are restricted from tendering for signing work for his Department during periods of major contracts on motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Agent authorities' direct labour organisations may tender for work for the Department but have no powers to work as a sub-contractor to a private sector maintenance contractor.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines his Department issues to agencies doing contract work on behalf of his Department in respect of temporary signing work on motorway maintenance.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department issues detailed guidance in the form of standards, advice notes, manuals and site drawings. These publications are listed in the relevant trunk road management and maintenance notice (TRMM/9/85). A copy is in the Library.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will list the total cost of contraflow temporary signing on motorway contracts for the current year and the comparable figures for 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Temporary signing is often carried out as part of the main works contract. The cost is not recorded as a separate item.

Motorways (Maintenance)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations his Department has received from local authorities in respect of their ability to tender for motorway maintenance contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has received no formal representations from local authorities on this matter.

Newbury (Traffic)

Mr. Michael McNair Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates his Department has made of the increase in traffic on the A34 through Newbury in 1988, 1990 and 1992, respectively.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The forecast traffic flows for the A34 near the Robin Hood roundabout (based on a 12-hour period on a weekday in May) are:

	Vehicles per day
1988	35,000 to 37,000
1990	36,000 to 39,000
1992	37,000 to 41,000

These figures take no account of the proposed Newbury bypass as this will depend on the outcome of the statutory procedures.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Newham, South on the funding of the docklands light railway eastern extension, *Official Report*, 1 December, column 617, he will place in the Library a copy of the text of the assurance he has received from the London Docklands Development Corporation concerning private funding of the extension.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am unable to deposit the documents referred to as they contain commercially sensitive information. We believe that this part of the docklands light railway can and should be paid for out of the private and public sector development gains it is expected to generate.

Thames Crossing, Dartford

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to introduce legislation to authorise a new crossing of the Thames at Dartford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I announced proposals for the construction of a new, privately financed, bridge to be undertaken by Dartford River Crossing Ltd., the concession company, on 29 September. Since then the Department and the company have been discussing in detail the statutory and contractual arrangements which will govern the construction of the new bridge and the transfer and operation of the existing tunnels. Discussions have been required with interested third parties, including the county councils, the Port of London Authority, and local landowners.

Many of these matters are novel and complex and it is important that we get them right. Nevertheless, good progress has been made, and I aim to introduce a Bill as early as possible after Christmas.

ENERGY

Berkley Power Station

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will now make available for independent assessment all the details of the incident at Berkley nuclear power station reported to the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate on 7 January 1983 and all the documents relating to the subsequent safety review;

(2) if he will now make available for independent assessment all the details of the incident at Berkley nuclear power plant involving the discovery of environmental contamination on 25 September 1980 and all the documents relating to subsequent inquiries;

(3) if he will now make available for independent assessment all the details of the discovery of weld defects at Berkley nuclear power station on 26 November 1980 and all the documents relating to subsequent inquiries;

(4) if he will now make available for independent assessment all the details of the incident at Berkley nuclear power station involving radioactive contamination discovered during work begun in January 1981 to remove a discharge pipeline and all the documents relating to subsequent inquiries;

(5) if he will now make available for independent assessment all the details of the incident at Berkley nuclear power station on 25 June 1981 involving radioactive contamination and all the documents relating to subsequent inquiries.

Mr. Goodlad: These incidents were independently assessed at the time by HM nuclear installations inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive. Descriptions of the incidents, and of the immediate subsequent investigation of the incident of 25 June 1981, are given in the HSE's quarterly reports for third and fourth quarters, 1980, first and second quarters 1981 and first quarter 1983. HMNII advises me that following the incident of 7 January 1983 a comprehensive safety review of the cranes was undertaken, leading to a programme of refurbishment, and that changed procedures were adopted to prevent damage to an operating reactor by an operating crane. They advise me that following the incident of 26 November 1980, remedial work was carried out on both reactors 1 and 2; and that the remainder of the disused pipeline exposed in January 1981 was removed under radiologically controlled conditions. All this work has also been assessed by HMNII, whose final agreement was required before the reactors could be restarted following the work on the defective bellows welds found on 26 November 1980; and is required before the operator will be permitted to resume normal operation with the cranes referred to in the report on 7 January 1983 incident.

Political Advisers

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those currently employed by Her Majesty's Government to act as his political advisers.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have no political advisers.

Aerogenerators

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the number of aerogenerators of the largest size currently operating which would be required to generate 1,360 MW of electricity.

Mr. David Hunt: The largest aerogenerator currently operating in the United Kingdom is a 300 kW machine on Orkney. A total of 4,534 such machines would be required to generate 1,360 MW.

Elsewhere in the world there is a small number of 3 MW machines and there is a 3-MW machine currently under construction on Orkney. A total of 454 3 MW machines would be required to generate 1,360 MW.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Falkland Islands (Slaughterhouse)

Mr. Livsey asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will direct the Falkland Islands Development Corporation to reverse its decision to reject Captain E. P. Carlisle's proposals for a ship-based slaughterhouse to be operated by a Falkland Islands company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: No. The proposal has been fully considered by the Falkland Islands Development Corporation and I have no reason to ask for its decision to be reviewed.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Telephone Calls

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Lord Privy Seal if outgoing telephone calls from offices within the Palace of Westminster are logged on a computer.

Mr. Biffen: In June 1985 the Services Committee decided that call information logging equipment should be fitted to the new Palace of Westminster electronic telephone exchange for system management purposes only. The information stored by this equipment can be accessed by only a severely restricted number of individuals, and there are no facilities for recording telephone conversations.

WALES

Health Authorities

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many associate specialists have been appointed in each health authority in Wales; and in what specialties; and what estimate he has of the actual financial saving to each authority.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Associate specialist posts are established with the approval of the central manpower committee. Costs are not a relevant factor in the determination of applications. Information on the overall cost of such appointments in not held centrally. The remaining information requested is given in the following table:

Associate specialists in post as at 30 September 1985 (whole-time equivalents)—excluding locum staff

	Clwyd	East Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	Pembrokeshire	Wales
Accident and emergency	—	—	—	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	—	2·0
Anaesthetics	—	1·0	1·0	—	6·0	—	—	1·8	—	9·8
Child and adolescent psychiatry	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·5	—	—	0·5
Clinical pharmacology and therapeutics	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·4	—	—	0·4
Dermatology	—	—	—	—	0·4	—	0·4	0·6	—	1·4
Ear, nose and throat	—	1·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0
General medicine	—	0·5	—	—	—	—	0·5	1·0	—	2·0
General surgery	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	1·0	—	2·0
Genito-urinary medicine	—	—	—	—	0·4	—	—	—	—	0·4
Geriatrics	—	0·5	—	1·0	1·0	—	—	—	1·0	3·5
Gynaecology and obstetrics	—	—	0·8	—	—	—	1·0	—	—	1·8
Histopathology	0·3	—	0·5	—	—	—	0·5	—	—	1·3
Mental illness	—	1·9	1·1	—	—	1·5	2·9	0·1	0·1	7·6
Nephrology	0·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·5
Ophthalmology	2·0	0·3	—	—	1·5	—	—	0·5	—	4·3
Oral surgery	—	0·4	—	—	—	—	1·8	1·0	0·4	3·6
Paediatrics	2·0	1·0	—	1·0	1·0	—	0·5	—	1·0	6·5
Restorative dentistry	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0	—	—	1·0
Thoracic medicine	1·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·0
Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery	—	2·0	—	—	2·0	—	0·6	0·8	—	5·4
All specialties	5·8	8·6	3·4	3·0	12·3	1·5	11·1	7·8	2·5	56·0

Vasectomies

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many vasectomies were carried out by *(a)* junior hospital staff and *(b)* consultants and consultant surgeons in each of the health authorities in Wales in the past year for which details are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The available information is shown in the following table:

Number of vasectomies carried out in hospitals in Wales in 1985

District Health Authority	Number
Clwyd	479
East Dyfed	195
Pembrokeshire	23
Gwent	165
Gwynedd	234
Mid Glamorgan	562
Powys	87
South Glamorgan	512
West Glamorgan	205

Details of the staff carrying out such operations are not available.

Morriston Hospital

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made with the proposed cardiac surgery unit at Morriston hospital near Swansea; and whether other centres for such procedure are envisaged within Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There are no plans to develop a cardiac surgery unit at Morriston hospital, Swansea. A unit at Cardiff is being planned.

Cardiac Bypass Surgery

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will enumerate the number of individuals registered with family practitioner committees within Wales that have received cardiac bypass surgery at hospitals outside the Principality in each of the past four individual years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is not available centrally.

Cardiothoracic Surgery

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will detail the arrangements for cardiothoracic surgery within Wales, in addition to those at the university teaching hospital at Cardiff.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Facilities for thoracic surgery are available at Llandough hospital, Penarth.

Mammography Centres

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the locations of specialist mammography centres in Wales, enumerating how many such procedures were carried out annually at each centre for the last three individual years for which figures are available.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Statistics on mammography tests are not held centrally.

National Museum

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales what funds voted for the purchase of specimens by the National

Museum of Wales during 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 were vired for other purposes; and if he will specify the sums and the purposes for which authority to vire was granted.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

1982-83	Nil.
1983-84	£100,000 for salaries and general administrative expenditure.
1984-85	£555,765 for salaries and general administrative expenditure.
1985-86	Nil.

Housing Condition Survey

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales why it was necessary for any of the civil servants and local government officers in Wales who have been involved in compiling the Welsh housing condition survey to be required to sign a declaration under the Official Secrets Act; and whether this has been required for each of the previous Welsh housing surveys.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The signing of declarations was not required in the previous survey in 1981, but it is considered that it would be a breach of confidence if those acting on behalf of the Welsh Office in undertaking the housing condition survey disclosed personal information gained in the course of their duties. The signing of the declaration under the Official Secrets Act served as a reminder to those engaged on the survey work about the confidentiality of information acquired in official work.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the approximate target date for publication of the current Welsh housing condition survey; and whether the scope of the survey will report to any significant extent from the scope of previous such surveys.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is hoped that publication of the 1986 Welsh house condition survey will take place in December 1987 or January 1988.

The report of the survey will differ in extent from previous reports as results will be published at local authority district level.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people involved in compiling the current Welsh housing condition survey have been required to sign a declaration under the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: One hundred and forty four.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Middle East (Peace Conference)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government with regard to the resolution 38/58C of the United Nations General Assembly on the proposal for an international peace conference on the middle east.

Mr. Renton: An international conference could be valuable if the gap between the parties can be narrowed and they can agree on the principle and nature of such a meeting. With the majority of our EC partners we abstained on this resolution because we believe that an immediate conference would not be productive if these conditions are not met.

United Nations Association (Grant)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why there has been no increase in grant to the United Nations Association in the past five years; and if he will increase the grant in future in real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The level of the grant-in-aid to the UNA is reviewed annually. The size of this grant together with those to other organisations has to be decided in the light of all the available information and of the limited resources available for all activities undertaken by the FCO. No absolute commitments can be given for future years.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the subject of the Falkland Islands has been discussed in the past 12 months in the context of European Economic Community political co-operation; what was the result of any such discussions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Our views on various aspects of the Falkland Islands question have been made plain to our partners. We have tended to use bilateral contacts for this purpose but my right hon. and learned Friend briefed his colleagues on 10 November on the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone and our views on the Falklands vote at the UNGA have been made plain in the Political Committee.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the other European Economic Community members voted in the recent United Nations resolution about the Falkland Islands; and what explanation they have given to Her Majesty's Government for their attitude.

Mr. Eggar: The majority of our European Community partners (Belgium, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, Republic of Ireland, Luxembourg and Portugal) abstained. French, Greek, Italian, Dutch and Spanish support for the resolution reflects a variety of considerations.

Diplomatic Missions

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what, for each diplomatic mission overseas, is the current *(a)* authorised establishment and *(b)* actual staffing level.

Mr. Eggar: The current diplomatic and aid wing authorised United Kingdom-based establishment at each post overseas is:

Post	*Establishment*
Abidjan	7·0
Abu Dhabi	17·0
Accra	20·0
Addis Ababa	17·0
Aden	4·0
Alexandria	2·0
Algiers	11·0
Alicante	1·0
Al Khobar	2·0
Amman	23·0

Post	Establishment
Amsterdam	3·0
Ankara	22·0
Antananarivo	2·0
Antigua	2·0
Asuncion	2·0
Athens	29·0
Atlanta	3·0
Auckland	4·0
Baghdad	25·0
Bahrain	10·0
Bandar Seri Begawan	7·0
Bangkok	32·0
Banjul	5·0
Barcelona	4·0
Beirut	6·0
Belgrade	19·0
Belmopan	6·0
Berlin BMG	27·5
Berlin Consulate General	3·0
Berne	13·0
Bilbao	1·0
Bogata	9·0
Bombay	13·0
Bonn	75·0
Bordeaux	1·0
Boston	1·0
Brasilia	18·0
Brazzaville	1·0
Bridgetown	20·0
Brisbane	2·0
Brussels Embassy	31·0
Brussels NATO	42·0
Brussels UKREP	77·0
Bucharest	17·0
Budapest	27·0
Buenos Aires	17·0
Berlin, East	19·0
Cairo	38·0
Calcutta	4·0
Canberra	28·0
Capetown	5·0
Caracas	16·0
Casablanca	2·0
Castries	1·0
Chicago	6·0
Cleveland	2·0
Colombo	16·0
Copenhagen	20·0
Dhaka	45·0
Dakar	8·0
Dallas	1·0
Damascus	6·0
Dar es Salaam	17·0
Doha	9·0
Douala	3·0
Dubai	12·0
Dublin	22·0
Durban	1·0
Dusseldorf	13·0
Edmonton	2·0
Florence	1·0
Frankfurt	6·0
Freetown	5·0
Gabarone	9·0
Geneva Consulate General	3·0
Geneva UKMIS	38·0
Geneva UKDEL	6·0
Georgetown	6·0
Guatemala City	2·0
The Hague	24·0
Hamburg	5·0
Hanoi	6·0
Harare	27·0
Havana	16·0
Helsinki	22·0
Honiara	2·0
Houston	3·0

Post	Establishment
Islamabad	68·0
Istanbul	8·0
Jakarta	27·0
Jedda	8·0
Jerusalem	3·0
Johannesburg	11·0
Kabul	6·0
Kaduna	5·0
Kampala	14·0
Karachi	9·0
Kathmandu	10·0
Khartoum	23·0
Kingston	26·0
Kingstown	2·0
Kinshasa	8·0
Kuala Lumpur	28·0
Kuwait	20·0
Lagos	46·0
La Paz	5·0
Las Palmas	1·0
Libreville	2·0
Lille	1·0
Lilongwe	13·0
Lima	9·0
Lisbon	19·0
Los Angeles	5·0
Luanda	9·0
Lusaka	25·0
Luxembourg	6·0
Lyons	2·0
Madras	2·0
Madrid	32·0
Managua	2·0
Manila	14·0
Maputo	7·0
Marseilles	2·0
Maseru	6·0
Mbabane	5·0
Melbourne	4·0
Mexico City	23·0
Milan	6·0
Mogadishu	5·0
Monrovia	4·0
Montevideo	14·0
Montreal	4·0
Moscow	57·0
Munich	9·0
Muscat	16·0
Miami	1·0
Nairobi	39·0
Naples	2·0
Nassau	5·0
New Delhi	57·0
New York Consulate General	17·0
New York BTDO	10·0
New York BIS	3·0
New York UKMIS	33·0
Nicosia	25·0
Nuku'Alofa	2·0
Oporto	1·0
Osaka	3·0
Oslo	19·0
Ottawa	19·0
Palma	1·0
Panama City	4·0
Paris OECD	7·0
Paris Embassy	81·0
Peking	40·0
Perth	2·0
Port Louis	7·0
Port Moresby	4·0
Port of Spain	11·0
Port Stanley	3·0
Prague	21·0
Pretoria	37·5
Quito	7·0
Rabat	7·0

Post	Establishment
Rangoon	8·0
Reykjavik	3·0
Rio de Janeiro	8·0
Riyadh	30·0
Rome	40·0
St. Georges	2·0
Sana'a	11·0
San Francisco	3·0
San Jose	6·0
San Salvador	1·0
Santiago	14·0
Sao Paulo	4·0
Seattle	1·0
Seoul	14·0
Shanghai	3·0
Singapore	27·0
Sofia	14·0
Stockholm	23·0
Strasbourg	5·0
Suva	6·0
Sydney	4·0
Tarawa	1·0
Tegucigalpa	3·0
Tehran	24·0
Tel Aviv	20·0
Tokyo	48·0
Toronto	4·0
Tripoli	7·0
Tunis	6·0
Ulan Bator	2·0
Valletta	9·0
Vancouver	2·0
Vatican City	2·0
Victoria	5·0
Vienna	31·0
Vienna CSCE	8·0
Vienna UKDEL	6·0
Vienna UKMIS	4·0
Vila	2·0
Warsaw	36·0
Washington	117·0
Wellington	12·0
Yaounde	8·0
Zurich	3·0

So far as possible the staffing level matches the establishment of each post; but the actual level varies from day to day depending on leave, training and urgent operational requirements.

Western Hemisphere

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs into what divisions the western hemisphere is divided for the administrative purposes of his Department; which nations each division covers; how many home-based staff are allocated to each; and of what grades.

Mr. Eggar: The western hemisphere is divided for administrative purposes within the diplomatic wing of the FCO among five departments under an assistant under secretary. The nations each department covers and the allocation of home based staff to each are:

Department	Nations covered	Home based staff
1. North America Department	Canada, United States of America	Nine comprising five Diplomatic and four Administrative and Technical staff
2. South America Department	Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, Polar Regions	18 comprising 11 Diplomatic staff and seven Administrative and Technical staff
3. Mexico and Central America Department	Mexico, Cuba, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Panama, Belize, Guatemala, Dominican Republic	14 comprising eight Diplomatic staff and six Administrative and Technical staff
4. West Indian and Atlantic Department	Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos, Ascension, Bermuda, St. Helena, Tristan da Cunha, Cayman, Islands, Haiti, Bahamas, French Guiana, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, Bardados, Dominica, Grenada, Guateloupe, Martinique, Netherlands Antilles, St. Kitts, St. Lucian, St. Vincent Grenadines	16 comprising nine Diplomatic staff and seven Administrative and Technical staff
5. Falkland Islands Department	Falklands, Argentina	19 comprising 10 Diplomatic staff and nine Administrative and Technical staff

Aid wing activities are covered by two departments under one under secretary.

Department	*Nations covered*	*Home based staff*
1. Latin American, Caribbean and Pacific	Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos Islands, Bahamas, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago	14 comprising 11½ Administrative and Executive and two and a half clerical and secretarial grades
2. South Atlantic and Gibraltar	Falkland, St. Helena, Tristan da Cunha	Six and a half comprising five Administrative and Executive staff and one and a half clerical and secretarial grades

Iran and Iraq (Arms)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to take the lead in securing a United Nations embargo on the supply of arms to Iran and Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No, we do not believe it would be effective. Our own very restrictive policy on defence sales to Iran and Iraq remains unchanged. We do not sell any defence equipment to either side which could significantly enhance their capability to prolong or exacerbate the conflict.

PRIME MINISTER

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister when and by what means the chief information officer at the Department of Trade and Industry and the press secretary at No. 10 Downing street first became aware that a letter was to be sent by the Solicitor-General to the then Secretary of State for Defence alleging material inaccuracies in relation to Westlands.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 17 November, at columns 49-50.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Terrorism

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he has taken following the terrorist attacks on the border at the Army/police station in Middletown on 23 November and at the Fane Valley Co-operative building at Newtownhamilton on 25 November; who were responsible for these terrorist attacks; whether the terrorists were operating from the territory of the Republic of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the security situation along the Irish/United Kingdom border.

Mr. Scott: These disgraceful attacks are the subject of investigations by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Appropriate assistance is being sought from the Garda Siochana. Both are thought to have been the work of the Provisional IRA. In the attack at Middletown the mortar rounds were fired from a vehicle situated in the Republic of Ireland. The vehicle used to convey the bomb to the Fane Valley Co-operative building was hijacked in Northern Ireland shortly before the attack took place.

Although much has been done to seek to reduce the level of terrorist activity in the border region the Government remain concerned at the security situation there, and measures are in hand on both sides of the border designed to bring about further improvements in the situation.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, in the light of the Taoiseach's statement in London on 28 November that progress by the United Kingdom in the implementation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement would determine progress with the Republic's Extradition Bill, he will make representations to the Irish Government about their intentions with regard to the fulfilment of their obligations under paragraph 7 of the joint communiqué of the Anglo-Irish summit meeting of 15 November 1985, Cmnd. 9657; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: The Irish Government are well aware of our views on the desirability of early ratification of the European convention on the suppression of terrorism, and we understand their desire to enact legislation designed to bring this about.

ENVIRONMENT

Showmen

Mr. Barnett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will direct the London residuary body to observe the recommendations contained in his Department's circular 23/83 with regard to its role as landlord of land occupied by showmen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No.

Planning Zones

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made about the effect on the revenue of the creation of simplified planning zones; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Simplified planning zones will have no direct effect on central Government revenue. Local planning authorities will not receive the fees which would have been payable on making planning applications for development authorised by simplified planning zone schemes.

Marine Pollution

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list any recommendations currently being considered by his Department concerning the acceptable level of list I and list II substances in dredged materials to be disposed of in the North sea;

(2) what concentrations of list I and list II substances are regarded as acceptable levels of contamination in dredged materials to be disposed of in the North sea.

Mr. Gummer: I have been asked to reply.

In the context of both the Oslo and London dumping conventions, to which the United Kingdom is a signatory, guidelines for the disposal of dredged materials were adopted this year which prescribe the conditions under which licences may be issued for the sea disposal of dredged materials. Whilst the guidelines do not set numerical limits on the levels of Annex I and II substances, they indicate the factors to be taken into account in assessing whether or not the environmental impact of contaminated spoils is acceptable.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the amounts of list I/ black list substances which render sewage sludge unsuitable for sea disposal.

Mr. Gummer: I have been asked to reply.

These substances may not be disposed of at sea except where they occur in, for example, sewage sludge as trace contaminants. In deciding on particular cases, in accordance with the relevant international conventions, my Ministry takes full account of the need to protect the marine environment, its living resources, human health and other relevant factors.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Investment Business (Licence)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will consider bringing in provisions of the Financial Services Act relating to the conduct of investment business in the United Kingdom without a licence, with immediate effect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: It would not be possible to implement immediately the provisions which require investment businesses to be authorised, because it is necessary first to give such businesses an opportunity to obtain authorisation. Our intention is that the agency should be designated, the self-regulating organisations and professional bodies recognised and an interval allowed for businesses to apply to them, before bringing into force the requirement to be authorised. I hope that it will be possible to complete the last of these stages during the second half of 1987.

Regional Aid

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish his latest figure for the amount of regional development grant and regional selective assistance paid out for each regional area covered by grant aid for 1984-85, 1985-86 and so far in 1986-87.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The payments of regional development grant[1] made in each region of England and in Scotland and Wales in 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 to date are:

Region/Country	*1984-85 £ million*	*1985-86 £ million*	*1986-87[3] £ million*
North East	61·6	46·4	56·8
North West	107·4	83·0	59·1
Yorkshire/Humberside	26·8	24·2	15·1
East Midlands	3·8	4·4	5·3
West Midlands	—	—	—
South West	9·5	8·6	9·2
Scotland	109·2	107·5	116·3
Wales	92·7	84·4	54·3
TOTAL GREAT BRITAIN	411·0	358·5	316·1

The payments of regional selective assistance[2] made in each region of England and in Scotland and Wales in 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 to date are:

£ Million

Region/Country	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87[3]*
North East	14·9	16·5	10·0
North West	14·9	13·7	9·0
Yorkshire/Humberside	9·4	8·0	3·3
East Midlands	6·5	3·9	1·2
West Midlands	—	4·8	5·8
South West	2·0	2·3	1·0
Scotland	31·9	48·1	17·2
Wales	18·2	22·5	15·1
Total (Great Britain)	97·8	119·8	62·6

[1] Consists of old and new style RDGs; the new RDG scheme was introduced on 29 November 1984.
[2] Industrial and Training Grants only.
[3] April to October.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is his budgeted figure for payments in *(a)* regional development grant and *(b)* regional selective assistance; and what is his best estimate of the amounts due;

(2) if he has any plans for any further moratorium on the payment of regional development grant; and if he will give details of any such plans.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Merchant Shipbuilding

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many people were employed in merchant shipbuilding in 1979 and in the most recent year for which figures are available in *(a)* Great Britain, *(b)* the United Kingdom, *(c)* France, *(d)* Germany, *(e)* Italy and *(f)* the European Economic Community as a whole.

(2) if he will publish the most recent information available to him of the support for shipbuilders in (a) Japan, (b) Taiwan, (c) Korea and (d) all individual countries of the European Economic Community;

(3) under what circumstances shibuilding intervention fund support is now available to private sector yards; and what are his proposals for the future.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much shipbuilding intervention fund support has been paid out in each year since 1977, and in total, to each of the member countries of the European Community.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There is no support for merchant shipbuilding paid to Member countries from European Community funds. Each member state administers a regime of aid that is agreed with the European Commission within the framework of successive Council directives on shipbuilding aids. For the United Kingdom, Her Majesty's Government have made the following payments to merchant shipbuilding yards from the shipbuilding intervention fund:

Financial Year	*£ million*
1976-77	1·4
1977-78	19·3
1978-79	10·8
1979-80	36·3
1980-81	45·8
1981-82	54·5
1982-83	54·9
1983-84	43·4
1984-85	28·1
1985-86	30·8
1986-87	19·3

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of world orders has been won by British shipbuilding yards in 1985 and so far in 1986.

Mr. Giles Shaw: During 1985, United Kingdom shipbuilding yards won 2·7 per cent. of world new orders for merchant ships. During the first six months of 1986, United Kingdom yards have won 1·6 per cent. of world orders.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of orders placed by British shipowners has been placed in Britain in 1985 and so far in 1986.

Mr. Giles Shaw: During 1985, 61 per cent. of new orders for the United Kingdom flag were placed in United Kingdom yards. During the first six months of 1986, 78 per cent. of new orders for the United Kingdom flag were placed in United Kingdom yards.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the numbers employed in each of the yards of British Shipbuilders in 1979, the numbers employed currently, and the number to be employed in April 1987.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information is as follows. The figures for 1979 include employment at companies since sold or closed:

Company	*March 1979*	*September 1986*	*April 1987*
Appledore Shipbuilders [1]	870	585	550
Austin and Pickersgill [2]	2,999	1,131	[2]2080
BS (E & TS)	1,131	—	—
BS Marine Design Consultants	1,089	232	220
Clark Kincaid (Greenock)	1,350	510	565
Clark Kincaid (Wallsend)	1,933	78	—
Ferguson-Ailsa—(Pt Glasgow) [1]	414	334	490
Ferguson-Ailsa (Troon)	522	227	—
Govan Shipbuilders	5,474	2,385	1,850
Smiths Dock	2,756	999	—
Sunderland Forge Services	—	386	400
Sunderland Shipbuilders [2]	4,374	1,754	(see Austin and Pickersgill [2])
Barclay Curle	315	—	—
Blackwall Engineering	105	—	—
Brigham and Cowan (Hull)/Tyne Shiprepair	3,594	—	—
Brooke Marine	855	—	—
Cammell Laird	4,450	—	—
Clelands	515	—	—
Falmouth Docks and Eng.	162	—	—
Falmouth Shiprepair	747	—	—
Goole	427	—	—
Grangemouth Dockyard	176	—	—
Hall Russell	896	—	—
Henry Robb	677	—	—
Henry Robb (LPG)	24	—	—
K. and L. Marine Equipment	99	—	—
R. Harris and Son	179	—	—
River Thames Shiprepair	1,044	—	—
Scott Lithgow	7,170	—	—
Sunderland Forge	692	—	—
Swan Hunter Shipbuilders	10,284	—	—
VO Offshore	140	—	—

Company	March 1979	September 1986	April 1987
Vosper Thornycroft	5,073	—	—
Vickers Shipbuilding	9,020	—	—
Vickers Engineering	4,950	—	—
Vosper Shiprepairs	1,533	—	—
Wallsend Slipway Eng.	336	—	—
Wolsingham Steel	411	—	—
Yarrow Shipbuilders	5,544	—	—
BS Headquarters etc.	203	166	160
Total	82,533	8,787	6,320

[1] Appledore Shipbuilders Ltd. merged with the Ferguson yard at Port Glasgow in September 1986 to form a new subsidiary, Appledore-Ferguson Ltd.

[2] Austin and Pickersgill Ltd. and Sunderland Shipbuilders merged in April 1986 to form a new subsidiary, North East Shipbuilders Ltd.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the current orders of British Shipbuilders and the date of completion.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The following is the information:

BS yard	Current orders	Completion date
Govan	1 passenger RO/RO ferry	March 1987
Austin & Pickersgill	1 multi purpose cargo vessel	First half 1987
	1 barge	First half 1987
	12 ferries	June 1987 to mid-1989
Sunderland	1 diving support vessel	First half 1987
	1 diving support vessel	First half 1987
	1 crane ship	First half 1987
	13 ferries	June 1987 to mid-1989
Appledore	1 dredger 5K	April 1987
	1 dredger 2K	September 1987
Ferguson (Port Glasgow)	1 passenger RO/RO ferry	February 1988
Ferguson (Troon)	1 research vessel	Early 1987
Smith's dock	1 SD King cargo vessel	Early 1987
Clark Kincaid (Greenock)	1 engine	July 1987

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his latest figure for the gross domestic product per head of each regional area expressed both in 1986 prices and as a proportion of the south-east for *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is:

Gross Domestic Product per Head by Region at 1986 (Second Quarter) Prices and Relative to the South-East (= 100)

	£'000 At 1986 Prices		As per cent. of South East (= 100)	
	1979	[1]1985	1979	[1]1985
North	4,508	4,797	79·3	80·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,593	4,741	80·8	80·0
East Midlands	4,740	4,944	83·4	83·4
East Anglia	4,625	5,205	81·4	87·8
South East	5,683	5,930	100·0	100·0
South West	4,573	4,844	80·5	81·7
West Midlands	4,713	4,770	82·9	80·4
North West	4,767	4,960	83·9	83·6
Wales	4,361	4,586	76·7	77·3
Scotland	4,712	5,026	82·9	84·8
Northern Ireland	3,749	3,864	66·0	65·2
United Kingdom (Less continental shelf)	4,934	5,165	86·8	87·1

[1] The data for 1985 are provisional.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Diabetics

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the possibility of diabetics obtaining blood-sugar testing equipment on a general practitioner's prescription.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 1 December at column *530*.

Viral Diseases

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information his Department has on the incidence of *(a)* post-viral fatigue syndrome, *(b)* coxsackie B infection and *(c)* myalgic encephalomyelitis;

(2) what steps his Department is taking to study and correct: *(a)* post-viral fatigue syndrome, *(b)* coxsackie B infection and *(c)* myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Mrs. Currie: Formal notification is not required for any of these conditions, but their incidence in this country is low. Only coxsackie B has been identified in the laboratory. The Public Health Laboratory Service's Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (CDSC) reported 1268 cases in 1985, though the incidence may have been somewhat higher since not all cases would have been the subject of laboratory investigation. In the early 1950s outbreaks of benign myaligic encephalomyelitis occurred in some London hospitals, but despite extensive

investigations no causal agent was found. No outbreaks have been reported in recent years. We have no data centrally on post-viral fatigue syndrome.

Treatment for all these conditions consists mainly of complete rest and quiet during the acute phase of the illness.

The Department is not currently funding centrally any research into these conditions.

Hospital Building Maintenance

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will provide a breakdown of the hospital services building maintenance expenditure figures given in the *Official Report* for 21 July, column 92, into capital and revenue figures.

Mrs. Currie: All expenditure on hospital building maintenance is classified as revenue in health authorities' accounts.

Deceased Patients (Valuables)

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services who is responsible for laying down the procedures governing the return of valuables belonging to a patient who dies in hospital; and if he will place a copy of the relevant guidelines in the Library.

Mrs. Currie: General guidance governing the return of valuables belonging to a patient who dies in hospital is set out in health memorandum (72)41, a copy of which is in the Library. Health authorities are responsible for producing detailed written instructions, based on departmental guidance, for local use.

Benefits

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions since November 1980 a period of exceptionally severe weather has been recognised for the purpose of the Supplementary Benefits (Single Payments) Regulations for each of the Department of Health and Social Security local offices of Stockton, Middlesbrough, Hartlepool, Eston and Redcar.

Mr. Major: Single payments of supplementary benefit were available under the exceptionally severe weather provision in this area in the winter of 1981-82 and the winter of 1985-86.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish his latest figure for each regional area, and for the country as a whole, of the numbers claiming supplementary benefit and supplementary pension and his estimate of the numbers dependent on these claims.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Winter Fuel Payments

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will outline his policy for targeting special winter fuel payments to elderly people and disabled people.

Mr. Major: Help with heating costs is available each week to supplementary benefit claimants through the weekly scale rates and heating additions. Extra help through the exceptionally cold weather provision has been targeted on vulnerable groups; the elderly, the very young and the sick and disabled.

Pensions

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce a system to enable pensioners who reach their 65th birthday several days before their first pension pay day to be able to receive a once-off Giro from his Department's local office to pay to them the pension appropriate to that number of days for which they currently lose their pension.

Mr. Major: Retirement pension is paid to people who have both attained a minimum age and retired from regular work. People approaching pension age are already advised in leaflet NP32, sent automatically before age 60-65 to all those for whom the Department holds a contribution record, that any gap between the date of retirement and the first pension pay day can be avoided by making the pay day the retirement date where this is possible for them. The pension is in law a weekly benefit, and at present no powers exist either to pay retirement pension for odd days between the date of retirement and the pension pay day, or, indeed, to recover it for days after a pensioner's death included in a weekly payment already cashed.

Cervical Cancer

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action his Department will take to seek to reduce mortality and morbidity through early detection of carcinoma of the cervix in women below the age of 35 years.

Mrs. Currie: All women who are or have been sexually active should be regularly screened for cervical cancer. Guidance to health authorities on the screening of women below the age of 35 was set out in HC(84)17, a copy of which is in the Library. The guidance is currently under review.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action his Department will take to seek to reduce the mortality and morbility rate through early detection of carcinoma of the cervix in women between the ages of 50 and 60 years who are at greatest risk.

Mrs. Currie: Women between the ages of 50 and 60 are within the priority group on whom health authorities have been asked to put the main emphasis in their cervical cancer screening programmes. The Government are committed to cutting death rates from cervical cancer by improving the effectiveness of these programmes. In January this year all health authorities were required to give priority to improving their cervical cancer screening programmes, including implementing computerised call and recall systems. Our detailed guidance to health authorities is currently under review.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now publish a statistical report on the medical and regional variations in the incidence of cervical cancer for the period 1974 to 1983.

Mrs. Currie: Information on the incidence of cancer, including cervical cancer, is published routinely in "Cancer Statistics: Registrations" series MB1 and in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys *Monitors* series MB1. Data for 1983 were published on 27 November 1986, and a copy of "Cancer Statistics: Registrations 1983" may be found in the Library.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many exceptionally cold weather payments have been made in each year since 1980 to applicants at offices in the Bath district.

Mr. Major: Payments were made in the winters of 1981-82, 1984-85 and 1985-86. Information on the number of payments for the winter of 1981-82 is not available, but for the other two winters is 252 and 1,200 respectively.

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many exceptionally cold weather payments have been made in each year since 1980 to applicants at offices in the Bristol district.

Mr. Major: Payments were made in the winters of 1981-82, 1984-85 and 1985-86. Information on the number of payments for the winter of 1981-82 is not available, but for the other two winters is 1,090 and 5,355 respectively.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by how much claims are being backdated following the change in the rules for invalid care allowance after the European Court ruling.

Mr. Major: Claims may be backdated for up to 12 months before the date on which the claim is actually made, subject to the statutory authorities being satisfied that the conditions were met throughout the period and that there is good cause for delay in claiming. Claims from married and cohabiting women may be backdated to 22 December 1984 subject to the conditions being satisfied. This will apply to claims from married and cohabiting women received by 31 December 1986. After that date the 12-month limitation on backdating will apply to all claimants. Statistics are not available of the amount of backdating in individual cases.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to have completed the review of all claims for invalid care allowance currently pending, following the decision in the European Court.

Mr. Major: Experience with cases so far processed—and particularly the extended time needed to obtain replies to inquiries about backdated claims—indicates that all claims currently pending will be proceed by March.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications for invalid care allowance are currently awaiting a decision.

Mr. Major: At 21 November 1986, the latest date for which information is available, 65,767 from married women; 10,380 from men and single women.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for back payment of invalid care allowance, following the European Court decision, have now been processed and are being paid.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 3 December at column *701*.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the number of telephone inquiries to the Preston office received for each week since he announced his revision of eligibility for the invalid care allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Records of the number of telephone inquiries received are not kept routinely. The available information relates to the period from 19 November to 2 December only. During this period, a total of 1,969 telephone calls were received by the ICA unit at Preston, Lancs.

Drug Addicts (Syringes and Needles)

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimates he has made of the cost of providing disposable syringes and needles to drug addicts.

Mrs. Currie: The costs would depend entirely upon the method of distribution selected, the number of outlets and the proportion of addicts who avail themselves of such a facility.

Resettlement Units

Mr. Wood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in providing alternative means of resettlement to his Department's resettlement units.

Mr. Lyell: All review teams have now reported to me. Those in Bristol and Brighton have put forward constructive proposals to replace the resettlement units there. In each case, there will be nearly twice as many beds as in the existing units, but provided through smaller and more informal facilities based in the community. I have approved these proposals and will be providing direct funding to give them effect. We shall also make funds available to review teams for development work.

This practical help demonstrates the Government's commitment to improving provision for people without a settled way of life, in partnership with local government and voluntary bodies. I have also set up an advisory steering group, with members from the review teams and from the main interests concerned, including local authorities. The team will advise me on the best strategy to achieve better provision and a sensible distribution of resources throughout the country.

I am not satisfied that it is enough simply to hand over existing units to local authorities or voluntary bodies, and I have asked those review teams which recommended this to think again. It is my hope and expectation that, in doing so, they will follow the positive and thoughtful example of the Bristol and Brighton teams.

Hospital Medical Staffing

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will detail the proposed pay and conditions of service of the sub-consultant grade proposed in his Department's document "Hospital Medical Staffing —Achieving a Balance"; whether such doctors will be able to undertake private practice; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether future appointments to consultant posts will only take place from the ranks of sub-consultants as referred to in his Department's publication "Hospital Medical Staffing—Achieving a Balance".

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 4 December on the subject of "Achieving a Balance". Details of the conditions of service of the proposed intermediate service grade are yet to be negotiated. Pay will be determined by the Government in due course, in the light of the recommendations of the Doctors and Dentists Review Body. It is envisaged that the vast majority of consultant appointments would, as at present, be from doctors who had undertaken higher professional training in the senior registrar grade.

Doctors (Drug Prescribing)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to take any action to draw to the attention of doctors the guidelines drawn up by the Royal College of Physicians concerning inducements by some drug firms to pursuade doctors to prescribe their drugs.

Mr. Newton: The Department has had under consideration for some time the issue of revised guidance to the Health Service on the acceptance of gifts and hospitality and has been consulting health authority and professional interests. I have seen the Report of the Royal College of Physicians and I will be considering what reference to this should be made in our guidance.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much was committed in each year since its inception to the blood products laboratory at Elstree;

(2) what reductions have been made in the funds originally estimated to be provided for the blood products laboratory at Elstree;

(3) if he will make a statement on the progress of the project to build the blood products laboratory at Elstree;

(4) when it was originally proposed that the United Kingdom should become self-sufficient in the blood product factor VIII;

(5) when Her Majesty's Government were first committed to the blood products laboratory at Elstree; and what was the original estimate of its cost and of its likely completion date;

(6) when the production of factor VIII was estimated to come on stream at Elstree; and when it actually came on stream.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 December 1986 c. *532-33*]: The present blood products laboratory commenced manufacture of factor VIII concentrate in 1968. Its production of heat treated factor VIII now meets approximately one third of the England and Wales requirement.

In 1981, before AIDS transmission was associated with blood products, approval in principle was given for the construction of a new blood products laboratory at Elstree. In 1982 more detailed proposals were approved for a laboratory to make England and Wales self-sufficient in blood products. Construction began in May 1983. To enable the building to be completed earlier than traditional methods would allow a "fast track" design and build contract was adopted. When a unique project like this laboratory is built under this method it is extremely difficult to forecast accurately at the outset either the final cost or the completion date since the detailed design is developed as building progresses. Our working assumption at that time was that the cost would be £21·1 million and completion would be at the end of 1985 or early in 1986. We now expect the new BPL to be completed during the first part of 1987. There is no single identifiable reason for the building taking longer and costing more than originally expected other than the complexity of the design required being greater than anticipated. The building will still have been completed two or three years earlier than traditional contracting methods would have allowed.

Progress on the new laboratory has not been impeded by lack of finance; it has been fully funded throughout. Capital expenditure to date has been as follows:

	£'000s
1981-82	38
1982-83	276
1983-84	4,977
1984-85	16,648
1985-86	13,663
1986[1]	10,000

[1] To date.

It is not possible for a complex pharmaceutical plant to reach full production immediately but it is expected that after commissioning, limited production will begin later in 1987. On current predictions, substantial supplies of factor VIII will be available during 1988; self sufficiency should follow in 1989.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Dual Resident Companies

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to review the taxation of dual resident companies.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have authorised the Inland Revenue to publish today a consultative document introducing draft clauses on the tax treatment of dual resident companies. Comments on the draft clauses should be sent to the Board of Inland Revenue to arrive by 31 January 1987.

Recent legislation in the United States and evidence of substantially increased use of dual resident companies at the expense of the United Kingdom Exchequer now make United Kingdom legislation necessary. The Government intend to introduce provisions dealing with dual resident companies in the Finance Bill 1987.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. William Powell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many firm proposals have been received by the Inland Revenue for the establishment of new business enterprise scheme companies to take advantage of the provisions on ship chartering introduced in the Finance Act 1986; and how many have gone ahead.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Companies raising finance under the business expansion scheme obtain approval from local tax offices and no central record of proposals is kept. Statistics are collected once investment has been made and a formal application by the company approved. No information on companies engaged in ship chartering is yet available.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. McCrindle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning mortgage interest tax relief for joint unmarried borrowers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 December 1986]: A married couple are entitled to mortgage interest relief on up to £30,000 of the loan to buy their main home, but unmarried borrowers sharing a home can have relief on loans up to £30,000 each. This issue was discussed in the Green Paper on the "Reform of Personal Taxation" and a substantial number of the individuals and organisations who responded considered that steps should be taken to end the disparity of treatment. The Green Paper suggested that one possibility would be to apply mortgage interest relief to the residence so that two or more people borrowing to buy a house would share the £30,000 limit between them, whether they were married or unmarried.

Family Incomes

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* working families with children and *(b)* childless people in work had incomes below the tax threshold at the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 December 1986]: Information on weekly income in the 1984 family expenditure survey suggests that about a quarter of a million working families with children and 300,000 working childless couples or single people in the United Kingdom had incomes after personal allowances and mortgage interest relief below the tax threshold.

A "working" family is defined as one in which at least one adult is in full-time employment or self-employed.

CIVIL SERVICE

Administrative Class

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Minister for the Civil Service what number and percentage of the administrative class of the Civil Service *(a)* are Oxbridge graduates and *(b)* have been educated privately in the latest available year; and what are the comparable figures for 1981.

Mr. Luce: Statistics are not kept centrally of the educational background of current members of the administrative group, of which the former administrative class now forms part. Statistics are, however, kept of the university attended by new recruits to the grades of administration trainee (AT) and higher executive officer (development) (HEO(D)). In 1986 there were 81 new entrants to these grades of whom 38 (47 per cent.) were graduates of either Oxford or Cambridge university. In 1981 the corresponding number of recruits was 41 of whom 24 (59 per cent.) were Oxbridge graduates. Statistics of the school attended by recruits to these grades have not been kept since 1981, when 13 (32 per cent.) of AT entrants had been educated at direct grant or independent schools.

SCOTLAND

New Town Development Corporation

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what conclusions he has reached on the housebuilding role of the New Town Development Corporation in the light of his recent review.

Mr. Rifkind: The policy which the Government introduced in 1983 temporarily restricting new general needs housebuilding by the development corporations was designed to increase the opportunity for private development of housing, to broaden housing choice, and to improve the tenure balance in new town communities. We made it clear that the policy would be reviewed after it had been in operation for a few years.

In reviewing the corporations' role in housebuilding, I have carefully considered the detailed evidence they have presented on housing needs in their areas. To assess the adequacy of future housing supply, I have also had regard to the special demographic factors affecting new towns and their impact on the local housing market.

The review has confirmed that the policy adopted in 1983 has been instrumental in extending home ownership and private housebuilding in the new towns. Completion rates have nearly doubled since 1983. The level of home ownership, supported by our commitment to the right to buy as well as by new private housebuilding, has risen appreciably. We remain committed to further private housing development in the new towns, both as a means of promoting balanced communities and as an attraction to industrial investment. The provision of a broad range of housing is vital to the fulfilment of the corporation's economic development role.

At the same time, we recognise that projected household growth in new towns is at least double the Scottish average. It would be unreasonable to expect the private sector to satisfy all the housing needs implied by this growth. A mixed supply of housing capable of meeting the needs of the rising generation must be maintained if the towns' natural population growth is to be protected. In these circumstances, I have decided that it is now appropriate to lift the moratorium on general needs housebuilding by corporations and to allow corporations themselves to assess the relative priorities as between house improvement and new building for rent in their areas.

I am also concerned to ensure proper integration of general and special needs development.

To enable corporations to finance a new build programme, we are making available £6 million more for new housing investment than was allocated last year. In addition, corporations will be permitted to plan ahead on the assumption that, depending on the overall resources available for housing investment, they may expect to receive in aggregate a further increase of some £8 million over the 1987-88 level phased over the following two years. With some readjustment of priorities this would be sufficient to permit the construction of 1,400 houses for rent over the next three years. The precise size of the new building programme will depend on corporations' assessment of priorities in their areas.

I am confident that the programme we envisage will enable corporations to meet the particular needs for rental housing arising in the new towns. Sustained private sector

activity will complement the corporations programmes. This will secure our major aim of creating viable, diverse and balanced communities in the new towns before the development corporations are wound up.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland at what minimum cost level he requires to approve Scottish Development Agency investments where private sector funding is lower than 60 per cent. of project finance; and what changes in Scottish Office guidelines have been made in this respect since 1979.

Mr. Lang: A threshold in this particular form does not exist in the Government's current industrial investment guidelines for the agency; nor did it in those previous to 1980. The current guidelines do, however, require the agency to seek the Secretary of State's approval inter alia for any investment which would bring the agency's total investment in a company both to more than £150,000 and to more than 50 per cent. of the funding of the company from all sources. A copy of the guidelines was placed in the Library of the House when they were issued in 1980.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the figures for *(a)* budget and *(b)* actual expenditure of the Scottish Development Agency in 1985-86.

Mr. Lang: The agency's approved budget (defined as its gross grant-in-aid plus its net provision of investment funds) was £128·0 million in 1985-86. On this definition actual expenditure, which was augmented by additional unanticipated grant-in-aid receipts which the agency received approval to retain, was £131·1 million. Taking account also of investment income actual gross expenditure was £136·6 million.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportions of the Scottish Development Agency expenditure from 1978 up to 1986 and budget for 1986-87 went on industrial investment; and if he will provide the figures for industrial investment at 1986 prices.

Mr. Lang: The information is as follows:

Gross expenditure on industrial investment

Year	*Outturn prices £ million*	*1986 prices £ million*	*As percentage of total expenditure*
1978-79	5·5	10·7	8·5
1979-80	8·5	14·1	10·4
1980-81	7·1	10·0	7·0
1981-82	6·6	8·4	6·4
1982-83	12·7	15·1	10·0
1983-84	11·2	12·8	9·2
1984-85	10·8	11·8	8·8
1985-86	8·1	8·3	5·9
[1]1986-87	9·0	9·0	7·0

[1] Estimate.

Note:

The agency's total expenditure is defined as gross grant-in-aid, plus gross investment.

Electronics Industry

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will explain the reasons for reclassifying electronics industry employment for the years 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Lang: Under the standard industrial classification industrial and commercial establishments are classified to an industry according to their principal or main product, and when this changes the reclassification of that establishment results in a change in the industry's employment. If the reclassified establishment produces more than one product the change in employment resulting from reclassification can be greater than the underlying change in employment related specifically to the product. In the IDS estimates, published in IDS "Statistical Bulletin No. C.2.1", one major establishment in Scotland was reclassified to another industry because of changes in its product structure between 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the estimates of electronics employment provided by the Engineering Industry Training Board in 1979 and the most recent dates for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: The Engineering Industry Training Board estimates that there were 38,350 people employed in the electronics industry in Scotland in 1979 and 39,700 (provisional estimate) in 1985. The EITB defines electronics to comprise activity headings 3301, 3302, 3441, 3442, 3443, 3444, 3452, 3453 and 3454.

The EITB definition is based on different activity headings from those included in the IDS definition, partly reflecting differences in the activities of establishments in these activity headings in Scotland and the United Kingdom as a whole. If this difference in definition is removed, the difference in estimates of employment from the respective sources in 1985 are relatively minor.

Anderson Brown Engineering

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if Anderson Brown Engineering is in receipt of public sector contracts; and if he will list these contracts.

Mr. Lang: Government Departments and local authorities individually negotiate their contracts with companies. Information about contracts obtained by individual companies could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Council House Sales

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many council house tenants in Scotland bought their homes under the right-to-buy provisions of the Tenants Rights, &c. (Scotland) Act 1980 and subsequent legislation in the financial year 1980-81 and each subsequent year for which figures are available; and what are his estimates for such sales in future years.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is provided in the table. Estimates for future years are not available.

Sales to sitting tenants[1]

Year	*Local authority*	*New town*	*Scottish Special Housing Association*	*Total*
1980-81	3,199	1,365	1,681	6,245
1981-82	7,795	1,743	1,988	11,526
1982-83	11,787	1,519	1,891	15,197
1983-84	13,008	2,081	2,910	17,999
1984-85	11,674	1,828	3,214	16,716
1985-86	10,361	1,381	2,218	13,960
1986-87[2]	10,200	1,900	2,100	14,200

[1] Including voluntary sales.
[2] Provisional estimates.

Infectious Diseases

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has on the incidence of *(a)* post-viral fatigue syndrome, *(b)* coxsackie B infection and *(c)* myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Mr. John MacKay: These are not notifiable diseases and no data are available centrally which would enable their incidence to be determined.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps his Department is taking to study and correct *(a)* post-viral fatigue syndrome, *(b)* coxsackie B infection and *(c)* myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Mr. John MacKay: Serological surveillance studies of these diseases are at present being undertaken by the regional virus laboratory at Ruchill hospital, Glasgow. Further related research is being carried out at the Southern general hospital, Glasgow.

Abortions

Mr. Campbell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state *(a)* the number of abortions which have been performed in Scotland under the Abortion Act 1967 and *(b)* how many of these abortions were performed in emergency to save the life of a mother.

Mr. John MacKay: During the period 1968-85 128,582 abortions have been performed in Scotland under the Abortion Act 1967, of which 15 were performed in emergency under section 1(4) of the Act to save the life of a mother. Information on the numbers of abortions performed under section 1(1) of the Act, which sets out other grounds for the termination of pregnancy, is contained in the annual HMSO publication "Scottish Health Statistics"; a copy of which is in the Library.

Firefighting

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take to implement the recommendations made to his Department by the firemaster of the Grampian fire brigade concerning the case for increased training for prison officers in first aid and firefighting and other procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The recommendation on training in first aid firefighting is one of several put forward by the firemaster of Grampian fire brigade following the fire at Peterhead prison on 13 November 1986. Officials of the Scottish Home and Health Department are studying this recommendation as part of their comprehensive examination of operational issues for the Scottish prison service following the incident at Peterhead.

Strip Searching

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many women have been strip searched in each prison in Scotland during the last 12 months; what were the comparable numbers for the previous 12 months; how many times per month each woman is strip searched; whether strip searching takes place on a random or regular basis; and what are the purposes of the searches;

(2) how many men have been strip searched in each prison in Scotland during the last 12 months; what were the comparable numbers for the previous 12 months; how many times per month each man is strip searched; whether strip searching takes place on a random or a regular basis; and what are the purposes of the searches.

Mr. Lang: Strip searching of inmates, male or female, in Scottish prisons is carried out only to the extent necessary to maintain security and prevent inmates having concealed weapons or unauthorised substances such as drugs.

Standing orders require strip searches to be carried out on the following occasions:

(a) as part of normal admission and discharge procedures;
(b) when a prisoner is being transferred to a segregation unit;
(c) during routine cell searches and special cell searches where there is reason to believe that contraband or weapons are being concealed;
(d) following "open" visits; and
(e) on leaving prison to attend a court hearing.

Statistics are not kept on strip searches of male prisoners or the small number of female prisoners held on remand in local prisons. The number of strip-searches of females at Cornton Vale institution in 1985, when figures were first kept, was 4,219 and in 1986, to 31 October, 2,924.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the strip searching of women in Scottish prisons has ever been carried out in front of male officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: No. The statutory rules governing searching of prisoners stipulate that a prisoner shall be searched only by officers of the same sex as the prisoner.

Legal Aid (Glasgow)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a copy of his reply to the letter from the secretary of the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties, copies of which have been sent to hon. Members, regarding the refusal of legal aid applications in Glasgow district courts.

Mr. Lang: Following is the reply:

Dear Mr. Godwin,

Mr. Lang has asked me to thank you for your letter of 26 November to the Secretary of State expressing your concern about the refusal of legal aid applications by Glasgow District Court, and to reply on his behalf.

Under the present arrangements it is entirely a matter for the court to decide whether or not legal aid should be awarded in any particular case. In reaching its decision, however, the court must have regard to statutory criteria which includes the interests of justice and the avoidance of undue financial hardship. The Secretary of State cannot intervene in individual cases or advise particular magistrates. If there has been a change in the way in which Glasgow District Court applies the interests of justice criterion when dealing with applications for legal aid it is not as a result of guidelines recently issued by the Scottish Home and Health Department. No guidelines on this matter have been issued by the Scottish Home and Health Department to district courts since March 1982 and it is not intended to revise them at this stage.

As you appreciate, the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986 provides for the transfer of responsibility for the determination of applications for legal aid in summary criminal cases from the courts to the newly established Scottish Legal Aid Board. It is hoped that this transfer will take place on 1 April 1987. One of the main reasons for the change is to secure greater consistency in the award of legal aid and the factors set out in section 24(3) of the Act are designed to help the Board to achieve this in their consideration of the interests of justice criterion. This provision will be brought into operation when the Board assumes responsibility. Meantime it must remain a matter for the individual courts to decide how to apply the existing statutory criteria.

Yours sincerely,
PETER A. D. RITCHIE,
Private Secretary

Private Education

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many members and what percentage of the Scottish judiciary have been educated privately; and what are the comparable figures for 1981.

Mr. Lang: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many members of the permanent secretariat of the Scottish Office have been educated privately, what percentage of the secretariat this comprises; and what are the corresponding figures for 1981.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the post-school activity of school leavers by social class in terms of full-time unemployment, unemployment or youth training schemes, full-time further education and other activities in the latest available year.

Mr. John MacKay: The most recent available information about the destination of school leavers is contained in the following table:

School leavers from 1983-84 session: destination at October 1984 by father's social class

Father's social class		*Destination (in percentages) at October 1984*						*Number in sample*
		YTS	*Full-time job*	*Unemployed*	*Full-time education*	*Other*	*Total*[1]	
I	Professional	6	19	7	59	9	100	321
II	Intermediate	19	29	9	37	6	100	1,361
IIIN	Skilled—non manual	19	36	7	34	5	100	411
IIIM	Skilled—manual	33	30	13	20	4	100	2,015
IV	Semi-skilled	32	31	14	19	4	100	767
V	Unskilled	40	24	19	13	4	100	239
	Total[2]	29	28	13	25	5	100	6,275

[1]Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.
[2]Including those for whom social class information is not available.
Source: Scottish Young People's Survey.

Nurses (Dundee)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many qualified nurses are employed in each hospital in Dundee with Tayside health board; and what is the funded establishment in each case.

Mr. John MacKay: On 9 November 1986 the number of qualified nurses in post in each hospital in Dundee was as follows. These are the funded establishment figures in each case and are "whole-time equivalents".

	Number
Dundee Royal Infirmary	329·65
Ninewells	676·17
Kings Cross	140·09
Ashludie	106·20
Royal Victoria	109·49
Strathmartine	174·56
Royal Dundee Liff	234·45
	1,770·61

Telephones

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what information he has on the number and percentage of people in Dundee without a telephone from the 1981 census; and if he will disaggregate the figures further by district council ward boundary;

(2) what information he has from the 1981 census on the number and percentage of people without a telephone, by social class.

Mr. John MacKay: This information was not collected in the 1981 census.

Torness

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the planned generation capacity of the Torness nuclear power station.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by the South of Scotland Electricity Board that it expects that subject to all necessary approvals being obtained from Her Majesty's

nuclear installations inspectorate the gross generating capacity of the Torness power station will be slightly in excess of 1400 MW.

EMPLOYMENT

Passive Smoking

Mr. Foulkes asked the Paymaster General what is the policy of the Health and Safety Executive in relation to passive smoking.

Mr. Trippier: The executive's policy is to ban smoking at work where there is particular danger, for example, of fire or explosion, and otherwise to encourage voluntary workplaces agreements to limit smoking to certain areas of separate smokers and non-smokers.

The responsibility for general public health matters, including passive smoking, lies with the Department of Health and Social Security. The Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health, which has considered a comprehensive review of the evidence on health effects from passive smoking, is due to report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services next year.

YTS

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General how many youth trainees are currently engaged in YTS that involve off-the-job training in further education colleges in *(a)* England and Wales, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not available in precisely the form requested. The most recent information is from a survey of YTS schemes in January-February 1986. This survey showed that schemes responsible for 42 per cent. of all trainees in Great Britain used colleges of further education to provide the main part of their off-the-job training. This includes cases where colleges of further education managing schemes provided their own off-the-job training in-house.

Separate estimates for Scotland, England and Wales are not available.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General how many youth trainees undertook off-the-job training at further education colleges in each of the years since the scheme's inception in *(a)* England and Wales, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not available in the form requested. The youth training scheme started in England, Wales and Scotland in 1983. No information is available on the numbers of YTS trainees undertaking off-the-job training in colleges of further education for the financial years 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1986-87.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster-General if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the numbers and percentages of jobs lost, or gained, in each regional area and in Britain as a whole between June 1979 and June 1986, or the latest month for which figures are available in *(b)* all industries, *(c)* all manufacturing industries, *(d)* all service industries, *(e)* shipbuilding and repairing, *(f)* metal goods engineering and vehicles, *(g)* mechanical engineering, *(h)* electrical electronic engineering and instrument engineering, *(i)* health, education and personal social services, *(j)* retail distribution and *(k)* banking insurance and financial.

Mr. Trippier: Information about job gains and losses is not available from the Department's statistics, but an indication of the net changes can be seen by comparing levels of employment at different dates.

Regional estimates of the numbers of employees in employment in the shipbuilding and repairing, mechanical engineering, electrical and electronic engineering and instrument engineering industries are not available for June 1979 or June 1986. The available information is given in the following table.

Employees in employment net changes between June 1979 and June 1986

thousand

	South East		East Anglia		South West		West Midlands		East Midlands		Yorkshire and Humberside	
	Change	Per cent. change	Change	Per cent. change	Change	Per cent. change	Change	Per cent. change	Change	Per cent. change	Change	Per cent. change
All industries and services (0-9)	−73	−1	23	3	−39	−2	−301	−13	−118	−8	−266	−13
Manufacturing industries (2-4)	−343	−18	−28	−14	−77	−18	−291	−30	−108	−18	−203	−29
Service industries (6-9)	347	7	68	17	54	5	32	3	31	4	8	1
Shipbuilding and repairing (3610)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Metal goods, engineering and vehicles (3)	−149	−15	−9	−10	−43	−20	−184	−30	−45	−19	−73	−29
Mechanical engineering (32)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Electrical and electronic engineering, instrument engineering (34, 37)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Education, health and other services (73-99)	154	11	17	13	31	10	−26	−8	27	12	−10	−3
Retail distribution (64-65)	28	4	16	23	−12	−7	15	8	3	2	−11	−5
Banking, insurance and finance (8)	187	23	12	29	22	20	35	30	21	30	32	33

	North West		North		Wales		Scotland		Great Britain	
	Change	Per cent. change	Change	Per cent. change	Change	Per cent. change	Change	Per cent. change	Change	Per cent. change
All industries and services (0-9)	−278	−10	−215	−17	−130	−13	−149	−7	−1,545	−7
Manufacturing industries (2-4)	−303	−31	−127	−31	−111	−35	−180	−30	−1,772	−25
Service industries (6-9)	75	5	−16	−2	21	4	83	7	701	5
Shipbuilding and repairing (3610)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	−54	−39
Metal goods, engineering and vehicles (3)	−99	−25	−64	−36	−43	−36	−79	−31	−788	−24
Mechanical engineering (32)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	−251	−24
Electrical and electronic engineering, instrument engineering (34, 37)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	−113	−13
Education, health and other services (73-99)	22	5	15	7	13	7	29	7	273	7
Retail distribution (64/65)	9	4	−11	−9	14	17	22	11	72	3
Banking, insurance and finance (8)	41	26	9	16	13	30	30	24	403	25

Figures in brackets denote the division, class or activity heading of the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification.
n.a. Not available.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table showing, for each regional area, the number of persons at work, who are *(a)* employees and *(b)* self-employed, in June 1979, June 1983 and June 1986 or the latest month for which figures are available; and if he will estimate the number of second jobs included in these figures.

Mr. Trippier: The following tables give the numbers of employees in employment and self-employed at the dates for the area specified.

The second jobs included in the employees in employment estimates are not separately identified, but estimates from the Labour force surveys suggest that the numbers of people with a second job as an employee in Great Britain in spring 1979 and spring 1983 were 289,000 and 372,000 respectively. Estimates are not available for spring 1986. The survey sample is not large enough to give reliable estimates separately for each region.

The employment estimates do not include second jobs when they are held as self-employed.

Table 1—Employees in employment

Thousand

	June 1979	*June 1983*	*June 1986*
South East	7,473	7,095	7,400
East Anglia	702	681	725
South West	1,598	1,511	1,559
West Midlands	2,241	1,917	1,940
East Midlands	1,555	1,408	1,437
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,011	1,764	1,745
North West	2,676	2,346	2,398
North	1,248	1,045	1,033
Wales	1,033	902	903
Scotland	2,102	1,924	1,953

Table 2—Self-employed

Thousand

	June 1979	*June 1983*	*June 1986*
South East	651	730	954
East Anglia	79	94	120
South West	146	213	258
West Midlands	141	177	189
East Midlands	116	157	160
Yorkshire and Humberside	134	169	238
North West	214	224	280
North	77	91	110
Wales	124	126	154
Scotland	160	179	203

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table showing the number of additional *(a)* jobs in service industries, *(b)* jobs in banking, insurance and finance, *(c)* self-employed and *(d)* small business, starts over stops, created in (i) the south-east and (ii) the south-east, south-west, and East Anglia as a proportion of the total additional jobs created throughout the country in these categories.

Mr. Trippier: The following table gives the available estimates of changes in employment:

New Increases in Employment June 1983 to June 1986

Thousand

	South East	*South West*	*East Anglia*	*Great Britain*	*South East as proportion of Great Britain Per cent.*	*Sum of three regions as Great Britain Per cent.*
Employees in banking, finance, business services etc (SIC80 Division 8)	+106	+11	+7	+499	21	25
Employees in service industries (SIC80 Division 6 to 9)	+374	+51	+44	+833	45	56
Self employed	+224	+45	+26	+505	44	58

For small business the available information relates to VAT registrations and deregistrations. The most recent estimates are that over the five-year period 1980-84 there was a net surplus of registrations over deregistrations of 125,000 in Great Britain as a whole, of which (i) 42 per cent. were in the south-east and (ii) 57 per cent. were in the south-east, south-west and East Anglia taken together.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list the numbers of unemployed for each postal code area in the Dunfermline East constituency for November 1986, November 1983 and November 1985, respectively.

Mr. Trippier: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Skillcentres

Ms. Richardson asked the Paymaster General (1) what steps his Department are taking to encourage manual and technical skills training courses for women in skillcentres; and how many women-only manual and technical skills courses in skillcentres there are nationally;

(2) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Barking on 28 November, why the closure of the women into manual skills' course at Deptford skillcentre was carried out without consultation with the London boroughs of Southwark, Lewisham and Greenwich; and whether the Manpower Services Commission has received representations alleging racism and sexism at Deptford skillcentre;

(3) if he will instruct the Manpower Services Commission to co-operate with the inquiry sponsored by the London boroughs of Southwark, Lewisham and Greenwich to look into allegations of racism and sexism at the Deptford skillcentre;

(4) how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men are currently undergoing training courses at skillcentres in the Greater

London area; how many are currently undergoing courses at the Deptford skillcentre; and which courses they are taking.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mines and Quarries Act

Mr. Redmond asked the Paymaster General if he will place in the Library correspondence between himself and the chairman of the National Coal Board in connection with any proposed changes in the Mines and Quarries Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have not corresponded with the chairman of the National Coal Board in connection with any proposed changes in the Mines and Quarries Act 1954.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Higher Education

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the latest percentage of 18-year-olds entering full-time education.

Mr. Walden: The Department's usual way of monitoring participation in higher education is the age participation index. This is defined as the number of full-time and sandwich home domiciled initial entrants to higher education aged under 21 expressed as a percentage of the average population of 18 and 19-year-olds. Initial entrants are those entering a higher education course for the first time. The provisional age participation index for Great Britain in 1985 was 13·9.

Scottish Universities

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the figures and percentage composition of entrants by social class into Scottish universities in the latest year; and what are the comparable figures for 1981.

Mr. Walden: Information on acceptances by social class to universities is collected by the University Central Council on Admissions, and information relating to Scottish universities could be provided by it only at disproportionate cost.

Welsh Language

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if all institutions of higher or further education accept A-level Welsh, both first and second language, on the same value as other modern language A-level qualifications when candidates make applications for places on their courses.

Mr. Walden: Universities, polytechnics and other colleges are responsible for their own admission decisions. My right hon. Friend is not aware of any that regard an A-level in Welsh (either as first or second language) less favourably than A-levels in other subjects in their general admission requirements for first degree level courses. Nor does he know of instances where A-level Welsh is inappropriately not accepted as meeting the specific requirement for entry to particular courses.

School Meals

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of children entitled to free school meals at the beginning of this autumn term, and the number now entitled to them after the recent changes for each local education authority in the west midlands.

Mr. Dunn: I will reply as soon as possible.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools in Avon take part in the assisted places scheme; and if he will give the name of the schools and the number of places involved.

Mr. Dunn: I will reply as soon as possible.

School Discipline

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to define the powers of local education authorities in relation to investigations into the conduct of parents and governors in relation to school disciplinary matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: One of the aims of the new Education (No. 2) Act 1986 is to clarify the responsibilities of local education authorities, governing bodies and head teachers across the whole range of responsibilities. The Government have no present plans for further legislation on this.

Disabled Students

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice his Department offers colleges for further and higher education in order to widen access to students with disabilities.

Mr. Walden: In terms of physical access the DES has issued, and periodically updates, Design Note No. 18 which contains guidance for those responsible for making educational buildings accessible to disabled people. A copy of this has been placed in the Library.

In 1983 the DES commissioned the preparation of a staff development pack for teachers of students with moderate learning difficulties in colleges. This was published in January 1985 under the title "From Coping to Confidence".

A working group is now considering the training support required for the full range of further education staff concerned with special needs students. The group is expected to report early in 1987.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students with disability are currently attending courses at colleges of further and higher education.

Mr. Walden: The information is not collected centrally on a routine basis, but a survey of students with special educational needs was commissioned by the Department in 1985. The survey indicated that in November 1985 there were around 30,000 students with special educational needs attending courses at colleges of further and higher education.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consideration of the effects of student loans on students with disability his Department has made in its research into student loans schemes.

Mr. Walden: The student support review will take account of the situation of disabled students in any consideration it gives to the possibility of introducing a student loans scheme.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what special funds are available from his Department for colleges of further and higher education to improve access for students with disabilities.

Mr. Walden: Such students will have a wide range of special educational needs and the support that they require will vary accordingly. The Government believe support should generally be made by the maintaining LEA, taking account of the needs of those students whom a college proposes to admit.

However, through the mechanism of education support grant the Government are contributing to the expenditure of up to £0·5 million in each of the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88 to enable more students with disabilities to participate in mainstream courses in colleges. The grants cover 70 per cent. of approved expenditure on the part of selected LEAs to establish a continuing system of micro-electronic support for students with physical and/or sensory disabilities.

National Council for Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding membership of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications and young people with special needs.

Mrs. Rumbold: Appointments to the National Council for Vocational Qualifications are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. During the summer several letters were received all suggesting that one member of the NCVQ should have a specific responsibility for reviewing the vocational training and qualifications requirements of people with special needs. The final arrangements for membership of the Council, as outlined in the White Paper "Working Together — Educational and Training", were that appointments would be made on a personal basis in the light of individual knowledge and expertise rather than be representative of specific bodies or viewpoints.

Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in respect of the statistics kept and published by his Department, he will publish in the *Official Report* any changes since 1979 in *(a)* the statistical series which are published, including those which have been introduced and those which have been dropped; *(b)* the basis on which any elements in the statistics are estimated, calculated or presented; *(c)* the periods over which, and the dates on which the series are collected or published; and *(d)* any other respects in the ways in which statistics are collected, recorded, presented, evaluated or published; and if he will explain the reasons for any such changes.

Mrs. Rumbold [*pursuant to her reply*, 3 December 1986, c. *626*]: Only minor changes have been made since 1979 to the regular annual statistics collected by the Department. The statistics of first destinations of students from public sector institutions have had their coverage extended and have been collected on an individual basis in place of the former college summaries and those collected through the teacher destination survey. The annual monitoring survey of students and staffing ratios in further education has also increased its coverage in the last few years. Surveys of PICKUP courses have been introduced, while surveys of maintained youth clubs in adult education have been dropped. Information collected on overseas students has been incorporated in the "Further Education Statistical Record". The summary information published in statistical bulletins has been expanded, and the statistical volumes have been redesigned and their production costs reduced.

These changes in the basis of compilation, presentation and publication of statistical series have been made from time to time in response to the Government's requirements for statistical information, changes in the administrative systems on which some series are based, the development of new statistical techniques and technological developments affecting the compilation and dissemination of statistical data.

When such changes are made they are fully documented in the relevant statistical publications.

DEFENCE

DROPS

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the award of the demountable rack off-loading pick-up system contract.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am pleased to announce that, following competitive selection and trialling, we have now decided to award main production for the British Army's DROPS vehicles and ancillary equipment to Foden Trucks and Leyland Vehicles Ltd (Scammell Motors). These firms will be responsible respectively for the supply of the improved and the medium mobility vehicles. Load Handling Systems for the fleet will be provided under sub-contract by Multilift (UK) Ltd of Shrewsbury. This programme will comprise over 2,000 vehicles with a total value of some £220 million. Trials of production built vehicles will lead to full production in 1988, with the equipments entering service with the Army in 1989. DROPS will represent a major advance on the Army's existing logistic capabilities for the outloading and resupply of ammunition in the field. The programme will also provide much needed orders for the United Kingdom motor industry, sustaining over 1,000 jobs in the industry and with beneficial effects on associated component suppliers.

Dog Training School, Melton Mowbray

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has now supplied to the National Audit Office all background and statistical information within his possession relating to the future of the dog training school at the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, Melton Mowbray, including all reports of special inquiry teams; and whether he will encourage corps and unit commanders to give full information to assist the Comptroller and Auditor General in his inquiry.

Mr. Freeman: The National Audit Office has access to all such information, if it wishes to see it, including that held by corps and unit commanders. Ministry of Defence staff always give every possible assistance to the NAO in the discharge of its duties.

Tornado Aircraft (Noise Nuisance)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the representations which he has received regarding noise nuisance at the village of Stretton, Rutland, and, in particular, Walnut Close in that village; and what specific steps are being taken to deter the pilots of Tornado aircraft from flying directly over Walnut Close contrary to the approved flightpath and to repeated assurances to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton.

Mr. Freeman: Representations have been received in the Ministry of Defence and RAF Cottesmore. Every possible measure has been taken to minimise disturbance and these measures have been discussed with the hon. Member and the local parish council. In particular the current circuit pattern from runway 23 has been modified to pass to the north of Stretton. Pilots are frequently and will continue to be reminded of the need to avoid flying directly over Stretton.

RAF Cottesmore

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the progress of his review of compensation or sound insulation for villagers living near RAF Cottesmore.

Mr. Freeman: Grant levels are being reviewed to ensure that they are adequate to cover the cost of sound insulation. I shall write when I know the outcome of this review and when the boundary for the extended scheme has been determined.

Recruitment

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many people have been recruited into each branch of the armed forces in Dundee in each year since 1980; and of the total number of recruits how many were unemployed;

(2) what has been the total number of recruits into the armed forces in each year since 1980; and what number and percentage of recruits were previously unemployed in each year.

Mr. Freeman: With regard to numbers recruited to the armed forces in Dundee, I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) on 22 July 1986 at column 163; on 23 July 1985 at column 496; on 23 July 1984 at column 537; on 23 Mareh 1982 at column 401 and on 12 May 1981 at column 264.

Figures for the total numbers of recruits can be found in volume 2, table 4.15, of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" (Cmnd. 9763-II).

Information is not kept on the number of recruits to the armed forces who were previously unemployed.

International Military Services Office, Tehran

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to close the international military services office in Tehran; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Murders

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) by what percentage the number of murders made known to the police has changed over the past 10 years.

(2) if he will publish a table showing the numbers of murders made known to the police in each of the past 10 years which involved the death of a child under 16 years of age.

Mr. Mellor: In the absence of a court decision it is not always possible to distinguish between offences of murder, manslaughter, and infanticide; they are collectively known as homicide. Information on the offences of homicide recorded by the police, on their outcome and on the ages of the victims is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales"; in tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.6 respectively of the issue for 1985 (Cmnd 10). Further information on the outcome of offences of homicide involving children aged under 16 is given in the following table. Corresponding information for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Offences initially recorded by the police as homicide where the victim was aged under 16
England and Wales

Number of victims

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Outcome:				
Initially recorded as homicide	94	81	93	116
No longer recorded as homicide	4	7	10	11
Decided at court to be homicide:				
Murder	17	14	8	19
Manslaughter (S.2)	27	11	19	7
Manslaughter (other)	19	26	24	22
Infanticide	6	11	2	8
Total	69	62	53	56
Court decision pending	—	—	2	10

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Proceedings not initiated or concluded without conviction[2]	16	6	21	29
Currently no suspect	5	6	7	10
Total offences currently recorded as homicide[1]	90	74	83	105

[1] As at 1 September 1986.
[2] Includes suspect commited suicide.

Goods Vehicles (Statistics)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the number of prosecutions for offences of exceeding permitted driving hours by drivers of goods vehicles of all kinds for the latest year for which such figures are available, dividing this figure by police authority and including, if available, non-police prosecutions;

(2) if he will indicate, for the most recent years for which figures are available, the total number and the proportion of vehicles of all kinds found by the police or other authority to be in contravention of loading, safety or other regulations, where transhipment of the load or part of the load has been required, dividing this figure by police authority area;

(3) if he will list the number of prosecutions for offences of exceeding the maximum gross vehicle weight, or axle weight, of goods vehicles of all kinds for the latest year for which such information is available, dividing this figure by police authority and including, if available, non-police prosecutions.

Mr. Mellor: No reliable information is available separately for goods vehicles. The readily available information on total court proceedings for the offences referred to, which includes non-police prosecutions but may be incomplete in respect of them, is published annually in "Offences relating to motor vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (Table 5 of the issue for 1985), copies of which are in the Library. Information by police force area is also given in Table 17 of the same publication but relates to total findings of guilt in the broader categories "work record and employment offences" and "load offences".

Homosexuals

Ms Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men were imprisoned in the United Kingdom in 1985 for consensual homosexual acts with males between the ages of 16 and 21 years; and what were the maximum minimum and average sentences served by such men.

Mr. Mellor: In England and Wales in 1985, 15 males of, or over, 21 were sentenced to immediate imprisonment for buggery or attempted buggery of a man of, or over 16 but under 21 with his consent. Twenty-two males of, or over the age of 21 were sentenced to immediate imprisonment for an act of gross indencency with a male under the age of 21. The maximum sentence imposed in these cases was five years' imprisonment; the minimum, three months' imprisonment; and the average, 22 months' imprisonment. Similar information is not readily available for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Durham Prison

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many women in Her Majesty's prison, Durham have been strip searched during the last 12 months; what were the comparable numbers for the previous 12 months; how many times per month each woman is strip searched; whether strip searching takes place on a regular or a random basis; and what are the purposes of the searches;

(2) how many women in Her Majesty's prison, Durham are body searched within the prison; how many times per day; on what occasions; and for what purposes these searches take place.

Mr. Mellor: Establishments are not required to record all strip searches. However, Durham has, exceptionally, begun to keep records of strip searches in respect of category A female inmates. These show that from 1 August to 30 November such prisoners in Durham were strip searched 3·5 times per month on average.

Prisoners are strip searched on reception into a prison and subsequently as the Governor thinks necessary. The occasions on which a prisoner may be strip searched include before and after court appearances, after visits, at the time of cell changes, and during wing and cell searches. The frequency of searches depends upon such factors as the incidence of court appearances and visits, and the security category of the prisoner.

The purpose of strip searching is to detect and deter the concealment of small items (including weapons and drugs) which can be easily concealed about the person and which cannot be detected by other means of searching.

Rub-down searching (or frisking) is also used to detect and deter concealment of unauthorised articles. The occasions on which prisoners in Durham may be given a rub-down search include before and after work and exercise periods, before visits and on return to their wing after attendance at other parts of the prison, such as the hospital. Establishments are not required to record such searches.

Prison Population

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has for the number of places in the prison system which will be without integral sanitation or access to lavatories at night by 1999; and what is his estimate of the projected rise in the prison population by that date.

Mr. Mellor: On the basis of the building schemes at present in progress or planned the number of places lacking access to sanitation will fall from 22,000 now to 15,600 in 1999, that is, a decrease of 6,400. Projections of the prison population are prepared for only nine years into the future. The population is projected to rise to between

nearly 53,000 using a demographic model, and nearly 59,000 using a non-demographic model, by 1994, as described in Home Office statistical bulletin 5/86 (projections of long term trends in the prison population to 1994). But of course all projections must be treated with caution because they are based on historical trends and reflect past levels of crime and the decisions of the courts.

Firearms

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has conducted concerning the updating of the Firearms Act 1937 and legislation relating to weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no plans to amend the Firearms Act 1968 which consolidated the Firearms Act 1937 and other firearms legislation.

Immigration

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrivals from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Ghana from 1 October to the current date have been held at detention or search centres; and for how long.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not available centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Trial List (Avon)

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of persons held in custody awaiting trial in the Crown court in Avon on 1 September.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not held centrally in the form requested.

Police Recruitment

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what indication he has received from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about his views on the attitude of Islington, Haringey and other Labour councils in London in contributing to improvements in the recruitment of people from ethnic minorities into the police force.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that he is very grateful for the help he is having from local authorities, community relations officers and community/police consultative groups in mounting local ethnic minority recruitment campaigns. So far campaigns have been run in Haringey, Lambeth, Hounslow and Islington, and more are planned for Brent, Croydon, Ealing, Lewisham, Newham, Wandsworth and Westminster. He looks forward to receiving similar help in organising campaigns in other boroughs in due course.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to introduce any changes to the system of police recruit training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Police training at all levels is subject to a continuous process of review and improvement. In recent years particular attention has been given to the need to ensure that the system of police recruit training produces officers who are properly equipped to deal with the difficult and complex problems which they can expect to encounter in policing today's society.

Following the report "Police Probationer Training" (published in July 1983) prepared by its working party, the Police Training Council commissioned, and has now received the report of, a fundamental review of police probationer training in England and Wales conducted by an independent team based at the University of East Anglia (the stage II review). I am arranging for this report to be published shortly, and have meanwhile placed a copy of it in the Library.

A number of improvements were rapidly implemented following the 1983 report, including an increase from 10 to 14 weeks in the length of the initial course at district training centres; longer periods of attachment to experienced tutor constables; and greater emphasis on training in community and race relations. Nevertheless the stage II report criticises certain aspects of the current probationer training arrangements, and makes recommendations aimed at bringing the development of personal and practical policing skills to the fore in the training process. It proposes changes in the curriculum and in instructional methods and an integrated approach to the training and development of recruits throughout the probationary period, involving among other things closer integration between training provided in forces and that at district training centres.

The Police Training Council has given a general welcome, with some qualifications, to the stage II report, and agreed that work should proceed on the detailed development of revised training courses and procedures, having regard to its recommendations. This work is being co-ordinated by the Home Office, central planning and training unit for police training. I look forward to receiving from the Police Training Council details of the changes in the police training arrangements which are agreed to be necessary in the light of the stage II report, with a view to their full implementation by mid-1988. Meanwhile a number of changes in the instructional regime at district training centres have already been made in response to points raised during the stage II review, and improvements to probationer training procedures will continue to be made as and when the need for them is identified.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Additives

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to which countries have banned the food additive 154 Brown FK; and what criteria were used in deciding that this additive is safe to eat in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Brown FK is used in the United Kingdom primarily for colouring kippers. Of other EC countries I believe only Ireland includes it in its permitted list. Brown FK is not currently included on the permitted lists of other member states because the need for it is obviated by differing dietary habits. Following a positive safety evaluation by the European Commission's Scientific Committee for Food the EC Commission has issued proposals which, if adopted, would require all member states to permit its use on smoked fish.

I am advised on the need for and safety of food additives by the Food Advisory Committee and the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment. The safety of Brown FK has recently been re-evaluated by the expert committees as part of the FAC's review of the colouring matter in food regulation which will be published early next year.

North Sea

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the policy of his Department towards extending knowledge of the North sea by more intensified monitoring and scientific research.

Mr. Gummer: My Ministry undertakes a considerable programme of monitoring and research in the marine environment in support of its statutory responsibilities. The level of resources committed to this programme is kept under regular review and has more than doubled between 1978-79 and 1985-86.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the policy of his Department towards the avoidance of dumping, as well as incineration, at sea of wastes which could be harmful to the North sea.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 25 November at column *182*.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if Her Majesty's Government have exchanged their experience with dumping at sea, and other forms of disposal of severely contaminated dredged materials to be disposed of in the North sea, with other nations.

Mr. Gummer: Yes. Such exchanges take place regularly within the framework of the Oslo convention and the London dumping convention, and through bilateral contacts.

Pigs

Mr. Waller asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to the extent of compliance with the Government' code of recommendations for the welfare of pigs, with the speific reference to the use of alternatives to cage and stalls.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The code of recommendations for the welfare of pigs discourages the use of cages and stalls. Whilst caged systems are rarely used, a pig management survey carried out in 1985 by the Meat and Livestock Commission suggested that some 52 per cent. of sows in the larger pig holdings were kept in stalls or on tethers. I believe within the industry there is now a growing interest in alternatives to these systems.

Cereals Co-responsibility Levy

Mr. Lord asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the cereals co-responsibility levy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have received representations from many different sources. The Government have already made clear their attitude to this measure, for example in my statement to the Select Committee on Agriculture on 16 July and in the debate in this House on 5 November.

Green Pound

Mr. Deakins asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the effect on prices received by United Kingdom farmers of the recent European Economic Community Commission proposal to devalue the green pound.

Mr. Jopling: Implementation of the Commission's proposal to devalue the green pound by 6 per cent. for beef and 2 per cent. for sheepmeat would increase support prices in the United Kingdom by about 4·9 per cent. for beef and 1·6 per cent. for sheepmeat, and add about £50 million to farm incomes in a full year.

Sheep (Radioactivity)

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing for England each reading of radioactive caesium found in sheep and lamb which was over 3,000 Bq/kg, giving the precise level of radioactivity in each case, the date of the reading, and the approximate location.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Results of testing of sheepmeat in England have been placed in the Library of the House. Readings of radioactive caesium over 3,000 Bq/kg in sheep and lambs have been found in Cumbria as follows:

Location	*Date*	*Level Bq/kg*
Copeland	2 July 1986	3,665
Copeland	2 July 1986	3,572
Copeland	2 July 1986	3,238
Copeland	12 July 1986	3,691
Copeland	13 July 1986	3,324
Copeland	13 July 1986	3,501
Copeland	13 July 1986	3,155
Copeland	12 September 1986	3,831
Copeland	12 September 1986	3,262
Copeland	8 October 1986	3,645
Allerdale	8 October 1986	3,636
Copeland	8 October 1986	3,879
Copeland	10 October 1986	3,339
Copeland	22 October 1986	3,924
Copeland	29 October 1986	3,240

Green Pound

Mr. Eric Deakins asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated cost to the European Economic Commission budget of the recent European Economic Commission proposal for devaluation of the green pound and the green French franc; if Finance Ministers were consulted about this proposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The Commission estimates that implementation of its proposal to devalue the green pound and the green French franc would cost the EC budget 95 mecu in a full year. The proposal is under discussion in the Council of Agriculture Ministers and subsidiary bodies. Devaluation of the green pound was requested by the British Government.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

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Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

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Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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